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WHAT'S ON

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to find out what's on around Northland over the coming months or phone the CoastCare Co-ordinator on **0800 002 004**.

Restoring Tokerau Beach, one step at a time

The erosion-prone dunes of Tokerau Beach, on the Karikari Peninsula, are beginning the long road to recovery thanks to the efforts of local residents.

As in most coastal areas, the beach's dunes are vulnerable to erosion during storms, but over the years a spread of exotic vegetation coupled with foot and vehicle traffic on and off the beach has created further destabilisation.

Exotic plants are much less effective than natives at building dunes and holding them together – and that's clearly illustrated as you walk along Tokerau Beach, says CoastCare Co-ordinator Laura Shaft.

"The dunes dominated by the native sand-binder spinifex are full and gently sloped, which is in sharp contrast to the steep, gouged-out banks topped with non-natives like kikuyu, buffalo grass and exotic iceplant – the difference is quite remarkable."

Glenys Ulrich of the local residents and ratepayers association, which is leading the restoration work on Tokerau Beach, says the approach is essentially about tackling things one step at a time.

"The idea is to work on a specific area and be able to demonstrate success before expanding into other areas.

"We've started out in front of the Waitotara reserve, as it's the most high-traffic area. It's also an opportunity to help educate people and get them on board as we expand into other areas down the track."

After permission was gained to work on the lower part of the reserve land – which is administered by Land Information New Zealand – weeds were cleared from the area and planting started in August 2012.

"Around 1200 spinifex and pingao plants have gone into the ground since then, spread across three plantings," says Glenys.

"We've had great support from the local community including the ladies from the garden club, local ratepayers, a group of students from Te Kura Kaupapa Maori O Rangiawhia, plus a Far North homeschool group and other locals.

"The plants have been doing really well, particularly considering the long, hot summer we've had, and we're starting to see big spinifex trails heading down the beach."

More plants are scheduled to be planted this winter, including native back-dune species pohuehue, sand coprosma and wiwi. Plants have been provided through the Northland Regional Council's Environment Fund.

People wanting to get involved in restoring Tokerau Beach are welcome and can contact Glenys on 09 408 7150.



Waitotara reserve before planting (June 2012)



Waitotara reserve after first stage of planting (June 2013)

CoastCare news in brief

Northland's CoastCare groups have been busy with dune restoration work over recent months. Here's a quick update on just some of what's been happening around the region.

Friends of Rarawa

Winter's arrival hasn't slowed down activity at Rarawa Beach. The first planting day of the season was on 11 June and students from Ngataki School helped the group to plant spinifex on the foredune and trees – including pohutukawa, cabbage trees, flax and coprosmas – in cleared sections of the back-dune area. The next planting day will be on 26 June with Pukenui School.

Friends of Rarawa has been busy trapping to help protect dotterels which nest there, and 39 traps are currently in use. The group also holds regular working bees on the first day of every month. The 6 July working bee will include continuing the foredune and back-dune planting.



Rarawa is one of the sites for the Dunes Trust Back-dune Project, and has project demonstration areas to monitor the growth of different species and factors such as rabbit and pest plant control. Local schools will be involved in planting and monitoring.

Stay updated with the group's activities on the Friends of Rarawa Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FriendsofRarawa

Long Beach CoastCare Group



Three new sand ladders have been installed at Long Beach, Russell.

Long Beach's dunes now have some better protection thanks to the installation of three new sand-ladders to guide people down to the beach and reduce erosion of the bank.

Native plant life will also get a boost with spinifex and pingao planting planned to continue over winter.

Group member Melanie Jones is continuing trials to test the effect of saline solution on natives and exotic weeds, to see how effective it might be as a weed control option – results so far are very promising.

SPOTLIGHT ON oioi



Jointed wire rush | *Apodasmia similis*

Oioi means 'to shake gently', and it is so named for the way its stems sway in the wind.

This coastal rush-like plant grows up to one metre high and is found on damp sand dunes, along the edges of tidal rivers and dune lakes, and in salt marsh. Oioi can be distinguished from sea rush by the dark bands along its stem.

Oioi is useful for restoration projects and can be successfully transplanted by digging up a clump, splitting and then re-planting in the desired spot.

Ocean Beach

Tackling weeds continues to be a big focus at Ocean Beach, with a weed management plan in the pipeline. Large areas the beach's back-dunes are seriously compromised by weeds including kikuyu, buffalo grass, blue morning glory, and sweet pea.

The Bream Head Conservation Trust has organised a series of public working bees at Ocean Beach to target the removal of exotic iceplant, which threatens native species and can impact on dune stability. The latest working bee on 5 May saw large amounts of iceplant removed, and only a very small amount of regrowth was found where the iceplant had previously been removed.

A new information board has also been erected at the beach to build public awareness of the local dune environment and how to help protect and restore it.



The new public information board at Ocean Beach, Whāngārei Heads.

Waipu Cove Domain Board

The spinifex planted at Waipu Cove is looking very healthy. Light spraying with glyphosate has killed off the kikuyu which was starting to take over. More planting is planned for this winter.



Dune restoration at Waipu Cove is making headway with spinifex planting and weed control.

Taipā Beach Improvement Society



Work is continuing over winter to keep Taipā Beach's dunes looking great.

The restored dunes at Taipā are looking good, thanks to the efforts of the Taipā Beach Improvement Society.

The group undertakes regular weeding to keep kikuyu and other exotic weeds out of the dune area. Group members have been very successful at growing new spinifex plants from cuttings. They have also successfully transplanted wiwi from further along the beach where it grows in abundance. More planting of spinifex and pingao is scheduled for this winter.

Ahipara Community CoastCare

Dune restoration efforts by Ahipara Community CoastCare are really starting to pay off.

A fence installed in September 2012 to protect the dunes from vehicles has proved very effective. Also working well is the Tuturiwhatu Pukenui Punanga dotterel sanctuary which was set up last year. The group has produced leaflets and t-shirts to help raise awareness of the sanctuary.

The spinifex planted by local residents and school students is growing successfully, with real change visible at the 'Bowl' at Ahipara. More spinifex planting is scheduled for August with Pukepoto and Ahipara schools.



The 'Bowl' at Ahipara, before planting in 2012



The 'Bowl' in May 2013

To keep up to date with CoastCare projects and events check out our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/CoastCareNorthland

"What's in our dunes?"

Sand scarab | *Pericoptus sp.*



Image: Tony Beauchamp

The two species of sand scarab beetle present in Northland.

Have you ever come across a large grub while digging holes to plant spinifex or pingao on the dunes? It's likely the grub of a sand scarab beetle, which is native to New Zealand. There are two species of sand scarab in Northland.



Image: DOC

A sand scarab grub.

The large grubs are 36 to 65 mm long and live under driftwood and in amongst the roots of sand-binding plants. They feed on rotten driftwood and grass roots. Adult beetles feed at night and hide in the sand during the day.

Learning about safe beach driving

Puppets make learning fun for Waipu School's Harris Lymburn (six) during a recent Northland Regional Council school visit.

Harris was one of about 130 Waipu School junior students who recently learned about beach driving safety and were encouraged to take the message home to family and friends.

Council Environmental Education Officer Susan Botting said the safe beach driving messages became personal as students made puppets come to life while watching the characters simultaneously going through their paces in a new council safe beach driving DVD for children.

"The theme was that if you drive your vehicle on the beach, drive it slowly, on the hard sand by the water's edge – not on the dunes – and watch out for children," Ms Botting said.

Students learned "Tex's Driving Song", the DVD's beach safety-themed driving song.



Harris Lymburn, six, Waipu School.

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FURTHER INFO

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