

January
2011

Waikanae Estuary Care Group Inc.



Waikanae Estuary Care Group Inc.

Secretary: Lyn Whiley
Phone: 04 905 2748

Editor: Caroline Cowie

Rodent and Mustelid monitoring in Waikanae Estuary 2010

In 2010 the Waikanae Estuary Care Group, along with DoC, GWRC, KCDC and Kenakena Primary School, carried out rodent (ship rat, Norway rat and house mouse) and mustelid (stoat, ferret and weasel) monitoring in the Waikanae Estuary, to gauge the population levels of these pests.

Thirty ink tracking tunnels were placed in six lines of five across the Waikanae Estuary. Four tunnels were placed on the southern side of the river and two on the north. Crunchy peanut butter or fresh rabbit meat was used to lure pests through the tunnels.

The tracking tunnel results were surprising. While conditions in the estuary seem to be favorable for rats, stoats and weasels, relatively few rats and no mustelids were tracked. Mice were consistently the most common pest through the tunnels, often in quite high numbers. Other tracks included a few hedgehogs and lots of insects.

With this baseline data Eric Stone from DoC has made the following recommendations:

- Continue monitoring rodents bi-annually.
- Add a new line in the marsh area opened by the new track.
- Continue monitoring for mustelids at least once a year. Encourage local residents to report any sightings to the Care Group or DoC. Respond to sightings with monitoring and traps.
- Place up to thirty stainless steel traps in key areas around the estuary and alternate baits to target rats, mustelids and hedgehogs.
- Keep track of new mouse control techniques, technology and research.
- Continue to foster community interest and involvement in the monitoring and pest control aspects of Waikanae Estuary restoration. This could involve a sharing of ideas with other local groups such as Friends of Waikanae River.

For Eric's full report, to find out more or to get involved with future rodent and mustelid monitoring contact Eric Stone on (04) 296 1392.

Native plant spotting at the beach this summer



At the beach this summer you may be lucky enough to come across New Zealand's endemic sand binding species pingao or *desmoschoenus spiralis*. Pingao is a native sand-binding sedge, coloured a brilliant green and golden yellow or fiery orange. Stunning Pingao stands would have once have been found on almost every sandy beach, from Northland to Stewart Island and the Chatham's but is now only found in a few remnant populations or where active replanting programmes have been established.

Pingao is found only in New Zealand and is one of our major native dune builders. Pingao stabilise the sandy coast by trapping wind blown sand between its leaves and around the base of the plant and the long rope-like rhizomes it sends out. The sand dunes that consequently form are (usually) low, undulating active dunes, allowing continuous sand movement around the plants, which pingao requires to survive.

Pingao is a keystone species. The coastal morphology that pingao creates, provides a habitat within which other native coastal species are able to settle, adapt and flourish. Consequently much of our native coastal biodiversity depends largely on the presence of pingao to form the coastal geomorphology (beach shape created by

geological forces) to which those species are adapted.

Pingao has considerable cultural significance to Maori, used for weaving and in tukutuku panels in whareniui.

The demise of pingao can be attributed to human activity; fire, grazing and trampling by stock and rabbits, vehicle damage, the introduction of marram grass and the continued pressure and demand for coastal land.

Pingao is slowly being re-established and maintained in small pockets around the country. This is largely due to the hard work and commitment of coast and dune care organisations including the Waikanae Estuary Care Group.

The return of pingao as the major dune plant appearing on our local beaches is far off, but the commitment to manage pingao appropriately exists and all that is required now is you.

- Article adapted from DoC *Pikao (or pingao) the Golden Sand Sedge – Introduction*,

<http://www.doc.govt.nz/publications/conservation/native-plants/pikao-or-pingao-the-golden-sand-sedge/introduction/>

Up-coming working bees

2011 summer weeding bees

Saturday	5 February	RPS 1
Saturday	19 February	RPS 3/4
Saturday	5 March	RPS 3/4
Saturday	19 March	Honda site
Saturday	2 April	Venue TBA
Saturday	16 April	Venue TBA
Saturday	30 April	Venue TBA