

Te Matuku Scenic Reserve Wetlands Botanical Survey - 21 May 2016

Time: 10am to 2pm **Weather:** Sunny, not much wind **Tide:** From mid to low

Cam (botanist) & Leighton (council biodiversity) were guided through the reserve by Craig. Hamish drove us all to the top of Puriri Gully to begin & collected us all from the far end of Orapiu Road when survey was completed.

Quick visit to base of shellspit. Recent kikyuyu control & briar rose removal observed. Emerging bulb weed presence noted (either *Watsonia* or *Gladiolus*) Cam able to scoop up handfuls of bulblets. Control to be determined.

Wetland 1 at the mouth of Greywacke Gully was first site visited. Significant trampling of *Carex lessoniana* & *Bolboschoenus fluviatilis* witnessed, carried out during recent WRT moth plant control. Multiple pathways had been created out into salt marsh for similar work. Numerous areas of bare soil had been created through the digging of holes to bury pods: moth plant seed, present in the soil, now germinating on the surface of these sites.

A discussion was had expressing concern for this form of moth plant control & consequences.

A single spotless crane was heard calling at the top of the fresh water wetland near the bush edge. Later a pair of spotless crane were heard calling to each other in the salt marsh, including that extraordinary call which Hue successfully mimics.

Several large woolly nightshade in the salt marsh will be controlled by Craig on a later visit. Large area of *Ageratina* sp. (likely mist flower though leaf form is a little wider, almost no galls present) was found, future control yet to be determined.

Cam & Leighton both commented on the visual difference in an environment with no possums, pigs or goats present. Cam had already earlier observed signs of pig damage on a wetland across the bay.

Passage was then made around the nose of Pohutukawa Ridge, via the fringe of salt marsh where a WRT photo point stake was located (why so high profile?), passing back into the bush onto esplanade baitline (A-line) then through to main freshwater section of **Wetland 2**. An area in transition: dominated by *Carex lessoniana*, but with a good selection of well-established emerging coastal broadleaf species present.

All *C. lessoniana* in one area were lying flat as if partially dying down, though still green, unlike all other areas where remained upright. Foliage lying in one direction, pointing inland – king tide incursion perhaps?

Red berries present on *Ripogonum scandens* (supplejack) growing around extremely robust nikau. A very large *Parsonsia heterophylla* was observed growing over kohekohe in the bush buffer zone.

This was the only wetland with patches of *Typha orientalis* (raupo) present. Cam found *Gleichenia microphylla* (tangle fern) a species commonly associated with this form of manuka wetland, a species not as yet found elsewhere in the reserve, unlike in the higher parts of Te Haahi Goodwin. Large manuka have died, likely through old age with skeletal forms remaining, but very few new seedlings evident.

More large woolly nightshade, as well as large pampas clumps which are evenly scattered along the entire salt marsh between Wetlands 2 & 3, identified for future control. Small areas of *Ageratina adenophora* Mexican devil weed were found, future control yet to be determined.

Beyond Wetland 2 a rare *Syzygium maire* (swamp maire) was discovered by Cam, right on the baitline. Distinctive buttress roots & pneumatophores (like mangrove) evident to all who pass by (now!) Bark pale, slightly wrinkled & papery but not fissured. Tree very tall & upright, multiple leaders.

Moving back into the salt marsh by nikau fenceline, another rare plant was discovered inadvertently by Craig near a small area of *Apium prostratum* (sea celery, edible). Adjacent in a wet hollow was *Ranunculus acaulis*, a low-growing small-leafed buttercup.

Passage was then made through the mud, adjacent to the salt marsh edge, to a small area of freshwater wetland species at the northern base of Exit Ridge. A large pussy willow was observed (brown leaves, recently poisoned?)

Back on A-line an area of significant mothplant regrowth, pampas & mistflower was passed through around the base of Exit Ridge. Passage was then made back out to the salt marsh & mud for one last look at this zone, more pampas in this area.

A small amount of *Erechtites valerianifolia* Brazilian fireweed was observed. While not a significant threat Cam advised that simple hand removal was wise to prevent its spread. This weed has been recently observed in the open kikuyu land half way up Exit Ridge amongst areas of recent gorse control, an area where banana passionfruit continues to persist, by the way.

Back on A-line through to **Wetland 3**. Cam was curious to know if there had been any planting of reveg species there, given the nature of the vegetation (no, none). Some very large leafed *Coprosma arborea* were observed plus handsome clumps of *Phormium tenax*, likely parents of the plants growing on the shellspit.

A single large Chinese privet was discovered close to the salt marsh zone. Cam GPS'd the location, Craig will control this shortly. Seed yet to fully form, this weed has not been found anywhere else in the reserve.

Exit was made along the DoC fenceline/P-baitline up to Orapiu Road. *Hedycarya arborea* seedlings previously flagged by Craig to prevent their removal along this baitline observed by Cam.

Written by Craig, with thanks to:

Cam for his botanical support (my apologies for errors & omissions)

Eva for teaching me the value of such reports

Miranda for her empowerment