

## BOWENTOWN HEADS AND SAND DUNES

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The northern entrance to Tauranga Harbour is marked by a small rocky headland and sandspit and the vegetation on both these areas was explored by members on this field trip on 3 October 1999. Remnants of the formerly widespread pohutukawa forest occur on the headland, while the dune areas contain good examples of indigenous vineland, grassland and sedge communities.

During the morning a foray was made into the pohutukawa forest remnants near Yellow Point. This is the area on the west (inland) side of the harbour and is generally more accessible and less steep than the fringe of forest which extends around the harbour entrance from Papatu Point to Ocean Beach. Several vehicle tracks or foot-tracks have been formed near Yellow Point. While these have facilitated weed growth they have also provided niches for indigenous plants. We noted *Blechnum filiforme* and *Adiantum cunninghamii* in shaded cut banks as well as *Thelymitra longifolia* and *Drosera auriculata* in a sunny area higher up. Under the pohutukawa trees there is a carpet of *Doodia australis* interspersed with sedges (*Gabnia lacera*, *Lepidosperma laterale*), grasses (*Chionochloa flavescens*, *Oplismenus imbecilis*) and shrubs (*Leucopogon fasciculatus*, *Knightia excelsa*, *Pseudopanax lessonii*, *Macropiper excelsum*, *Olearia furfuracea*). *Rhabdothamnus solandri*, with its mottled and toothed leaves was also noted.

A number of grassed clearings occur along the track. In places where the track changes direction we noted large specimens of *Cotoneaster* sp., *Lonicera japonica* (Japanese honeysuckle), *Paraserianthes lophantha* (brush wattle) and *Acacia mearnsii*. Fortunately, not all sunny areas are dominated by weeds, and the flowering *Pomaderris phyllicifolia* var. *ericifolia* looked magnificent. We did not botanise the rocky shoreline so did not see *Tetragonia tetragonioides* which is known to occur here.

In the afternoon we walked along a portion of the sandspit. Indigenous vegetation communities here are regionally significant. *Muehlenbeckia complexa* forms a carpet over much of the dunes interspersed with clumps of knobby clubrush (*Isolepis nodosa*), pingao (*Desmoschoenus spiralis*) and spinifex (*Spinifex sericeus*). The only indigenous shrub of any size or abundance is houpara (*Pseudopanax lessonii*). *Pimelea arenaria* (classed as rare) has been reported from the area in the past but we could not find any. Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) and smilax (*Asparagus asparagoides*) are well established in the dunes in places and it is hoped they can and will be controlled.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Sarah Beadel provided a useful reference from her report on the area.

## **REFERENCES**

Beadel, S.M. 1994. Significant indigenous vegetation of the Bay of Plenty coastal zone. Bay of Plenty Regional Council. 412 pp.