RARANGI LANDCARE GROUP INC.

LANDCARE PROGRESS REPORT FEBRUARY 2009

RARANGI—a special place *by Marlborough District Council Officer Nicky Eade*

The Rarangi environment is a special place. It includes:-

- the bush and caves on the hills to the north,

- a unique geology of lines of gravel ridges and wetland areas inland from today's coastline, formed by old beach ridges, and,

- the beach and foreshore area which extends for several kilometres south to the diversion and beyond to the Wairau bar and lagoons.

- a shallow and a deeper underground water aquifer

- established and new areas of housing, vineyards and farmland

- several rare and threatened native plants and animals

Achievement of the Group since 2000

Introducing the Rarangi Landcare Group

The Rarangi Landcare Group was formed in 2000 by a group of residents concerned about the local environment and keen to take some responsibility for restoring it. The group decided to focus on restoration of areas of the foreshore area in front of their homes, where introduced weed plants, many of them "escapees" from the gardens, have overtaken the native species.

A number of the naturally occurring native plant species found at Rarangi are classified as threatened nationally. Also, a survey of insects carried out by Department of Conservation scientists in 1998/99 had found several special moth species, two of which were new species and highly threatened. The group was keen to make sure these species, along with more common native plants and animals (insects, lizards and birds), could survive and prosper on Rarangi beach.

This area is public land administered by the Department of Conservation. The Marlborough District Council and the New Zealand Landcare Trust have also supported the group over the years. The Rarangi Landcare Group is registered as an Incorporated Society which means it can apply for public funding.

The mission of the Rarangi Landcare Group is:-

"To restore the Rarangi coastal ecosystem, including native foreshore plants and associated insect, lizard and bird species".

The group has focussed on clearing and replanting small "plots" along the length of foreshore (approx 1 kilometre) in front of the established houses. Native plant species in this area were almost non-existent, with many introduced species of flower and shrub having taken over. Approximately 20 small areas were established through working bees. Weeds were cleared, driftwood surrounds put in place and native plants - mainly sand tussock and the native daphne - re-establishe

Over time some of these plots have been neglected but many have now been amalgamated into four or five larger areas. The two biggest areas, (behind the fire station and at 150 Rarangi Beach Road at the public beach access), have large colourful information panels which explain the ecology of the beach and the work of the Landcare Group.

Students from the Outward Bound school at Anakiwa have provided much of the labour over the years and the Tuamarina School pupils and others have helped out from time to time. The Landcare Group has also hosted many groups and visitors.

AN INVITATION — The Rarangi Landcare Group Incorporated needs new members — come along to a get together at the Fire Station/Community Centre on March 6th at 6pm to find out more about the Group. A beach walk to look at the plantings will be followed by a brief presentation & meeting and informal sausage sizzle

WORKING BEES

This last year has been our busiest ever with another 3,000+ plants restored on the foreshore thanks again to Outward Bound's help.

Planting got underway in April 2008, when Officers from the Department of Conservation and Marlborough District Council joined Landcare members together with four groups of Outward Bound students and their leaders to clear and plant 2544 sand tussock and 768 native daphne onto the foreshore.

Planting continued in May with help from Marlborough District Council staff who helped Landcare members clear and plant 240 Spinifex.

September 5th saw Outward Bound students back again to weed and open up more areas for a September 14th planting when a further 150 native plants including coastal tree daisy, tauhinu and native daphne were planted. This last 'planting' working bee for the year was organised by DOC and included help from girl guides and church members. As you can see in the photo everyone enjoyed the sausage sizzle provided by DOC.

' This final planting in September brought the total number of plants restored for the year 2008 to 3,702.'

Maintaining the planted areas got underway in December with help from two groups of Outward Bound students, DOC and MDC. Weeding continued in January 2009 with another two groups from Outward Bound.

A BIG 'THANKYOU'

goes to everyone who took time out of their busy lives to help us restore and maintain our native foreshore plants, Be assured in the knowledge that your effort is appreciated and will go a long way in sustaining our environment with it's rare and endemic plant and insect species for future generations to enjoy.

PLANTING

April 2008—planting sand tussock & n.daphne

May 2008—planting spinifex

September 2008—planting tauhinu, coastal tree daisy & n.daphne

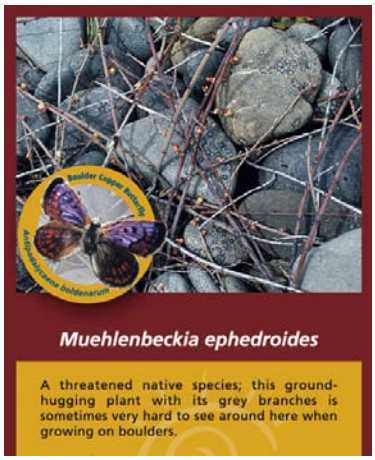
MAINTAINING THE PLANTED AREAS

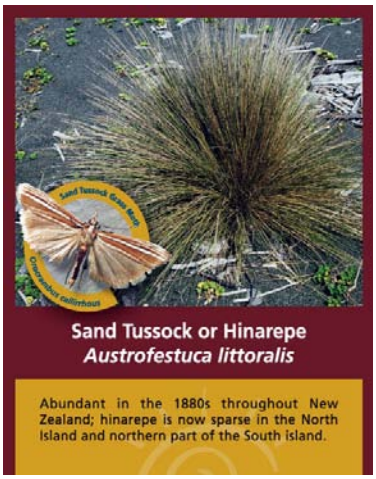
December 2008

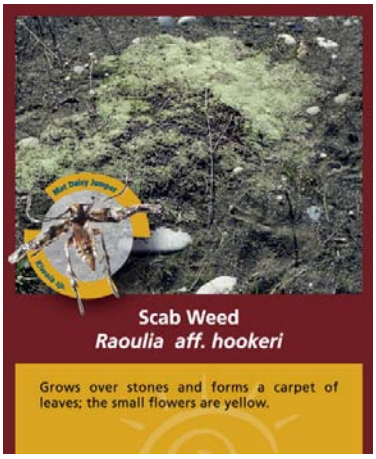
January 2009

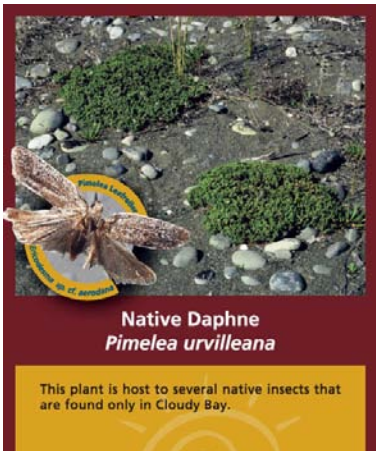
NO BUGS EQUALS NO LIFE *by Department of Conservation Officer Shelly Sidley*

People are often surprised to find that hundreds of species of plants, animals and insects live and thrive in the windy, salt-strewn, sandy and pebble beach environment of Rarangi's foreshore. At least 167 species of moths make this area home, rare geckos and lizards scurry amongst the indigenous plants and birds seek the plants for food and shelter. *(photo shows Shelly looking over restored sand tussock)*









A lot is known about the unique plants and animals that have been able to survive in these harsh conditions but new information is coming in all the time. A survey of insects carried out by Department of Conservation scientists in 1998/99 had found several special moth species, two of which are new species and highly threatened. In fact one of the moth species– the Cloudy Bay mat daisy jumper, only exists at Rarangi– no where else in New Zealand, no where else in the world.

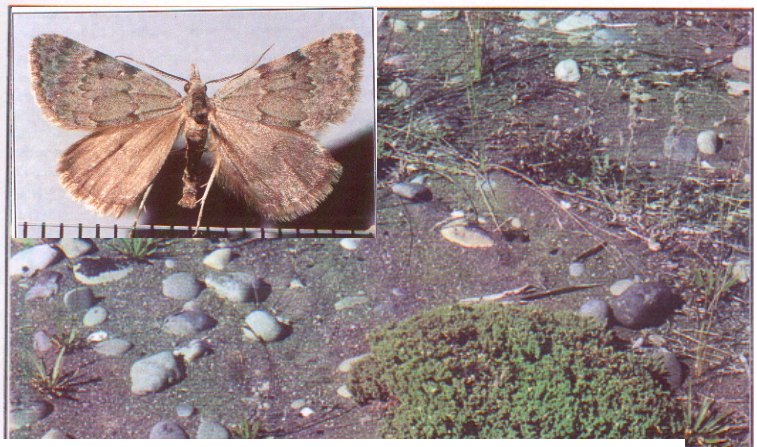
The World Wildlife Foundation summed up the importance of Rarangi's efforts to help these insects best when they said:

> ***"WWF supports Rarangi landcare because they are battling for a vita underdog. The community is helping to restore the building blocks of an ecosystem, they might lack charisma but they reflect the health of an ecosystem – no bugs equals no life."***

The Rarangi Landcare group has seen great progress on helping establish these "building blocks" for the unique moths and it is important to note that the restoration effort also helps the more common native plants and animals (insects, lizards and birds). But continued support and energy is needed to help ensure that these underdogs continue to survive and prosper on Rarangi Beach.

To learn more join our workshop on March 6 *(see page 4 for details)* or contact Shelly Sidley with the Department of Conservation on 03 572 9100

LOCAL INSECTS — FOUND NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD



STONE MOTH

Dichromodes sp.cf. sphaeriata Felder & Rogenhofer, Lepidoptera; Geometridae (Stone Moth).

The Cloudy Bay population differs from all known *D. spaeriata* populations in its peppering of whitish scales on the dark stone-grey forewings, and consistently smaller size; all others have these scales yellow.
At present because of these differences, and the "unusual" habitat, this population is regarded as a Cloudy Bay endemic.

Habitat —Native daphne (*Pimelea urvilleana.)*

MAT DAISY JUMPER

Kiwaia sp cf *jeanae* Philpott, Lepidoptera: Gelechiidae (Cloudy Bay mat daisy jumper)

This flightless, blue –grey, jumping moth is similar in size (ca 3mm body length + wings), colour pattern and time of emergence to *Kiwaia jeanae,* but differs in the male having short dark grey scales dorsally on the hindwing and a short buff fringe. It differs from *K. glaucoterma* in having short hindwings, and long, saltatorial (jumping) hindlegs. Adults though flightless, can achieve leaps to a height of about 4 cm., and are concolorous with the coarse grit surrounding the mats.

Habitat—Scab weed (*Raoulia australis)*

GET INVOLVED——Save the Butterflies.

Come see what nine years of restoration looks like! Meet at the Rarangi Fire Station/Community centre meeting room on the 06th of March at 6PM for a fun and educational evening exploring and learning about what makes Rarangi's coastal habitat so unique.

Conservation Ranger, Jan Clayton-Green, who has extensive botanical knowledge and has been surveying the Rarangi restoration plots since its inception, will be leading the guided walk. She will also be making a presentation about what makes this place special and will give you an in-depth understanding of the inhabitants of the area. The presentation will include loads of pictures just in case the moths, geckos and lizards evade us on the walk.
There will be also be opportunity to discuss plans for future restoration projects and share ideas on "where to from here" in the ongoing effort to restore the Rarangi coastal ecosystem. Of course no night is complete without a sausage sizzle and the opportunity to discuss ideas and ask questions.

The Department of Conservation, Marlborough District Council and the Rarangi Landcare group will be hosting the evening and it is free to anyone interested.
Contact Shelly Sidley with the Department of Conservation on 03 572 9100 for further details.

Supported by:

MARLBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawbai

nz landcare trust
ngā matapopore whenua