



Foot Print Survey

Students from Coastal Taranaki School undertook a footprint survey to assess the presence of dogs and other predators in and around the dunes at the Komene 13B Reservation and Waikirikiri Lagoon.

The students found footprints at all obvious entrances to the dunes between the main beach entrance and the Hangatahua/Stony River. Footprints were also observed in the dunes themselves.

South of the main beach entrance the students recorded the presence or absence of footprints every 50 paces along the stream edge which separates the beach itself from the wetland area behind. Dog footprints were noticed nearly the whole way down this southern stretch.



Clearly there is a strong presence of dogs in and around these dune and wetland habitats. Dogs can pose a serious threat to the bird species in this area through disturbance and attacks.

Where to from here?

Project Hotspot and Coastal Taranaki School want to work with local dog owners and community groups to raise awareness of this issue. It is not our intention to vilify anyone, rather, we want to work with dog owners to discuss and generate positive outcomes for our coastal threatened species.

Listed below are some points to help direct discussion in your groups:

- What positive advice can be provided to dog owners to help protect nesting birds (non-leash/leash areas, dog supervision advice, which months?).
- What is the best way to spread this message (signs, flyers, community forums etc.)?
- Are you aware of other threats to bird species at Komene 13B Reservation?
- Future work: What can be done and how can I help?



Using citizen science to better protect coastal threatened species in Taranaki



New Zealand Government

Komene 13B Reservation and Waikirikiri Lagoon



The Komene 13B Reservation is an area of coastal wetland and adjacent sand dune that is a nationally rare habitat in New Zealand. It plays host to an ecosystem which has been identified to hold significant biodiversity values.

The Komene 13B Reservation Trustees and the local community with support from the TRC and AWE have implemented several campaigns to protect and enhance these values of biodiversity:

- Pest management – targeting stoats, weasels, feral cats, hedgehogs, ferrets, and rats.
- Planting programmes designed to enhance the dune and wetland areas
- Planting rare plants
- Control of pest plants

Signs have been erected to deter the use of vehicles in the dunes which have helped protect threatened bird species which nest there.

Human disturbance and the presence of dogs can have a negative impact on threatened bird species at the Komene 13B Reservation. This area is a popular place to walk dogs. To reduce the impact on threatened bird species dog owners are required to keep their dogs on the leash until they get to the high tide mark or on the beach at dawn and dusk when penguins are active.



Coastal Taranaki School undertook field investigations on October 30 2016 at the Komene 13B Reservation. The students investigated the diversity of life found in this area (<http://naturewatch.org.nz/projects/coastblitz-komene>) as well as surveying dog footprints in and around the dunes and wetland areas.

Threatened Coastal Bird Species at Komene

The Komene 13B Reservation plays host to several threatened bird species including:



Grey Duck



Reef Heron



Red-billed Gull



NZ Dotterel



Caspian Tern



Little Blue Penguin



NZ Pied Stilt



NZ Pipit



South Island Pied Oystercatcher



Variable Oystercatcher



Black Shag



Royal Spoonbill

Threatened:



Nationally Critical



Nationally Endangered



Nationally Vulnerable

At Risk:



Declining



Recovering



Naturally Uncommon



New Zealand dotterel (research by Sarsha & Tara, Coastal Taranaki School)

The NZ dotterel is a threatened species mainly found along the sandy east coast beaches of NZ, but can also be found in scattered pairings along the west coast. The upper parts of their body are brown and the underparts are an off-white colour in autumn/early winter, becoming orange-red from about May. New Zealand dotterels breed in pairs, and vigorously defend territories against other dotterels. The nests of northern New Zealand dotterels are simple scrapes in the substrate, sometimes lined or decorated, often with driftwood or vegetation. Three eggs are laid, usually from August or September. The main threats for the birds are loss of eggs and chicks to predators such as dogs and other animals, loss of nests to big tides and loss or damage of their habitat.



Variable oystercatcher (research by Sarsha & Tara, Coastal Taranaki School)

The variable oystercatcher is a large shorebird. Adults have black upperparts, their underparts vary from all black, through a range of 'smudgy' intermediate states to white. They have a long bright orange bill (longer in females), and stout coral-pink legs. The iris is red and eye-ring orange. Breeding success of variable oystercatchers is not very high, with main causes of failure being predation of eggs, flooding of nests by big tides, and disturbance resulting from human recreational use of the coast, they are sometimes killed by cats and stoats. Nests are normally simple scrapes in the sand, often with a marker of driftwood, vegetation, or flotsam.