

September 2003

Moana Roa – More than just mud!

What's so special about Moana Roa?

At first glance, the saltwater flat that makes up the heart of the Moana Roa Conservation Area might not be much to look at - but appearances can be deceiving.

To the banded dotterel, the katipo spider and other animals and plants, Moana Roa is more than just a muddy flat – it's home. It is also one of the last few extensive estuarine communities left in the Manawatu and is a haven for a host of different species – most of which are unique to New Zealand.

Unfortunately, the heavy scarring caused by vehicles cutting back and forth across the salt flats and the dumping of household rubbish and green waste is threatening this unique place.



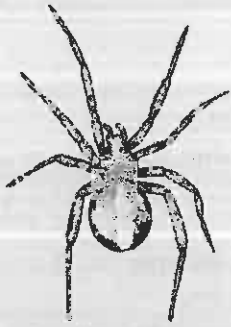
Destruction caused by vehicles at Moana Roa



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

What lives at Moana Roa?

Situated on the coast west of Bulls, Moana Roa is home to a number of plants and animals specially adapted to live here. Some are no bigger than a 10 cent piece, and many are found only in New Zealand.



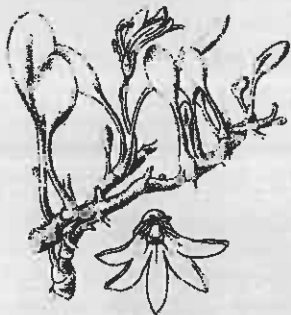
katipo spider (M. Beaufrais)

New Zealand's only poisonous spider, the katipo, which is hovering on the edge of threatened species list, lives in the dunes.

The banded dotterel breeds and nests among the stones, which means its eggs can be destroyed in a second by vehicles driving across them.

Seals also use the beach to "haul out" or rest up after long periods at sea. They should be left alone unless obviously sick or injured.

Among the plants is the *Lilaeopsis novae-zelandiae* or "tape-measure plant," named because of its narrow segmented leaves, the Sea Primrose or maakoako, and the native "half star" or Remuremu, which also has exotic cousins in Chile and Australia.



half star (P. Brooker)

The native sand sedge Pingao – notable for its brilliant orange/gold colouring valued for weaving - is also struggling to maintain a foothold in these dunes.

The rubbish and weed threat

Plastic left near the beach, particularly supermarket bags and beer six-pack loops can choke and kill marine animals, while broken glass and metal left behind can be a danger to people, especially when hidden by shifting sands and vegetation. Dumping garden waste can spread invasive plants and insects, which devour and destroy native species.

What can I do?

Protect your beach by sticking to the marked vehicle tracks next time you visit. Don't dump household or garden waste. Tell others that Moana Roa is a special place and get them to protect it too.

The Department of Conservation is keen to work with coastal communities to protect and preserve their beaches and estuaries.

Need more information?

For more information on the Moana Roa Conservation Area, or for advice on forming a coastal care or clean-up group, contact Tim Gilbertson at DOC Palmerston North, ph (06) 350 9700, or E-mail: tgilbertson@doc.govt.nz.