

Flora of Horseshoe Island, Whangateau Harbour

Enid Asquith, Graeme Hambly & Maureen Young

Horseshoe Island, as its name suggests, is a curved sandy island in Whangateau Harbour, situated between the tips of Point Wells Spit and Omaha Spit (map reference: NZMS 260 R09 693410). Fig.1.

"Both Omaha/Whangateau Flats and the Omaha Spit are the result of incremental progradation; that is, marine sediments were deposited in strips that are generally continuous alongshore. Although modified by farming activities, the surface of the Omaha Flats is actually a sequence of ridges and swales"¹.

Horseshoe Island is the remains of one of these ridges, the surrounding land having eroded away to form the harbour. It would be c. 200 m long and maybe 1 m high at the highest point. At high tide parts are submerged, leaving discrete sandy islets, and at high spring tides all but the highest area on the NW end may be under water. The island is easily reached on foot from the Whangateau Domain once the tide has subsided.

Mangroves grow in the concavity of the horseshoe. On the sandy areas that are occasionally inundated

grow the usual plants found on saltmarsh flats - *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*, *Selliera radicans* and *Samolus repens*, with *Austrostipa stipoides*, *Isolepis nodosa*, *Spinifex sericeus* and *Calystegia soldanella* on the hummocks. Of interest here are healthy plants of the succulent *Suaeda novae-zelandiae*, which is not common in the district. The hybrid, *Carpobrotus edulis x Disphyma australe* is also present; this hybrid is illustrated in Plate 6 in Flora of New Zealand Vol.4. On the higher, more stable part of the island one medium sized and about three small pohutukawa trees grow among a tangle of buffalo grass, gorse, brush wattle and *Muehlenbeckia complexa*. One plant of *Tetragonia tetragonioides* straggles down the bank. One always wonders whether this species grows naturally or is introduced, when found near an area that has been intensively gardened for several generations.

¹Forest & Bird Coastal Conference - November 1988. Mike Hilton, Department of Geography, University of Auckland.

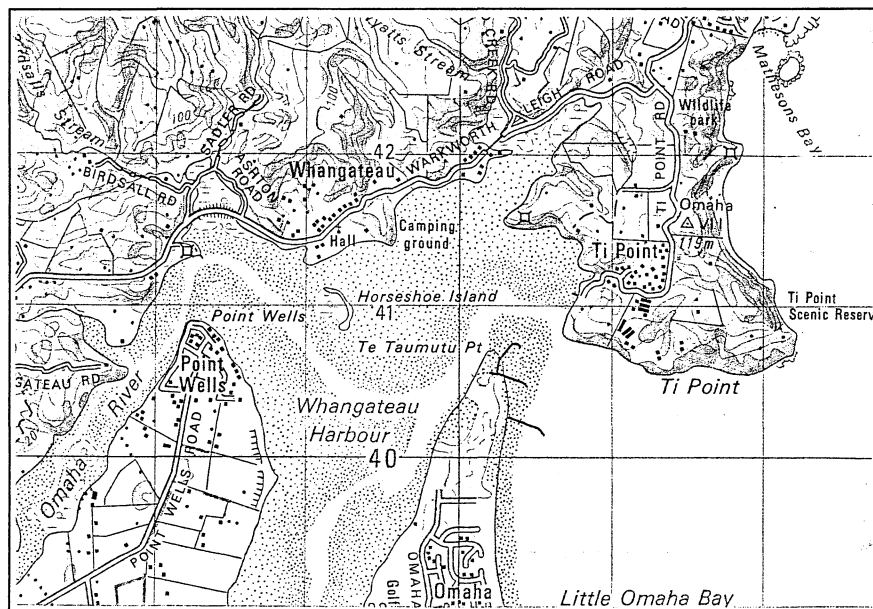


Fig.1: Horseshoe Island location

Appendix: Horseshoe Island flora, Whangateau Harbour

Ferns (3)

Asplenium oblongifolium
Microsorium pustulatum
Pyrosia eleagnifolia

Dicotyledons (18)

**Atriplex prostrata*
Avicennia marina
 subsp. *australasica*
Calystegia soldanella
Carpobrotus edulis x

Disphyma australe

Coprosma robusta
Leptospermum scoparium
Lobelia anceps
Metrosideros excelsa
Muehlenbeckia complexa
**Paraserianthes lophantha*
Plagianthus divaricatus
Sarcocornia quinqueflora
Samolus repens
Selliera radicans

Solanum sp.

Suaeda novae-zelandiae
Tetragonia tetragonioides
**Ulex europaeus*

Monocotyledons (14)

Apodasmia similis
Austrostipa stipoides
Baumea juncea
Carex pumila
Isolepis nodosa

Juncus kraussii

 var. *australiensis*
Lachnagrostis billardierei
**Lagurus ovatus*
**Paspalum vaginatum*
Phormium tenax
**Schedonorus phoenix*
Spinifex sericeus
**Stenotaphrum secundatum*
Triglochin striata

