

Reference Project

Conservation

Boxthorn Eradication: Mercury Islands

Location Coastal cliffs on Red Mercury, Koropuki & Double Island, Bay of Plenty

Date Yearly since 2003

Client Department of Conservation

There are five small islands in the Mercury group which are all nature reserves.

The bare coastal cliffs are up to 150m high and have become home to the noxious weed Boxthorn. Abseil Access Ltd was called upon to determine the extent of the problem in 2003. Since then the worst areas on the 3 islands have been tackled. Abseil drops are established over infested areas and the number and location of the plants are mapped for future reference.

The project presents many difficulties including vertical drops of 150m on dangerously loose cliffs, tidal traps, heavy backpacks and impenetrable bush. The islands have no habitation and no landing areas. An extremely high level of outdoor experience and fitness is required for all team members.

Boxthorn itself is a highly problematic species. Its hard woody stem support stiff limbs which carry perpendicular thorns up to 100mm long. The plant can trap birds and the cuttings adhere to the surrounding bush. Any section of the root can re-sprout independent of the mother plant.

This project has shown Abseil Access' long term commitment to the hardest weed eradication programmes.

