

**Gaining New Ground: *Thinopyrum junceiforme*, A Model of Success  
Along the South Eastern Australian Coastline.**

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## Table of Contents

Title Page	i
Table of Contents	ii
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Abstract	xi
Declaration	xii
Acknowledgements	xiii
<b>Chapter 1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background	1
1.2 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Australia	2
1.3 Research Gaps and Questions	4
1.4 Research Aim	5
1.5 Research Approach and Objectives	5
1.6 Organisation of the Thesis	7
<b>Chapter 2. <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> – an overview</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> – Taxonomy and Nomenclature	9
2.2 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> as a successful coastal coloniser	12
2.2.1 Soil salinity, salt spray and tidal inundation	12
2.2.1.1 Soil salinity	12
2.2.1.2 Salt spray	13
2.2.1.3 Tidal inundation	14
2.2.1.4 Seed germination and salinity	14
2.2.2 Burial	14
2.2.2.1 Mature plants	15
2.2.2.2 Seedlings	15
2.2.2.3 Darkness	16
2.2.2.4 Seeds	16
2.2.2.5 Rhizomes	16
2.3 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> dune formation and method of spread	17
2.4 Seasonal ecology of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> on the Younghusband Peninsula	20
2.4.1 Background	20
2.4.2 Methods	20
2.4.2.1 Site selection and location	20
2.4.2.2 Surveying and Monitoring	21
2.4.2.3 Data collection	22
2.5 Results	23
2.5.1 Autumn 2007	23
2.5.1.1 Transect 1 (1 km north 28 Mile Crossing)	23
2.5.1.2 Transect 2 (500 m north 28 Mile Crossing)	23
2.5.2 Winter 2007	24
2.5.2.1 Transect 1 (1 km north 28 Mile Crossing)	24
2.5.2.2 Transect 2 (500 m north 28 Mile Crossing)	25
2.5.3 Spring 2007	26
2.5.3.1 Transect 1 (1 km north 28 Mile Crossing)	26
2.5.3.2 Transect 2 (500 m north 28 Mile Crossing)	26
2.5.4 Summer 2008	27
2.5.4.1 Transect 1 (1 km north 28 Mile Crossing)	27

2.5.4.2	Transect 2 (500 m north 28 Mile Crossing)	28
2.5.5	Summary of transect data	28
2.5.5.1	Transect 1	28
2.5.5.2	Transect 2	30
2.6	Discussion	32
2.6.1	Composition	32
2.6.2	Frequency of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i>	32
2.6.3	Cover of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i>	33
2.6.4	Flowering of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i>	34
2.7	Summary	35
<b>Chapter 3. <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Australia: a spatio-temporal analysis using herbarium records</b>		<b>36</b>
3.1	Background	36
3.1.1	Previous uses of herbarium records	36
3.1.2	Criticism of the use of herbarium records	37
3.2	Methods	39
3.2.1	Australia's Virtual Herbarium (AVH)	39
3.3	Results	41
3.3.1	Herbarium records of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Australia	41
3.3.2	The spatial and temporal distribution of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> from herbarium records	45
3.3.2.1	Victorian collections	46
3.3.2.2	Discussion of Victorian collections	46
3.3.2.3	Tasmanian collections	50
3.3.2.4	Discussion of Tasmanian collections	51
3.3.2.5	South Australian collections	52
3.3.2.6	Discussion of South Australian collections	53
3.4	Discussion	54
3.4.1	Potential pathways of dispersal between the Australian states	54
3.4.2	Introduction and scale of invasion	55
3.4.3	Other species of the Genus <i>Thinopyrum</i> in herbarium records	55
3.4.4	Influences on herbarium collections	56
3.5	Summary	57
<b>Chapter 4. Analysing the awareness and perceptions of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> using an online survey</b>		<b>58</b>
4.1	Background	58
4.1.1	The pros and cons of electronic questionnaires	58
4.1.2	Benefits of electronic surveys	58
4.1.2.1	Specific benefits of the online component	59
4.1.3	Problems with electronic surveys	60
4.1.3.1	Concerns with unsolicited email questionnaires	60
4.1.3.2	Confidentiality and anonymity of email surveys	61
4.1.3.3	Technical issues	61
4.1.3.4	Response rate	62
4.1.3.5	Conclusions	62
4.2	Methods	62
4.2.1	Questionnaire medium	62
4.2.2	Structure of the survey	63
4.2.3	Survey guidelines	63
4.2.3.1	Participant Information Sheet	63

4.2.3.2 Consent to participate in the research	64
4.2.4 Confidentiality and anonymity	64
4.2.5 Intended participants of the questionnaire	65
4.2.6 Survey design	65
4.2.6.1 SurveyMonkey tool	65
4.2.6.2 Design using SurveyMonkey	65
4.2.7 Questionnaire dissemination	66
4.2.7.1 Priming the collection process	66
4.2.7.2 Contacting potential respondents	67
4.2.8 Analysis	68
4.3 Results	68
4.3.1 Overview of response rate	68
4.3.2 Part A. Participant profile	69
4.3.3 Part B. Participants' knowledge, opinion and experience of Sea wheat -grass	72
4.3.4 Part C. Participants' perceptions on coastal weeds and coastal weed management	78
4.4 Discussion	82
4.4.1 Response rate	82
4.4.2 Profile of survey respondents	82
4.4.3 Knowledge/experience of Sea wheat-grass in Australia	83
4.4.4 Temporal and spatial distribution of Sea wheat-grass	83
4.4.5 Friend or foe – perceptions of Sea wheat-grass	84
4.4.6 Perceived impacts of Sea wheat-grass along the coast	85
4.4.7 The importance of Sea wheat-grass in comparison to other weeds	87
4.4.8 Management and control of Sea wheat-grass	90
4.4.8.1 National initiatives	90
4.4.8.2 State initiatives	91
4.4.8.3 Regional strategies and plans	93
4.4.8.4 Local strategies and plans	94
4.4.8.5 Should Sea wheat-grass be controlled?	95
4.4.9 Final comments	95
4.5 Summary	96
<b>Chapter 5. Colonisation potential of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> by seed: the role of oceanic hydrochory</b>	97
5.1 Background	97
5.1.1 Oceanic hydrochory	97
5.1.2 Studies on seed dispersal and buoyancy	98
5.1.3 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds as dispersal units	100
5.1.3.1 The relative importance of seeds and rhizomes in the dispersal of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i>	100
5.1.3.2 Floating capacity of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds	100
5.1.3.3 The tolerance of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds to salinity	101
5.2 Methods	102
5.2.1 Dispersal units used in experiments	103
5.2.2 Seed source	103
5.2.3 Description of experiments	103
5.2.3.1 Experiment 1a. The buoyancy or floating capacity of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds (without disturbance)	103
5.2.3.2 Experiment 1b. The buoyancy or floating capacity of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds with disturbance	104

5.2.3.3 Experiment 2. The germination response of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> to variable periods of floating on seawater	105
5.2.3.4 Experiment 3. The germination response of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> following complete submersion in seawater	105
5.2.4 Analysis	106
5.3 Results	106
5.3.1 The buoyancy or floating capacity of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i>	106
5.3.1.1 Buoyancy – no disturbance	106
5.3.1.2 Buoyancy – with disturbance	106
5.3.2 The germination response of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> to variable periods of floating on seawater	107
5.3.2.1 Commencement of germination	108
5.3.2.2 Germination rate	108
5.3.3 The germination response of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> following complete submersion in seawater	109
5.3.3.1 Germination of sunken seeds	109
5.4 Discussion	110
5.4.1 The buoyancy of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seed	110
5.4.2 The germination of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seed during and after floating on seawater	112
5.5 Summary	113
<b>Chapter 6. The regenerative potential of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> rhizomes in transported sand on the Adelaide metropolitan coast</b>	114
6.1 Background	114
6.1.1 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> on the Adelaide metropolitan coast	114
6.1.2 Sand replenishment along the Adelaide metropolitan coast	116
6.1.3 The potential mode of spread of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> along the Adelaide metropolitan coast	117
6.1.3.1 Buoyancy	117
6.1.3.2 Fragmentation	118
6.1.3.3 Fragment length and number of nodes	118
6.1.3.4 Timing of rhizome fragmentation	119
6.2 Methods	119
6.2.1 Site selection	119
6.2.2 Site description	119
6.2.3 Study site units	121
6.2.4 Vegetation monitoring	121
6.2.5 Monitoring erosion of emplaced sand in the study area	123
6.3 Results	123
6.3.1 Section One	123
6.3.1.1 Beach width	123
6.3.1.2 Vegetation colonisation	124
6.3.2 Section Two	126
6.3.2.1 Beach width	126
6.3.2.2 Vegetation colonisation	126
6.3.3 Section Three	127
6.3.3.1 Beach width	127
6.3.3.2 Vegetation colonisation	129
6.4 Discussion	131
6.4.1 Site comparison of beach width	131
6.4.2 Site comparison of vegetation colonisation	132

6.4.3 The regenerative potential of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> rhizomes	134
6.5 Summary	136
<b>Chapter 7. The impact of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> on the ecology and geomorphology of the Younghusband Peninsula</b>	<b>138</b>
7.1 Background	138
7.1.1 Geomorphological setting	138
7.1.2 Climate and tides	139
7.1.3 Morphodynamics of the study area	140
7.1.4 Vegetation of the Younghusband Peninsula	141
7.1.4.1 Vegetation surveys	141
7.1.4.2 Floristic communities	143
7.2 Methods	144
7.2.1 Site selection and location	144
7.2.2 Selection of survey sites	145
7.2.3 Surveying	146
7.2.4 Data collection	147
7.2.5 Analysis	147
7.2.5.1 Vegetation analysis	147
7.2.5.2 Dune form and <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation	148
7.2.5.3 Rate of spread	148
7.3 Results	149
7.3.1 Vegetation on Younghusband Peninsula	149
7.3.1.1 Introduction	149
7.3.1.2 Vegetation composition of the high exposure zone	150
7.3.1.3 Similarity/dissimilarity between transects in the high exposure zone	152
7.3.1.4 Association between <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> and other species recorded in the high exposure zone	154
7.3.1.5 Association between <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> and <i>Spinifex sericeus</i>	155
7.3.1.6 Distribution of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in other parts of the dune system	157
7.3.2 Dune form and <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation	157
7.3.2.1 General observations of dune form/ <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation along Younghusband Peninsula	157
7.3.2.2 Specific observations of dune form/ <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation along Younghusband Peninsula	160
7.3.3 Rate of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation on Younghusband Peninsula	167
7.4 Discussion	167
7.4.1 Rate of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> spread along Younghusband Peninsula	167
7.4.2 Dune form and <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation	168
7.4.3 <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in the high exposure zone along the Younghusband Peninsula	170
7.5 Summary	172
<b>Chapter 8. Conclusions</b>	<b>174</b>
8.1 A STADI model of invasion for <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> along the south eastern Australian coastline	174
8.2 Concluding comments and opportunities for further research	178

<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1. Australian herbaria holding records of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in 2005 [14 October 2005] according to the AVH.	180
Appendix 2. Australian herbaria holding records of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in 2010 [14 November 2010] according to the AVH.	181
Appendix 3. The spatial and temporal distribution of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> from herbarium records.	183
Appendix 4. Sea wheat-grass survey 2008.	189
Appendix 5. Plant species recorded along Younghusband Peninsula during vegetation sampling.	194
<b>Bibliography</b>	195

## List of Tables

Table 2.1	RGR of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> under different salt concentration treatments (Sykes & Wilson 1989).	13
Table 2.2	Cover scores based on a modified Braun-Blanquet (1965) scale modified by Heard and Channon (1997) and James (2004).	22
Table 2.3	Cover of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Transect 1.	29
Table 2.4	Summary of frequencies of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Transect 1 and percent change between seasons	30
Table 2.5	Cover of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Transect 2.	31
Table 2.6	Summary of frequencies of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in Transect 2 and percent change between seasons.	31
Table 2.7	Total frequencies (%) per season for <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> for Transects 1 and 2.	33
Table 3.1	Comparison of number of herbarium records for <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> in 2005 and 2010.	41
Table 4.1	Overview of response rates.	69
Table 4.2	Coastal council's survey response rate.	69
Table 4.3	Survey response rate – MCCN, weed societies and miscellaneous.	69
Table 4.4	Worst coastal weeds listed in rank order.	79
Table 4.5	Top ten issues/concerns faced in coastal areas.	80
Table 4.6	Key policies, plans or guidelines influencing coastal weed management.	80
Table 4.7	Examples of coastal weeds from South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.	88
Table 5.1	Buoyancy- no disturbance– seeds remaining afloat over the designated periods of 7,14 or 21 days.	106
Table 5.2	Buoyancy of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds with disturbance.	107
Table 5.3	Commencement of germination (days).	108
Table 5.4	Germination rate.	109
Table 5.5	Cumulative germination of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> seeds following (a minimum of) 19 days submersion in seawater.	110
Table 7.1	Floristic communities identified in the Coorong region by Oppermann (1999).	144



## List of Figures

Figure 2.1	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> on the Younghusband Peninsula.	10
Figure 2.2	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> 's vegetative spread and role in 'embryo' dune formation.	18
Figure 2.3	Location of the study area.	21
Figure 2.4	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 1 autumn (March) 2007.	23
Figure 2.5	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 2 autumn (March) 2007.	24
Figure 2.6	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 1 winter (July) 2007.	25
Figure 2.7	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 2 winter (July) 2007.	25
Figure 2.8	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 1 spring (October) 2007.	26
Figure 2.9	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 2 spring (October) 2007.	27
Figure 2.10	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 1 summer (January) 2008.	27
Figure 2.11	Vegetation composition, frequency and cover ( <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> only) of Transect 2 summer (January) 2008.	28
Figure 3.1	The spatial and temporal distribution of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> from herbarium records.	45
Figure 4.1	Organisational affiliation of survey respondents.	70
Figure 4.2	Description of survey respondents' work.	71
Figure 4.3	Respondents' State of residence.	72
Figure 4.4	Distribution of Sea wheat-grass according to survey respondents.	74
Figure 4.5	Respondents' opinions of Sea wheat-grass.	75
Figure 4.6	Should Sea wheat-grass undergo control?	78
Figure 5.1	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> inflorescence.	101
Figure 6.1 a,b	Location of the study area on the metropolitan Adelaide coast.	115
Figure 6.2	Sand sourced from south of the River Torrens outlet.	120
Figure 6.3	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> fragments in transported sand from south of the River Torrens Outlet.	121
Figure 6.4a	Sand deposited at the study site, view seaward.	122
Figure 6.4b	Sand deposited at the study site, view landward.	122
Figure 6.5	New fence being constructed seaward of existing drift fence used in this study.	123
Figure 6.6	Beach width, Section One, July 2006 - January 2007.	124
Figure 6.7 a-g	Vegetation colonisation, Section One, July 2006 – January 2007.	125
Figure 6.8	Beach width, Section Two, July 2006 - January 2007	127
Figure 6.9 a-g	Vegetation colonisation, Section Two, July 2006 – January 2007.	128
Figure 6.10	Beach width, Section Three, July 2006 - January 2007.	129
Figure 6.11 a-g	Vegetation colonisation, Section Three, July 2006 – January 2007.	130
Figure 6.12	Steep scarp remaining at the end of the study in January 2007.	132
Figure 6.13	Uprooted, desiccated plant in the study area.	133
Figure 6.14	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> rhizome fragment with development of multiple roots and shoots, July 2006.	135
Figure 6.15	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> rhizome fragment with root and shoot development, July 2006.	135

Figure 7.1	Survey sites located at 10 km intervals along the length of the Younghusband Peninsula.	146
Figure 7.2	Distance between the high tide line and first line of vegetation (unvegetated portion) of transects along the Younghusband Peninsula.	150
Figure 7.3	Diagrammatic representation of transects along Younghusband Peninsula.	151
Figure 7.4	Plant species occurring in the high exposure zone of each transect along the Younghusband Peninsula.	152
Figure 7.5	Similarity matrix of transects ('T') in the high exposure zone along the Younghusband Peninsula using the Sorensen Coefficient.	153
Figure 7.6	Dissimilarity matrix of transects ('T') in the high exposure zone along the Younghusband Peninsula using the Sorensen Coefficient.	154
Figure 7.7	Tendencies of association between <i>T. junceiforme</i> and other species recorded in each transect along the Younghusband Peninsula.	155
Figure 7.8	Tendencies of association between <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> and <i>Spinifex sericeus</i> in the high exposure zone.	156
Figure 7.9	Distribution of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> and <i>Spinifex sericeus</i> in the high exposure zone quadrats ( $n=10$ ) in each transect along the Younghusband Peninsula.	156
Figure 7.10	Presence of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> – all vegetated quadrats.	158
Figure 7.11	Variations in the mode of dune form/ <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonisation along the length of the peninsula.	159
Figure 7.12	In some locations along the peninsula <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> was absent from the foredune.	160
Figure 7.13	In some locations along the peninsula both <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> and the foredune appeared to be largely non existent.	160
Figure 7.14	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> incipient foredune displaying ramp morphology.	161
Figure 7.15	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> ramp formed on scarp fill amongst erosional dunes and an outcrop of aeolian-calcarene on the northern part of the peninsula.	162
Figure 7.16	Laterally extensive and continuous <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> dune near the River Murray mouth.	163
Figure 7.17	Laterally extensive and continuous <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> dune abutting former foredune.	163
Figure 7.18	Small scale low, broad mound-like dunes formed by <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> along the Younghusband Peninsula.	163
Figure 7.19	Seaward colonisation by <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> .	164
Figure 7.20	Inundation of <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> on the backbeach.	164
Figure 7.21	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> rhizomes exposed by erosion on the northern Younghusband Peninsula.	165
Figure 7.22	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonising across blowout entrance.	166
Figure 7.23	<i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> colonising either side of blowout entrance.	166
Figure 7.24	Hummocky <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> dune topography near the River Murray mouth, northern Younghusband Peninsula.	167
Figure 8.1	A STADI model of invasion for <i>Thinopyrum junceiforme</i> along the south eastern Australian coastline.	175

## Abstract

*Thinopyrum junceiforme* or Sea wheat-grass is a rhizomatous perennial grass native to Europe. In Australia, this invasive alien plant has colonised the coast in three south eastern states: Tasmania, Victoria, and South Australia. The very first specimen of *T. junceiforme* was collected from Victoria nearly 90 years ago, and was probably initially accidentally introduced via ballast. Sand stabilisation trials may have assisted in the spread of the plant locally, however, drift card and bottle studies indicate a number of potential pathways for the dispersal of the plant between the south eastern Australian states. *T. junceiforme* does not have the status of some introduced plants such as Marram grass, however, current awareness of the plant is greater than originally thought and it is predominantly perceived in a negative light due to its potential impacts on shorebirds, native vegetation and coastal geomorphology and beach-dune processes.

*Thinopyrum junceiforme* demonstrates the ability to disperse both by seed and by rhizome fragments. Its ability to delay germination while floating and the capacity of seeds to germinate well subsequent to prolonged immersion is interpreted as a significant advantage to *T. junceiforme*'s survival and spread. The presence of multi-noded rhizome fragments and seasonal conditions may influence the regenerative capacity of rhizomes, but ultimately catastrophic erosional events may affect its ability to establish on some parts of the coast. Beach replenishment activities have replicated the fragmentation process that facilitates dispersal and overcomes bud dormancy under natural conditions.

*Thinopyrum junceiforme* has become established along much of the length of the Younghusband Peninsula. The rapidity of its colonisation at approximately 18.571 ha/yr far exceeds the rate of Marram grass colonisation (1.875 ha/yr) on Stewart Island, New Zealand. By virtue of its presence this alien coastal grass has altered the vegetation composition of the peninsula, and the native grass *Spinifex sericeus* is no longer the primary coloniser along this part of the coast. *T. junceiforme* has also modified the dune environment by colonising pre-existing dunes as well as forming new dunes seaward of the established foredunes on the barrier. Consequently, *T. junceiforme* has impacted on the ecology and the geomorphology of the Younghusband Peninsula and may be classed as one of only a small group of invasive species designated as 'transformer' species.

## Declaration

I, Kristine Faye James, certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide.

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