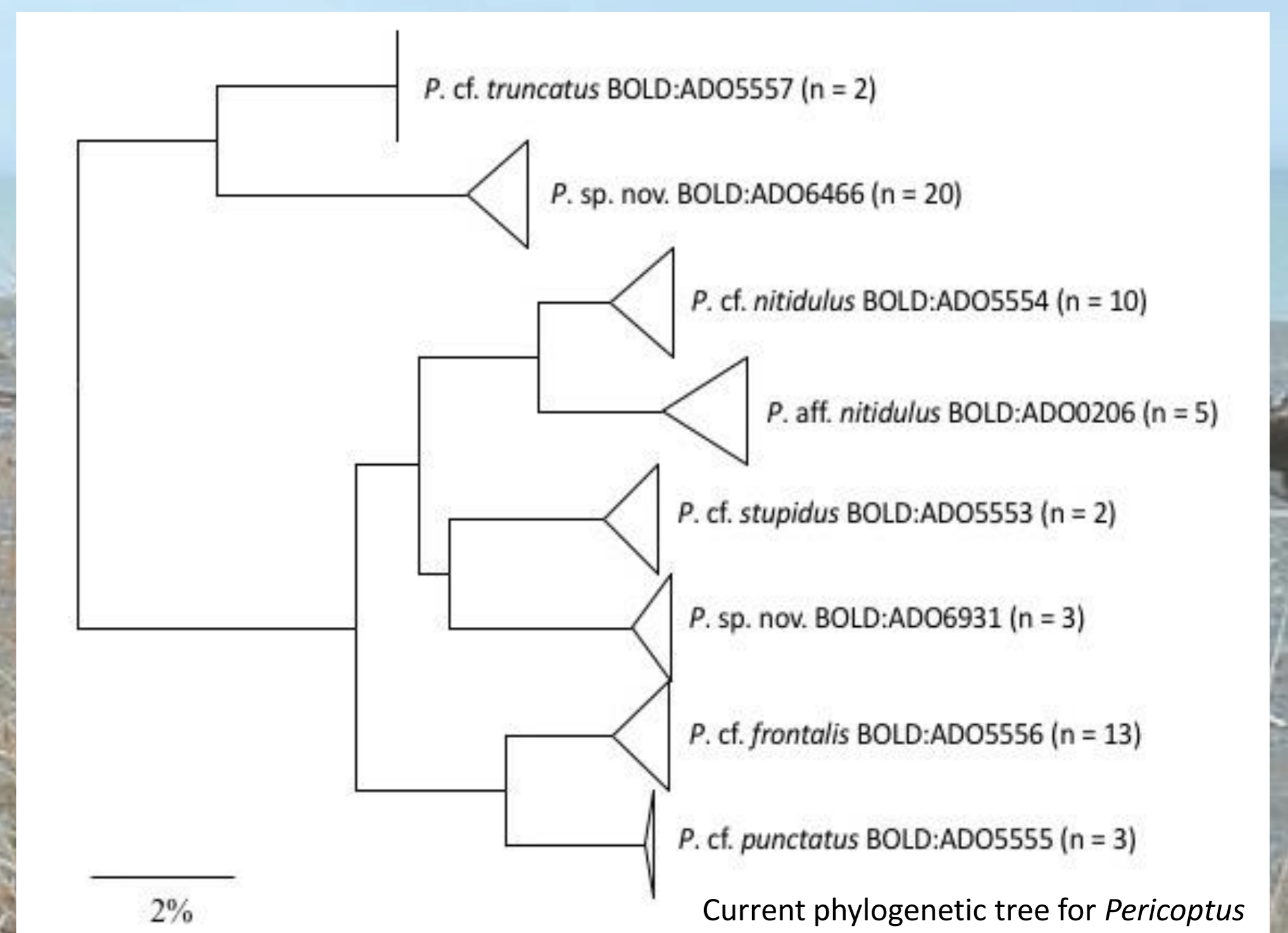
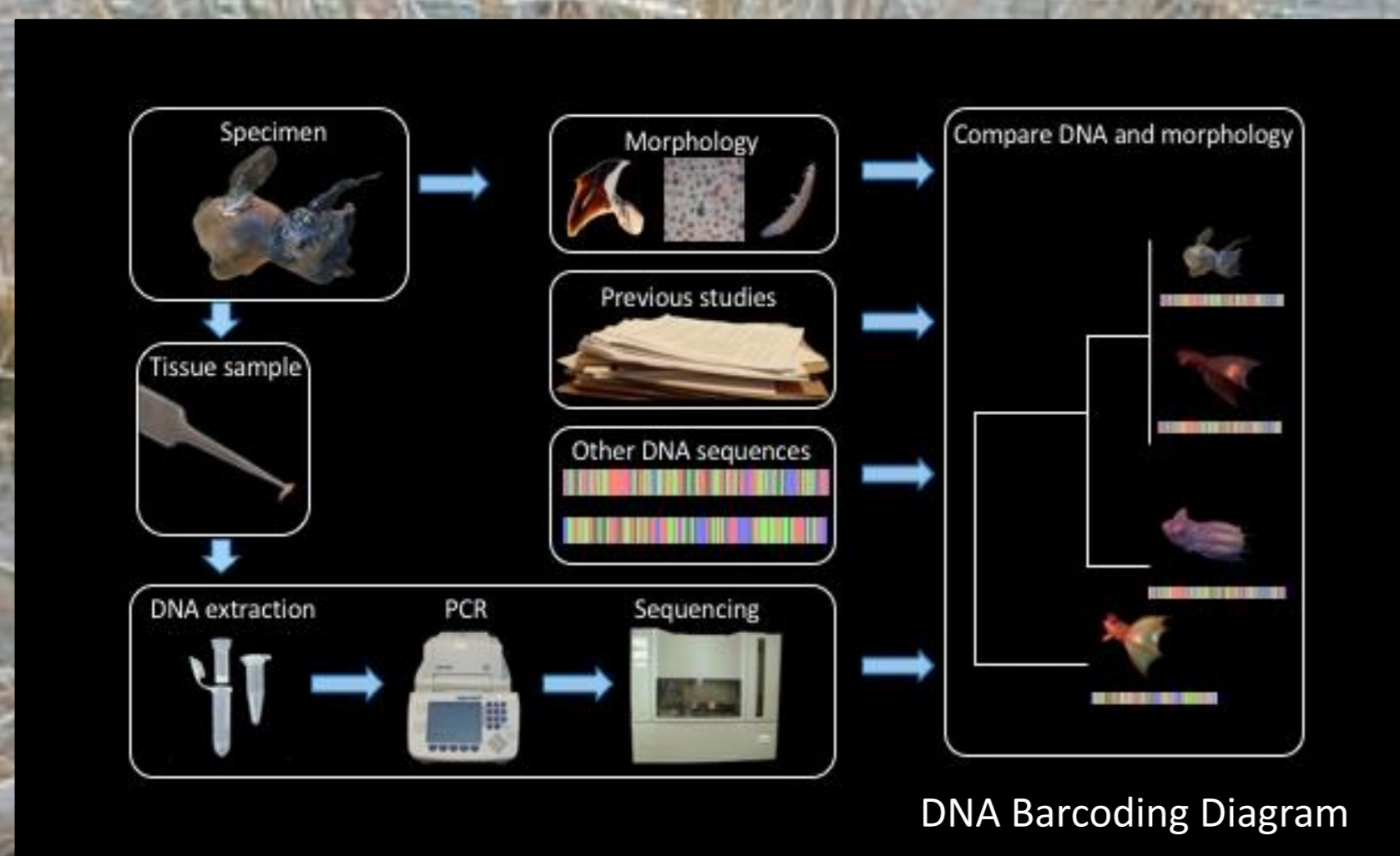


The Search for New Zealand's Scarab Beetles

Authors: Mitchell Baber, Heather Braid, & Hannah Buckley



- *Pericoptus* is a genus of dune dwelling scarab beetle native to New Zealand. Its members are nocturnal and are often found in damp areas beneath the sand: including the roots of sand dune plants (such as pīngao or spinifex) and under rotting driftwood. Adults tend to only be present during the months of November and December, while the larvae can be found all year round.
- There is little research on the taxonomy and ecology of *Pericoptus*. The number of species within the genus and their distribution is currently unknown, with only five having been taxonomically described in the scientific literature.
- The preliminary phylogeny of *Pericoptus* includes the species: *P. frontalis*, *p. stupidis*, *p. punctatus*, *p. truncatus*, and *p. nitidulus*.
- Over summer, we conducted a habitat comparison study at Kaitorete Spit to understand how three species of *Pericoptus* can co-exist on a single beach. We dug holes in close proximity to pīngao, driftwood, and bare ground. Samples collected from the respective micro-habitats will be genetically tested to see if there is correlation between the species and where they were found.
- The aim of our research is to completely map the phylogeny and distribution of *Pericoptus*. Specimens that are collected will be delineated through morphological and genetic analysis. By doing this, we can better understand how vulnerable each species across sand dune ecosystems and, as a result, better inform strategies for their conservation and management.
- We would like to collect samples of *Pericoptus* a wide range of sand dune locations in New Zealand as soon as possible, but we need help! If you are interested in collecting samples from your local beach in your spare time, let us know! We will give you all the information and equipment you need (including a pre-paid postal envelop slip for sending your samples to us).
- Acknowledgements: Funding and sampling permissions from the New Zealand Department of Conservation. Thanks to Dr Peter Johns for specimen collection and taxonomic advice.

Affiliation: School of Science, Auckland University of Technology.

