

Introduction

The Friends of Mana Island Inc. invite you to join with us in a project to establish a breeding population of yellow crowned parakeets (*Cyanoramphus auriceps*) on Mana Island.

Who We Are

The Friends of Mana Island Inc (FOMI) was established in 1999 as a non-profit organisation to support and assist the Department of Conservation (DOC) in restoring the natural and historical values of Mana Island. It is administered by an enthusiastic and dynamic Committee; several members of which have successfully managed a wide range of community projects, some in collaboration with business, local schools, other community groups, and sponsors. We would be happy to talk about some of these projects with you.

Since its inception, FOMI has organised and substantially funded the volunteer effort in planting 60,000 trees, and provided support for several other projects and activities, including the transfer of fairy prions to the island. It currently has approximately 260 members; including a significant number of families and groups.

The Project

The project will involve transferring 40 yellow-crowned parakeets from the Chetwode Islands, in the Marlborough Sounds, to Mana Island during 2003. The techniques used in this transfer have been developed during many bird re-introductions undertaken by DOC, including the transfer of this species to Long Island in 1999.

Birds will be captured by mist netting and held in a temporary aviary until the target number and gender balance is caught.

On the day of transfer, aviary birds will be caught and taken by helicopter to Mana Island. On arrival, birds will be released directly into Forest Valley, which has the only area of original forest on the island.

Some 200 nesting boxes, using non-treated hardwood timber, will need to be built and erected well in advance of the transfer, to allow weathering. FOMI have arranged for the Plimmerton School Technology Centre to construct the boxes as a school project; using a design successfully used on the Chathams in the transfer of a related species, the Forbes Parakeet.

Justification and Background

Mana Island is a 217 ha scientific reserve. Following the removal of farm stock in 1986, and the eradication of mice in 1989/90, Mana Island is free of all introduced mammals. It is the stronghold of the Cook Strait Giant Weta, Gold stripe gecko and McGregors Skink

as well as several rare and endangered plants. Several leading edge restoration projects, some of international importance.

One of the principal restoration goals for Mana Island is to introduce (or reintroduce) threatened and locally extinct indigenous species of the southern North Island that are not able to exist in the presence of mammals, and are likely to have occurred in coastal habitat in the Wellington region. So far, bird species transferred include the takahe, North Island robin, brown teal, diving petrel and fairy prion (last January).

Parakeets were part of the original Mana Island ecosystem. Reintroduction of parakeets will benefit Mana Island's long-term goal of restoring threatened species, restoring typical communities and restoring ecological processes of the island. The transfers will contribute to the Mana Island Ecological Restoration "key task" of reintroducing avian pollinators and seed dispensers.

Parakeets are an important part of the forest ecosystem. Although much of Mana is not forested, re-vegetation of the island is underway. The established plantings will provide plenty of food. In addition, parakeets are expected to exploit the super-abundance of exotic grass seed. These food sources are considered more than sufficient to support a viable population.

While both yellow-crowned and red-crowned parakeets are uncommon in the southern North Island, there is a secure and growing population of the latter on Kapiti Island. Yellow-crowned parakeets maintain a precarious foothold in the Tararua Ranges.

Transferring yellow-crowned parakeets now will allow a population to become established on Mana before the apparently more competitive red-crowned parakeets self-colonise from Kapiti Island about 22 km to the north.

Benefits of the Project

- Re-establishment of the yellow-crowned parakeet as a breeding species on Mana Island.
- Involvement of tangata whenua, commercial sponsors, local schools, volunteers and possibly community groups and the general public in an innovative conservation project.
- High public and media interest.

What We Can Offer You

We look forward to discussing with you how your company/organisation/ Trust can gain maximum benefit from its involvement in this project. Experience with other transfers to the island would suggest that the transfer of an attractive and endangered parakeet will also generate significant local and, probably, national media coverage. Some possibilities for adding extra value to you may include:

- Staff being given the opportunity to help with the installation of the nesting boxes.
- Invitations to key stakeholders to welcome the birds on arrival at Mana island.
- Complementary corporate membership of FOMI. This would give staff opportunity to help with a range of volunteer activities on the island; some of which involve overnight stays.
- A competition amongst your customers to name the birds.
- A display on the project and the island on your premises.