

From Mana Island's DOC Ranger, December 2016

Three months into rangering on Mana Island and I thought it was high time to report back on some of the details of Mana life that I'm privileged to see living on the island!

Aside from FOMI working bees and guided tours (achieving great work and introducing many New Zealanders to the island for the first time), I've been amazed how few casual visitors there are to the island, just a handful of kayakers and braver boaties.

There have been visits from the Hutt Valley Photography Club and recently a party of geochashers, and very exciting was Ngati Toa's first Taiaha Wananga on Mana in two centuries. It was great to hear the shouts of young Rangitahi practicing ancient martial arts on a site of such cultural significance to the iwi.

Like most places around the Wellington region, Mana was given a big jolt by November's earthquake, but luckily no damage was done (though three of us on the island spent the night up on high ground, opportunistically banding a few Diving Petrels). The floods that came the next day caused some slips and some impressive, if brief, flooding.

The intense rainfall took a toll on the Fluttering Shearwater colony which looks set to fledge fewer chicks than in recent years, though many eggs have hatched and chicks are growing quickly. Such a wet Spring has no doubt pleased the Pateke however, with the wetland still holding a lot of water and duckling broods looking very healthy.

All eight pairs of Takahe have attempted to breed. Sadly two pairs have failed already for reasons unknown, but five pairs currently have a chick, and one pair is still incubating.

This month a young Mana-bred male named Jamieson was flown south (via Air New Zealand) to join the Fiordland population at Burwood Bush, with a new wife already lined up. Good news came from Cape Sanctuary - another young Mana male named Brodie, who left Mana Island in August, has already successfully bred with a new mate and is raising a chick... a fast mover!

With so much hard work from FOMI and partners bearing fruit at the moment, and much more on the horizon, it feels a very exciting time to be on Mana Island!

Chris Bell, DOC Mana Island Ranger