**Pigeon Post February**

I think we can all agree, we’ve had a pretty decent summer so far. As with every summer on the island we have been busy with a range of species translocations and monitoring and catching up with visitors.

Another very successful Fairy Prion translocation was undertaken in January. As with last year, a hundred Prion Fledglings were choppered in from Takapourewa – Stephens Island. The hard work of the Friends of Mana volunteers and DOC staff was rewarded with the satisfaction of ensuring all 100 birds fledged out to sea following 10 days of intensive hand feeding.

Other artificially established sea bird populations have had another good season. 25 Fluttering shearwater chicks were banded before they too headed out to sea, to return in the coming years and add to the growing colonies.

The Cape Sanctuary in the Hawkes Bay sent another team down in early February to collect more Cook Strait Giant Weta. 50 weta were easily caught after dark as they grazed like miniature armoured sheep along the islands track network. It is great to see these rare beasts get back to the mainland. The ever growing network of the county’s ‘mainland islands’ makes this possible.

Not forgetting our beloved Takahe of course. We’ve got a couple of happy healthy chicks this season. We’ll be catching up with these in the coming weeks to band them, and round up last year’s juveniles to be sent away to other secure sites.

A new young pair was recently bought in from Southland to get some good genetics back into the Mana population, both seem happy enough leaving the bitter cold and snow of the deep south behind.

We are ever vigilant to the risk of pest incursion on the island impacting on our Native Taongo. Recently, a vessel out of Mana Marina had to beach itself on the northern side of the boulder spit, to avoid sinking at sea. Fortunately no one was injured. This occurred at high tide, enabling repairs to be made to the vessel as the tide receded and then refloated on the incoming later in the day. A good result for the skipper being able to recover his vessel, but also good for the island as it meant it wasn’t ashore overnight, reducing the risk of a rodent coming ashore. As with any incident like this, bait stations and traps were promptly set and monitored for the week following to ensure nothing had arrived. I was particularly happy that the vessel came ashore where it did – handy to the base, a vessel beached on the north coast would have been a different kettle of fish indeed.

With good numbers visiting the island in private boats through the festive season, I was pleased to see most leave their vessels offshore after dropping off passengers.

Enjoy the rest of the golden weather – although the recent rain was definitely appreciated as things were getting pretty crispy out here!!

Ka Kite,

The Islanders