



# FOMI Newsletter

October 2015

## FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 63

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua, 5247

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- Volunteer Opportunities
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- Sponsored by Adcold Refrigeration and Contracting

### President's Editorial

Hi

Well here we are again, typical October weather after a glorious early spring in September, back to the normal windy, wet, sunny, windy, cold, warm days. On looking back over previous years it is the same old, same old.

It is of course, the breeding season for the avions and they seem to be incredibly busy. I know that the kowhai have been prolific this year and the flax is now coming into flower as well, so I expect to see a number of inebriated tui and bellbird around.

FOMI have been busy too, as some of you will be aware. We now have regular working trips planned, 4 per year, as well as one off requirements such as the Gecko enclosure and monitoring. We are also active in Pukerua Bay in an area which is the last domain of the Whitaker Skink, monitoring predator traps and installing additional ones.

The increase in activity can be attributed to a number of factors, none the least of which is the reduction in manpower within DOC, the lowering of the priority of the Whitaker Skink project by DOC, the need to cope with maintenance on the Island, the increase in the number of projects we are involved in and the convenience of having a suitable charter boat since the demise of the dedicated Mana DOC boat. So far this year we have mounted 5 trips with a total of 64 volunteers, all managed very capably by Sue Chesterfield, Dale Shirliff and Lind Kerkmeester. In order to effectively cope with the wide range of work FOMI have purchased quite a variety of tools and equipment including many required to control some of the growth and provide light welling for the next stage of encouraging species trees to grow and increase the floral diversity now that the canopy is substantially in place. Our guidelines are embodied in the review of the ecological restoration plan published in 2010. The release of the forest gecko sponsored by Winstone Quarries was covered in the last Newsletter but the fence requires regular maintenance, and as from next year we will be responsible for the monitoring of these little critters. We also have another translocation of 100 Fairy Prion in January next year.

As you may have guessed we have an increasing responsibility and many opportunities for a number of projects on our Island which will require continuing input from fit and keen volunteers as well as increasing support from our membership.

You will have received this Newsletter and our email requests for volunteers because you are a FOMI member. You may like to spread the word around to your friends and neighbours to join and become a part of the future restoration and maintenance of Mana Island. You can join online at <http://www.manaisland.org.nz/join-us/>

Cheers

**Brian Paget**  
President.



## Volunteer Opportunities

With the increase in regular work parties and our commitment to the continuing restoration of the Island I thought it was timely to remind us all of the list of tasks ahead of us as suggested by Colin Miskelly in 2010 and see what progress we have made over the past 5 years. We have made some progress particularly over the past couple of years and with the financial assistance of OMV New Zealand Ltd for the Fairy Prion translocation of 100 chicks this year and another 100 planned for next January, and a grant from the Wellington Community Trust for the Floral Diversity Project Stage 1 and confirmation just received that they have sponsored Stage 2 as well. The change to arranging work trips leaving on a Friday late afternoon and returning on Sunday afternoon has meant a significant increase in volunteer input on the Island and a corresponding increase in the management, particularly by Sue. The 2 nights stay on Mana has highlighted a number of deficiencies in the accommodation and tools which we are putting to right with the help of some generous volunteer input and donations.



## 5. Summary of recommended tasks to continue the ecological restoration of Mana Island

1. Develop and maintain management partnerships with Ngāti Toa as tangata whenua.
2. Develop and maintain management partnerships with Friends of Mana Island Incorporated Society.
3. Continue suppression of priority weed species in all habitats (see Appendix 2).
4. Continue measures to minimise the risk of fire.
5. Carry out pest mammal surveillance, contingency and audit requirements as identified in the island biosecurity plan (Brown *et al.* 2004).
6. *Continue efforts to restore and attract burrow-nesting seabirds.*
7. *Develop and implement a restoration model for Waikoko wetland.*
8. *Increase the floral diversity of forests and wetlands through the introduction of eco-sourced plants (including threatened plants and tree ferns) into appropriate microhabitats.*
9. *Investigate methods to increase the diversity of invertebrate communities as forests mature.*
10. *Develop a threatened plant action plan.*
11. *Complete translocations of shore plover, whiteheads, bellbirds and rowi.*
12. *Monitor and confirm establishment of tūi and kererū, and maintain records of sightings of other vagrant and colonising species (e.g., kaka and red-crowned parakeets).*
13. *Assess the need for and practicality of further fairy prion chick transfers to Mana Island.*
14. *Restore and maintain the decoy gannet colony*
15. *Survey for banded rail and crakes around wetlands.*
16. *Seek support for translocation of Chatham Island snipe.*
17. *Develop more efficient methods to survey for green geckos.*
18. *Monitor and confirm establishment of Wellington green gecko and speckled skink, and any future reptile translocations.*
19. *Complete translocations for tuatara, Whitaker's skink and robust skink.*
20. *Monitor population spread and contact zones for McGregor's skink, spotted skink and speckled skink.*
21. *Assess the suitability of Waikoko wetland for the introduction of brown mudfish, and introduce if suitable.*
22. *Monitor and confirm establishment of Wellington speargrass weevils.*
23. *Translocate flax weevils on Mana to the vicinity of Waikoko wetland.*
24. *Develop interpretative methods and materials to ensure that visitors (both actual and virtual) gain an appreciation of ecological restoration and conservation management on Mana Island.*

## Fluttering Shearwater Report filed by Helen Gummer August 2015



### Conclusion

Fifty-five adult fluttering shearwaters have been identified in 2015 so far on Mana I.: 54 on this August monitoring trip; and, an additional (different) bird was found among the 25 or so birds handled on the April OSNZ Junior Field camp.

Notable fluttering shearwater captures/finds this year include:

- Two Mana-raised fluttering shearwater chicks caught as adults for the first time (one in April and one in August);
  - Another first-time adult recovery of a 2007 translocated chick (captured in both April and August);
- A new fluttering shearwater burrow at the Northern colony site (AB62) which was occupied by an adult that was last captured on the surface in the same area in March 2011 by Graeme Taylor. Quite possibly this bird is paired and may have been breeding elsewhere for some years at the Northern site. There are now five active fluttering shearwater burrows at the Northern colony, including a burrow (AB91) found by Colin Miskelly in October 2014.

The re-scheduling of the August 2015 monitoring trip a week earlier to accommodate boating and volunteer logistics was favourable in terms of moon phase and there were some good seabird weather conditions with strong wind and rain along with very dark nights, all improving the odds of birds visiting the colony. We were also able to catch some of the experienced breeders that we missed last year, birds that arrived earlier in the month and departed for the period prior to egg-laying before our delayed monitoring trip commenced last year (25 August 2014). However, a possible downside to the trip being brought forward this year is that we caught proportionally fewer birds that were actually considered to be unpaired (one or two), and no new first-time recoveries (except a Mana-raised chick). Past experience indicates that the floating birds and non-breeders are often caught a little later on, probably because they are not yet fixed to a breeding timetable. However, it might also be the case that we have recovered nearly all the translocated 2006–08 birds that have survived now, and that most birds are partnered.

A lack of further recoveries of 2008 translocated birds during this trip (now 7.5-year-olds) strongly indicates that the survival of the 2008 cohort of translocated birds was not as good as the 2007 cohort, i.e. post-fledging survival may have been compromised by conditions at sea.

We can now report a total of 65 fluttering shearwaters transferred to Mana I. in 2006–2008 are known to have survived with 57 birds recovered as adults on Mana I. and eight birds found on Matiu/ Somes I. (Table 1). On the whole, this 31% survival rate of all three translocated chick cohorts combined is extremely encouraging, with survival so far exceeding that found for translocation projects involving any other seabird species in NZ, with the exception of the Chatham Island taiko. The 27% return rate of birds to Mana I. is over double the overall return rate of 12% last reported for fluttering shearwaters translocated to Maud I., where there has been considerable variation between transfer year cohorts.

Since 2009, 62 fluttering shearwater adults have been handled on Mana I.—57 returned translocated birds, three immigrants, and two birds born on Mana I. Six returned translocated birds not captured this year so far were last captured in 2014 (3 birds), 2013 (2), and 2012 (1), and one immigrant of unknown age not captured this year was identified in 2014.

There is potential for there to be 25–30 breeding attempts by fluttering shearwater pairs this coming season. Last season (2014/15) there were at least 24 burrows of breeding status. A total of 20 chicks were banded at the end of the season (19 chicks banded on 22 December 2014 and 1 banded on 21 January 2015 by Helen, Sue Chesterfield and Graeme Taylor).

We will need to keep a close eye this season on breeding failures this year at South Point and whether any may be attributed to burrows flooding during heavy rain events. We will most likely need to replace the silted up 9-year-old burrow flooring in the breeding burrows after this breeding season to maximise breeding success in future years.

Photo 1  
Neil Fitzgerald  
Photo 2  
Colin Miskelly



## Volunteering is Hard Work and FUN



### Your Executive for the 2015/16 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Brian Bell, Vice President; Julie Harrison, Secretary; Dick Fernyhough, Treasurer and a Committee of Sue Chesterfield, Jason Christensen, Linda Kerkmeester, Dale Shirtliff, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Reina Solomon, (IWI representative) and co-opted Membership Officer, Darlene Adams.

To contact any of the above email them at [contactus@manaisland.org.nz](mailto:contactus@manaisland.org.nz)

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Hon. Solicitor: Roger Hayman, Hon: Auditor: Ian Hoare

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