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## President's Editorial

Hi

In my last newsletter I referred to the typical October weather and find that here we are in December and it seems to be the same old, same old stuff still. By now it, the weather, should have settled down but we seem to have alternating days of northerly and southerly conditions, all very troublesome when trying to arrange trips to Mana Island. The last of these for the year are due this weekend weather permitting. In the New Year we have the Fairy Prion translocation project of 100 chicks planned for release on 17th of January and we have 4 trips planned for February and March. For details and bookings refer to the next page.

We are coming up to the end of another financial year, December 31 for us, and it has been a successful year financially and also on the work front. We have to thank our generous sponsors for their support, but it is timely to thank our Executive, and in particular our Project Managers who have all put forward cogent proposals for consideration of sponsors and then carried out these efficiently and reported back to satisfy our obligations to them. In this time of shrinking government budgets and as a consequence increased competition for the sponsorship dollar we are indeed in a robust position to continue our work in the restoration of Mana Island and now increasingly the maintaining of it.

We would like in particular to thank our Sponsors for projects this year, namely OMV New Zealand Limited, Brother International and the Wellington Community Trust.

I wish you all a satisfying festive season and a successful 2016.

Cheers

**Brian Paget**

President.

## You would have to say that Gannets are slow learners, or is it us humanoids ?

In 1976 a large number of concrete gannet look a-likes were cast, painted and installed on the North West cliff top, and on the official opening day there were two real live birds seen checking out the proposed nesting site. But alas it was deemed to be inappropriate, so FOMI decided to refurbish the jaded and faded concrete replicas and relocated them to a new site on the North East corner of the Island in 2012.

Well believe or not in November this year this bird was observed at the site. What next, we wonder, was he/she taken in by the decoys or was it just checking out where the Xmas party was to take place. We are holding our breath, but it has been suggested that the Resene colour is not quite right for a mating bird! How can that be?



Above-1976



16-11-2015



## Volunteer Report from Dale

This is a report on the 21-22 Nov. working bee led by Linda and Dale (Sue had coordinated boat, volunteers, supplied food) 10 of us were involved after a few dropouts. All of us were over 50, except Jessie, a chirpy botany PhD student from Massey.

Leaving Mana Marina Sat. morning at 9am (high winds Friday prevented the planned departure). This meant the work party weren't 'tooled up' and ready to leave base until 11.35.

The priority work was dealing with the muehlenbeckia vines smothering patches of bush. A minimum team of 5 continued with this over the 2 days - chopping vines at shoulder level with hedge clippers, rolling back the vines and uncovering the lead vine stems, lopping and sawing these just above ground level and dosing the cut end with poison gel. This is hard physical work. Attention to process above is essential for success. It was good to see drooping vines/leaves later in the day - a sign we were having an effect.

Other tasks carried out -

- GPS recording and light welling of around 20 slower growing trees missed on an earlier trip
  - removal of vegetation around the woolshed walls
  - transferring 100s of flax seedlings to root trainers (a different hybrid to the ones being decimated by the flax weevils - hopefully when these mature and are planted out they will not be eaten by the weevils)
  - removal of a patch of senecio (the purple flowers seen along the motorway cuttings)
- removal of flowering tree lucerne

It was a harmonious group, as usual. Volunteers had a choice of jobs. Everyone had a great time, felt that they were well briefed and organised - I checked everyone out on the return trip. Everyone would like to return as time permitted for them.

Everyone pitched in and had something to share for the Sat night dinner - we finished this off for lunch Sunday.

The whole group did the complete island tour after we finished Sat afternoon. No gannets or signs this time. We spotted speargrass which had been nibbled but no weevils and carefully checked out the new fairy piron site. A lot of maintenance work is needed there to prepare for the translocation. The Dec banding/work group will do this.

## Summer Guided Day Trips to Mana Island

You can plan your summer trip to our Island in February and March.

Trips will Depart from Mana Marina at 0900 and return at 1600, we will provide a guide, you provide your own sustenance for the day together with suitable attire. More detailed information will be supplied when your booking has been confirmed or is available on our Web site.

The trips are limited to a total of 30 passengers, or a few more if there are children aboard.

The cost is \$45.00 per head which covers the cost of the boat charter and guide.

Payment can be made on the day in cash or cheque made out to FOMI or on line but be aware that trips may be cancelled if weather conditions are deemed to be unsafe.

The scheduled dates are all Saturdays, February 13th & 27th, and March 12th & 26th.

To book please email [contactus@manaisland.org.nz](mailto:contactus@manaisland.org.nz)





## Wednesday Wilderness Wanderers go off-shore to Mana by Bob Hodgson



Wednesday 11th November was yet another day of indifferent spring weather with several heavy rain squalls met as we motored south.

29 of us boarded the twin hulled ferry to Mana Island and most enjoyed the twenty minute, lumpy, crossing. We were joined on board by two Friends of Mana Island, Jason Christensen and Linda Kerkmeester, who were to be our guides for the day.

Once disembarked we made our way to the Woolshed Museum where the resident DOC Ranger Jeff, welcomed us and gave an initial briefing on the establishment of the Island as a Scientific Reserve (1987). Mana has a colourful history: having been inhabited and cultivated in pre-European times, then as a whaling station and source of ships' supplies, the location as a short lived lighthouse that, through confusion, caused two ship wrecks(!), as a private farm then as a quarantined government sheep breeding station. 28th September 1976 saw the first of the suspected scrapie outbreaks on the Island. The first was kept quiet. The affected sheep were killed and burned with the help of 10 tons of coal 80 tyres, 15 cord of pine, 58 bails of straw and 30 gal. of diesel. This was the amount of fuel estimated to burn 280 sheep.

Two years later a second possible outbreak led to the abandonment of the breeding program and the change of use for the Island which is now being restored to its presettlement state by large scale plantings. In addition the island has been cleared of possum, rats, mice etc. The mouse eradication program took three year and 5500 bait stations spread across the island every 50 meters. After the last mouse was caught the island was declared rodent free eighteen months latter. Mana was the largest Island to be cleared of mice in the world at the time. Before the control started at the back door of one of the houses, using a simple bucket trap they caught 204 mice in one night.

There are many such stories to be told, see [www.manaisland.org.nz](http://www.manaisland.org.nz), many of the stories were shared with us by our two guides as we tramped around the Island. The benched tracks were easy going, about one and a half metres wide and grassed, they had recently been mowed and made a welcome contrast to the muddy tracks recently "enjoyed" by the group. We had a pleasant lunch at the site of the lighthouse also the high point of the island at 122m, as we moved on we were hit by about fifteen minutes of heavy rain but then the weather cleared. We saw little of the birds restored to the island, for most of us this amounted to the distant sight of the heads of two takahe plus many sightings of kakariki. We were also briefed on the efforts being made to reintroduce the fairy penguin to the Island including the cliff-top burrows and the intensive feeding of the chicks brought in from elsewhere.

We spent almost six hours on Mana, mainly wandering the tracks a listening to our excellent guides. Not a tramp as we know them but a most enjoyable day trip.

Thanks to Trip Leaders Bev and Mark, our drivers especially Evan for driving the van. Reporter and plots Bob, Photos Maureen and Linda.



## MANA ISLAND FLORAL DIVERSITY PROJECT by Linda Kerkmeester

The following item has been extracted from our submission to the Wellington Community Fund for funding which was successful and provides for the next stage of this project.

The completion of the first stage of the floral diversity project and a subsequent field trip to the island has informed the second stage of the project. Although there has always been scope for this project to be complex and intensive, it is possible for FOMI to advance the second stage to provide useful floral diversity outcomes, progressing both research and achievable field tasks.

Lisa Clapcott and Linda Kerkmeester have reviewed the findings from the first stage and identified the following areas of work for the second stage. This has been put together for the FOMI committee meeting along with a detailed fee outline on which this funding application is based.

### Specific weed assessment and management recommendations

A volunteer field trip in early May 2015 was used as a pilot for 'lightwelling' of emerging canopy species. It identified increasing densities of Karaka that could threaten existing restoration planting and future floral diversity efforts. *Muehlenbeckia australis* and *Calystegia silvatica* were identified as potential ongoing threats and more information on their densities and distribution should be gained as part of the second stage research and ground-truthing. Contacts at DOC, Greater Wellington and district councils would be utilized as part of this work. Contact with Ngati Toa regarding the Karaka issue will need to occur either in the second or third stages, pending further discussion with FOMI and DOC.

### Waikoko Wetland hydrology

The first stage identified that the wetland is almost a project in itself and requires specific skills and more information on the hydrological performance of each part of the wetland complex. The second stage would follow up on the work done on the wetland since the culverts were originally installed by MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries) in 1978 and subsequently reworked by FOMI and Ducks Unlimited in 1998. It is proposed that Jason Christensen, who was involved in the 1998 construction, would accompany the botanical trip to make some assessment of the inlets/outlets, areas for silt removal, dumping/spreading and replanting. Colin and Matt would advise on appropriate wetland planting, including a possible boardwalk or controlled access track for maintenance and monitoring (of water levels/silt, planting and wildlife).

### Threatened Species

The first stage of the project identified that maintenance of the existing threatened species work on Mana is required before any new tasks or introductions are prioritised. Propagation of threatened species comes with inherent limitations and risks and it would be best to hold any new threatened species work until maintenance work and FOMI knowledge of existing species is complete. This pause will also allow time to see how the Mana Island nursery and ranger involvement pans out, if more common floral diversity species are to be propagated in the coming years. It is anticipated that a more extensive search of known threatened species sites and GPS recording will be undertaken in a field trip and during the botanical survey.

**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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