



February 2010

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 41

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

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- Payroll Giving
- Sniffing out Seabirds
- Update from Sue, Field Centre Supervisor
- Work Schedule 2010
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President's Editorial

Hi

It's a miserably wet Saturday morning (sound familiar) and, as usual, at this time of the year, I'm wondering what the year ahead will bring. There will always be changes, some of which will be unexpected. Some will be good and some will be not so good. However, we are not completely prisoners of fate. We can always, if we wish, influence our own futures, to a greater or lesser degree. It's the same with FOMI. We can either wait for things to happen or we can take the initiative and make the things we want to happen, happen.

Last year's accounts, lovingly and painstakingly crafted by our Treasurer, Barry Dent, are already with the Auditor and will be ready for presentation at our AGM at the Mana Cruising Club on 17 March. While these accounts reflect past decisions, they also indicate commitments to ongoing projects, some of which are fully funded (ie the shore plover transfers) and some of which, such as the Whitaker's skink project, are not. Commitments, such as these, represent a baseline for FOMI's future activities on the island as the Department and others rely on FOMI honouring its obligations. Everything else is discretionary.

After several years of grumbling and recent agitation by FOMI, Colin Miskelly from DOC is busy revising the Mana Island Ecological Restoration Plan, which, for the last decade or so, has guided what the Department, with the support of FOMI, Ngati Toa and the community, has done on Mana Island. This will provide both a strategic direction for the restoration of the island and from that, a work programme of projects and activities that FOMI may (or may not) be asked or choose to support. It is intended that FOMI, Ngati Toa and other major stakeholders to be consulted in the development of this important document.

I have my ideas what should be included in this revised plan. What are yours? Turn up to the AGM and let's hear them. Make a commitment now and put this event in your diary.

Colin Ryder
President

Annual General Meeting

The 2010 AGM for FOMI will be held on **Wednesday 17 March**, 7:30 pm at the Mana Cruising Club, Ngatitua Domain, Mana.

Agenda is the Annual Report and Accounts for the Year ending 31 December 2009, and the election of Officers. There are some vacancies on the Committee and if you would like to add your enthusiasm to an already established group of volunteers contact the committee on info@manaisland.org.nz.

The AGM will be followed by an illustrated talk by Bob Maysmor, the Senior Curator at Pataka Museum, who will give us an insight to his research into the History of Mana Island, the book and exhibition Pataka published/mounted last year.

MANA ISLAND NEEDS YOU

You have the opportunity to help support an exciting new project—the reintroduction of whiteheads and bellbirds to the island in March and April.

Your Committee is seeking up to \$4,000 from members and the local community to help defray the expenses of a transfer of up to 60 bellbirds and the same number of whiteheads from Kapiti Island. Both of these iconic little birds will be important to the ongoing restoration of Mana Island, which has relied so much on the efforts and support of people like you.

This is the first time that members and the community have been asked to contribute directly to a planned project on the island over the twenty very successful years of the restoration programme. The fact that we haven't needed to ask you previously reflects both the generous support of members, through their donations, and your Committee's success in raising funds elsewhere. The fact that we need to so now reflects our commitment to this project, as well as to a number of other important projects on the island.

Any donation, large or small, will be important to the success of this project and our ability to keep funding other work on our favourite island. Donations, which are tax-deductable, can be posted to the Friends of Mana Island, PO Box 54 101, Mana or direct credited to our bank account 15-3971-0004665-00. If you use direct credit, please enter your surname in the "reference" field and "bellbird" in the "particulars" field, so we can send you a receipt.

The Whitehead

The whitehead or pōpokotea is a North Island bird that can be found in both native and exotic forests. They are abundant on predator-free islands, including Kapiti and Little Barrier, but, although once widespread throughout the North

Island, they have disappeared from many former strongholds because of habitat loss and predator pressure.

They mainly eat spiders, moths, caterpillars and beetles which are gleaned from tree trunks, leaves and branches. They will also eat the fruits of native plants such as mahoe and matipo. Because they rarely feed on the forest floor, they will not compete for food on Mana Island with the already established North Island robin.



While feeding, they will often form mixed-species flocks with, kākāriki or silvereyes to catch the insects these birds dislodge as they feed.

Whiteheads build a nest in the forest canopy or lower shrubs. Young birds from earlier clutches often help raise chicks and help defend the nest from interlopers.

The whitehead is the main host to the long tailed cuckoo in the North Island, which lays its egg in the whitehead's nest to be raised by its hapless foster-parents.

They have special places in Maori culture and legend. Because it was regarded as a messenger between man and the gods, it was very sacred (tapu).

They have been very successfully

transferred to safe havens such as Tiritiri Matangi Island and the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary over the last twenty years and are capable to building up to large numbers very quickly when conditions are right.

The Bellbird

The bellbird or korimako, like the tūi, belongs to the honeyeater family. As such, it has a curved bill and a long tongue, frayed at the end like a brush, which is used to reach deeply into flowers and drink nectar. They feed on a mixture of nectar, fruit, and insects.

The bellbird is named for the bell-like quality of its song and when many birds sing at once, mostly during the dawn chorus and at dusk, the famous bell notes are impressive.

Bellbirds are unique to New Zealand, occurring on the three main islands, many offshore islands and also the Auckland Islands. Once common, they are almost completely absent on the mainland north of Hamilton, and are still rare in parts of Wellington, Wairarapa and much of inland Canterbury and Otago.

Bellbirds live in native forest and regenerating bush.

It is important that it is transplanted to Mana Island before its larger, more aggressive competitor, the tui, can dominate the same ecological niche.





Payroll giving – the painless way to support the Friends of Mana Island

You are now able to give to charities of your choice from your pay and receive an instant tax credit. Ask your employer how you can regularly give to the Friends of Mana Island - our Charity Number is CC27290. It's a really easy way to support your favourite charity, and to make things even better, Mr English pays one-third of it. See www.ird.govt.nz for more details.

Contact our Treasurer, Barry Dent, at barry.dent@bdg.co.nz if you need our bank account details so your employer can make direct credits.

While FOMI is very successful in raising funding for many of its projects, it relies on the support from its members for a whole range of others. Over the last 18 months alone, we have committed our internal funds towards:

The Whitaker's skink project

A remote monitoring system for the island's water supply

Drafting and publication of a report on the fluttering shearwater project

Urgent replacement of componentry for one of the seabird acoustic attraction systems

A solar panel to enable research into the role of seabirds in restoring island ecosystems

An oral history of the island.

The installation of an acoustic attraction system for the white faced storm petrel which will trial satellite monitoring and severe conditions framing.

You must admit this is quite an impressive list. Your committee would like to be able to support similar projects as they arise, often at very short notice, in the future, so your support, either through one-off donations or through payroll giving, is vital.

Sniffing Out Seabirds

Last November, FOMI funded a search by Steve Sawyer, of Ecoworks New Zealand, and his "petrel dog" Tui for burrows occupied by fluttering shearwaters, fairy prions and diving petrels on Mana Island. It was hoped that the trained nose of Tui (a certified and successful conservation dog) would sniff out previously undiscovered active burrows.

While Tui was very efficient at finding burrows that petrels had been visiting, most of these proved to be known sites. The most interesting finds were a third active fluttering shearwater burrow (containing an unbanded bird), and four additional diving petrel burrows containing chicks. It should be remembered that fluttering shearwaters from the chick translocations, also funded by FOMI, aren't expected to return yet.

I think the DOC might be a little disappointed with the small number of fairy prions found, but it has been postulated that this season might be a poor one for seabirds generally, as has happened previously during similar "El Nino" climate events. Colin Miskelly of DOC has also informally suggested that it could be worthwhile getting the team back in a year or so, to test that theory and to get a more reliable "business as usual" appreciation of what is happening.

Interestingly, there were no signs of any white-faced storm petrels. It appears as if the two birds found on the island in 2000 and 2001 were "one-offs" and not part of a local colony. This means installing a sound system later this year to attract these birds, is still worthwhile proceeding with. (More about this project in a future Newsletter).

By the way, have a look at Ecoworks' website at www.ecoworks.co.nz. They're doing some really good work. Of particular interest to those with an involvement with Mana Island, is their gannet project at Young Nick's Head.



Updates from Sue Caldwell, Field Centre Supervisor

Planting Program:

We have 5,500 trees to plant this year.

Volunteers are required for Monday to Wednesday trips during May and June.

To Register for these email planting@manaisland.org.nz or manaisfc@doc.govt.nz for a place.

Shore plover:

Another 12 birds have been released and more planned for February and March. There have been 9 birds fledged this year from breeding pairs.

Takahe:

The takahe have bred well this year with 9 chicks some of whom are earmarked for transfer to Burwood and on to the Murchison. Some adults are scheduled for transfer to Maud and Kapiti.

Volunteers

The schedule for this year has been released and includes 6 planned trips for groups of 6 for planting, Threatened Plant trips are planned for up to 6 in April, June, August, October and December. For further details contact Juliawhite@paradise.net.nz.

Maintenance trips are also planned for July and October, up to 6, for information or bookings contact manaisfc@doc.govt.nz.

Weed Control

This group is fully subscribed for the year but you never know so contact manaisfc@doc.govt.nz to check for vacancies

Tuis

It may be too late to establish Bell-birds as it would appear that Tuis have self introduced themselves and produced fledglings.

Members Day(s)

Brian has organised 4 open days last year all of which were cancelled . We are having one last shot at this for this Summer (wot) and there are still vacancies for Saturday and Sunday 6 & 7 March 2020. If you have an urge to take your chances with the weather and join us for a guided tour then email brian@caduceus.co.nz. The cost is \$45 per head, BYO sustenance for the day.

A Reminder of the Pataka Exhibition, which FOMI has in storage and Bob Maysmor Curated. Come along and hear his story at the AGM 17 March 2020



Your Committee this year is :

Colin Ryder President, Brian Paget Vice President, Darlene Adams Secretary, Barry Dent Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Jason Christensen, Ian Cooksley (DoC Rep), Tama Coker (Iwi Rep), and Allan Sheppard.

One vacancy exists. Do you feel like volunteering your energy and wisdom?

To contact any of the above email them at contactus@manaisland.org.nz

For a colour version of this Newsletter download one from our web site or request delivery by email, www.manaisland.org.nz

Editor: Brian Paget

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