



FOMI Newsletter

September 2011

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 45

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

Special points of interest:

- Presidents report to AGM
- Gannet restoration
- Brother International sponsorship
- Shore Plover
- Island Report
- Volunteers
- Committee

The Editor offers an apology for the lack of production of the Newsletter since February, so this is catch-up issue includes information from the March AGM which you may have attended.

Extracts from the President's Address to the AGM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the great honour to present the twelfth Annual Report for the Friends of Mana Island Incorporated (or "FOMI" for short).

Probably the most important steps taken this year, both in terms of our relationship with the Department and the restoration of the natural values of Mana Island, were the drafting of a revised Ecological Restoration Plan for the island and the subsequent agreement on four major workstreams where the Friends could focus much of their attention. Basically, we agreed that, in addition to finishing off the existing projects such as the shoreplover and the whitaker's skink translocations and "business as usual", we would focus on four strategic activities.

Firstly, the redevelopment of the island to one whose ecology is dominated by seabirds. It is only recently that the international scientific community is beginning to appreciate how important seabirds are to the long term restoration of islands and Mana is leading the way.

Secondly, increasing the floral diversity of the island to add depth and complexity to the results of all that hard work a lot of people have put in over the past two decades or so.

Thirdly, developing a restoration model for the wetland. Very little is known about the state of this important habitat and, so far, little has been done to enable it to reach its potential.

Lastly, we will assist the Department to monitor the success or otherwise of the restoration initiatives to date. While it's great to be involved in translocations for example, the initial project is only the first step. At the end of the day, we must be able to demonstrate the success or otherwise of the various initiatives and the effect they are having on the island's ecology.

While these work programmes will demand most of our attention and resources, we will also consider supporting any urgent or opportunistic one-off projects, such as introducing tuatara or kiwi, at the Department's request.

While we spent much of our time pondering our future, that doesn't mean to say that we neglected our other projects.

Another five thousand plants in the ground and another successful year with the shoreplover project. Another year and a bit more effort and funding will see the conclusion of the latter project – this has been a mammoth effort over the past years and will hopefully lead to the establishment of a viable self-sustaining population of what is perhaps the world's rarest shorebird on the island.continued

Presidential address continued from Page 1

2010 also saw the first major project funded entirely by FOMI itself, its members and the wider local community- the whitehead and bellbird transfers from Kapiti Island. I am pleased to report that these have been extremely successful with both species happily breeding during their first season in their new home. Bellbirds, in particular, have proved notoriously difficult to translocate elsewhere. Unfortunately for us, horrendously bad weather at the end of the capture project lead to a horrendously high cost over-run because DOC had to helicopter the birds between the two islands. Fortunately for us, we had the financial strength to more than cover it and my little panic attack eased when I saw the Treasurer's quiet smile.

The installation of another seabird sound system in December was very exciting for me personally. Firstly, because the target species, the white-faced storm petrel, has the potential to colonise the plateau. If the project is successful, the species could be the major driver of ecological processes on Mana. Secondly, a yet to be fitted satellite monitoring and control system could well revolutionise seabird conservation worldwide. It has already generated much interest from my seabird conservation contacts internationally. This project was partially funded by a Hutt Mana Charitable Trust grant in 2009.

So, another year of achievements. We can sometimes forget that these achievements occur only because of the efforts and contributions of a multitude of people – DOC scientists, DOC management and conservancy staff, Ngati Toa, volunteers, sponsors, funders, FOMI members, your committee, amateur experts like Dennis – a whole host of people. Most of them work quietly and diligently far from the public's view, neither expecting nor, unfortunately, receiving any overt recognition or gestures of appreciation. Well, you know who you are and I thank you. We are all part of the Mana team and we all need each other.

I have reviewed the past year and given you a glimpse into the future. However, there are other forces at work which could well profoundly affect FOMI and its relationship with DOC. It is my belief that DOC's cash and people are being stretched and stretched again. Whereas, in the past DOC has set the agenda and the pace of what's happened in Mana, FOMI may have to take more of a lead from now on. Opportunity or threat? I'm not sure, but if I'm right, watch this space.

Colin Ryder President



Brother International (NZ) Ltd

The sales Team from our Sponsors planting endangered species to enhance the Shore Plover habitat, a hard days work.



Proposal for a Gannet restoration project August 2011

By Brian Bell

As many of you will be aware that since the concrete Gannet colony were refurbished in the summer of 2008 it has fallen into disrepair.

The following are excerpts of Brian Bell's report to the FOMI Committee in August ;

Current Status

Over time the existing gannet site, which is located about mid-way along the west coast of the island, has become overgrown with grass and muehlenbeckia (Photo 1), the decoy gannets largely covered (Photo 2) and the sound system fallen into disrepair (Photo 9-10). While the site has been recently sprayed the growth is thick and lush.



Restoration?

At the request of the FOMI Committee Brian Bell was given the task surveying the Island and making recommendations on reviving the gannet project (FOMI Minutes, June 2011). Email contact was initiated with the Mana Ranger, Sue Caldwell and other interested parties including Colin Miskelly, Graeme Taylor, Peter Simpson, Steve Cress, Steve Sawyer, Rob Stone, Jason Christensen and Colin Ryder. This correspondence provided useful background information on the factors that are conducive to a successful gannetry and resulted in agreement for a survey to go ahead.

Potential new site

The area most promising appears to be between Red-bill Gully and Tauhinu Valley on the north east corner of the island. More specifically there is an area between two knolls that are about 40 metres apart right on the north east corner, just back from the cliff face (Photo 16). This area forms a slight saddle which is reasonably flat to undulating between the knolls and is exposed to both north west and south east winds. Being more exposed than the present gannet site there is much less vegetation as it is quite wind swept from both directions. There is easy access from the main track across a flat area with an existing side track already partially formed in the right direction. There would be a good public viewing area approaching from the west and most significantly the site would be able to be observed from the mainland (Photo 13). All-in-all this site seems to have the physical requirements identified by Gummer (2003) and others for a gannetry (see below). Whether the birds see it the same way would only be determined over time.

Recommendations

That: DoC and FOMI jointly decide whether to endorse the new site, if necessary after a site visit

- If endorsed then a budget and timeline be drawn up by FOMI and approved by DoC to
 - prepare the site and access to it
 - remove the decoys from their present positions
 - refurbish the decoys
 - translocate the decoys to their new positions
 - install a new sound system with solar battery recharging
 - spray paint new artificial guano around the birds

FOMI prepare a funding proposal and submit to potential funding agencies
Once funding is approved DoC and FOMI jointly implement the project.



Brother International NZ Ltd Sponsorship

FOMI are pleased to advise that they have entered into a sponsorship agreement with Brother International NZ Ltd for a period of 3 years. The sponsorship funding comes from their Brother Earth Environmental Policy. Their first involvement was for 6 of their staff, Sean Wilson, Glenys Scott, Manuel Efraraimo, Rodrigo Martinez, Justin Billie and Trasy Fahle to assist in planting some of our endangered plant species around the boat ramp to enhance the Shore Plover nesting site in May. Their Financial contribution this year was an impressive \$7,485.00 Following lunch they experienced the walk around the Island and viewed the extensive planting of the past 20 years and sites of interest.

You can find more information about their program and our involvement on their web site <http://www.brother.com/en/eco/biodiversity/index.htm>

Shore Plover

You may be aware of the fact that for some time now the Shore Plover, some 30 of them, have been visiting the mainland and occupying quite an extensive area around the Plimmerton Fire Station. DoC and their recovery group have shown concern at this trend, as have FOMI and their sponsors who have invested a substantial sum and volunteer effort in establishing a breeding colony on the Island. These highly endangered birds are at risk on the mainland site, from predators including cats and dogs and of course human activity. The birds are so small and cute and difficult to see. The recovery Group have taken some steps to minimise the risks, and the Island reports some indication of nesting behaviour there which is a hopeful sign. Sue reports that there are 18 present on Mana and are prospecting for nests.



Island Report

Apart from the note above on the Shore Plover Sue advises that 2 juvenile Takahe were transferred to Motutapu Island, Hauraki Gulf last month and the current population is 35 birds including 12 breeding pairs/groups about to nest.

Sue also reports regular sightings of whiteheads and unbanded bellbirds.

Volunteer Opportunities

The next planned trips for volunteers are set down for **Threatened Plants** is Saturday/Sunday 8-9 October, and for **Maintenance Trip**, Monday/Wednesday 21-23 November, limited to 6 and an overnight stay. Preference is given to experienced FOMI Members and all trips are subject to weather and minimum numbers. For Threatened Plant bookings contact info@manaisland.org.nz and for Maintenance email manaisfc@doc.govt.nz or telephone Brian on 021523444.

Breaking News

FOMI will receive \$850 for Z Mana (ex Shell) voted on by their customers last month. We came a sad last in competition with Mary Potter, Bellyful and the Coastguard.

Steps are being taken to arrange open day trips for members early next year, watch this space.

Your Committee for 2011 is:

Colin Ryder President, (4784391), Brian Paget Vice President, (2338411) Darlene Adams Secretary, Barry Dent Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Jason Christensen, (Linda Kerkmeester as alternate for Jason), Allan Sheppard and Irene Swadling, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Tama Coker (Iwi Rep), and to contact any of the above email them at contactus@manaisland.org.nz

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Editor: Brian Paget

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