



May 2012

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 47

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

Special points of interest:

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- Potted News
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Committee

President's Editorial

Hi

It is some time since the last newsletter, December 2011 to be precise.

You may well ask why, and the short answer is the 7 year itch.

All organisations go through periods of change, and if you are fortunate to be outside of the Public Service, it only manifests itself every 7 years, or multiples thereof. FOMI has entered into the 14th year, and not without some trauma. 2011 saw a restructuring within DoC, a number of changes of not only personnel but also policy, which manifested itself into frustration within FOMI as projects were put on hold or deferred until resources became available. This inevitably resulted in tensions and a break down in communications between the Department and FOMI.

A meeting was convened late last year to identify the issues and to, where possible, resolve them so that a Partnership of 13 years could continue to survive and hopefully flourish in an environment of significant change. That meeting achieved those objectives.

Regrettably the solution did not meet the approval of all those within FOMI, and as a result the core management all resigned at the AGM in March.

It has to be said that these changes were influenced by a number of contributing factors, including the changes in circumstances of the individuals involved and their belief that their energies and vision would be better directed to more promising and rewarding fields of endeavour.

It is, therefore, with substantial regret that the resignation of Colin Ryder, Darlene Adams, Barry Dent and Allan Sheppard were accepted.

Colin was the founding President of FOMI and has served many terms in that role. His contribution to the restoration of Mana Island has been huge, and this was recognised by his elevation to the first Honorary Member of FOMI. His legacy will remain in the form of many projects and an amazing amount of funding for which he instigated and extracted over 13 years.

Both Darlene and Barry fulfilled the roles of Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the past 7 years (another itch?) and will be tough shoes to fill.

The make up of the new Committee you will find on the last page of this Newsletter.

As the incoming President (again) it seems to me necessary to state the obvious.

We live in a world of change, at every level, and that rate of change is ever increasing. FOMI are faced with many challenges, another DoC restructure, Sue & Frank moving to Stephens Island, Government expenditure diminishing, the economy, the increasing competition for reduced funding in the environmental area, the scarcity and loss of expertise in restoration.

Mana Island is no exception and will have fight for funding and resources for every project either in hand or in the future. We have reached the stage where watching trees grow can be very frustrating but incredibly rewarding for those who can remember what Mana looked like 20 years ago. The rate of growth accelerates very year.

Mana Island is a very special off shore Island, and for endangered species a very important one. With diminishing resources and a seemingly ever increasing estate to manage, DoC will need all the help they can get, and partnerships such as ours have to be nurtured and respected.

We intend to continue to earn our respect.

We look forward to a fruitful and satisfying year, join us and enjoy the fruits of our labour.

Brian Paget, President

Presidents Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

This will be my last report to the FOMI membership. I had always intended to stand down as President because of other commitments and health issues and I have recently been persuaded to resign from the Committee as well.

Before writing this report, I had a quick look at what I wrote last year. In my final paragraph, I stated that the looming restructuring of DOC may well materially affect the nature of the relationship between the Department and FOMI. I posed the question, "threat or opportunity?"

Unfortunately, events in 2011 have indicated that the structural changes taking place within the Department, and the personal and professional pressures they have imposed on staff, have stretched the relationship almost to breaking point.

I don't want to discuss these issues in detail as I have alluded to them in a previous newsletter, and quite frankly, I am still angry, but I have concluded that I am part of the problem and my active involvement with FOMI will cease forthwith. I wish the incoming Committee well in putting the relationship onto a more positive and productive footing.

Overall, 2011 was a bad year for Mana Island. Most of the shore plovers flew off never to return, DOC discovered a rat on the island, and the planned bellbird translocation from Kapiti was deferred for a year because one to Zealandia was given priority. No progress was made on the four new major FOMI work-streams I mentioned last year.

Despite these disappointments, there were some positive developments. FOMI continued to fund the Whitakers skink project (in my opinion, probably the most important species project FOMI has been involved with), there is a long term sponsorship arrangement in place with Brother International, and Brian Bell from the Committee has made good progress with a project to resurrect the concrete gannet colony at what we hope is a more suitable site.

As always, none of our major projects would have proceeded without the unstinting support of the philanthropic agencies and our members. This year, we have appreciated the support of the Community Trust of Wellington, the Mana Community Grants Foundation and the Infinity Foundation. I am aware that recent times have also been difficult for these bodies and that they have had to decline many deserving applications. That fact that our projects continue to be funded in this environment reflects well on the Friends. I would urge the incoming Committee not to take these relationships for granted.

Despite the difficulties and frustrations over the past 12 months, the Committee has worked well together. I have to say that my colleagues have had to deal with an increasingly grumpy, and at times, exhausted, Chair and I wish to apologise to them for that.

My time is done and while I would have loved to have gone out feeling happier about my contribution to FOMI and the island, that can't be helped. People move on and so will I.

Three other Committee members are also resigning. Alan Sheppard has made valuable contributions on the ground (where it really counts) during his four years on the Committee. Darlene has been the perfect Secretary (good-humoured and efficient) and I will really miss her at the personal level. And every year, our Auditor has commented positively on the great job Barry Dent has done as Treasurer.

I am still optimistic about the organisation and the island but, in the short term, at least, it will be hard work. Goodbye and good luck.

I hereby move the adoption of the President's report.

Colin Ryder
President

Fluttering shearwater identities revealed



We are excited to report that a total of 16 fluttering shearwaters transferred to Mana I. between 2006 and 2008 have now been recovered as adults!

Of great interest is the fact that not all recaptures have been made on Mana, but that two birds have been discovered visiting the new artificial colony site on Mātū-Somes in Wellington Harbour! This has fuelled speculation that the populations may intermingle in future, and that perhaps fluttering shearwaters are not as strongly site-fixed as some other species! However, the fact that the sound system there plays similar calls to those broadcast on Mana may explain why our birds were attracted in to the site.

How many chicks from each transfer year have been recaptured?

Of four 2005/06 chicks recaptured to date: two recoveries were in South Point burrows (Helen Gummer) and one at the Northern Colony breeding burrow on Mana (Colin Miskelly). One recovery was on Mātū-Somes (Shane Cotter).

Of twelve 2006/07 chicks recaptured: ten recoveries were at South Point (nine in burrows; one under a speaker) (Helen Gummer); and, one on the surface at the Northern Colony site on Mana (Graeme Taylor). One recovery was also on Mātū-Somes (Shane Cotter).

Seventeen fluttering shearwater adults have now been identified on Mana; the 14 birds transferred there as chicks, and also three immigrants of unknown age and origin that were unbanded at capture, and are now banded thanks to Graeme and Colin. One of these immigrant adults has since emigrated to Mātū-Somes! With a total of seven Mana-bred fluttering shearwater chicks banded this season, the colony is well on the way to establishing. We suspect there has also been an influx of 2008 chicks arriving on the island in spring, as many different burrows were activated for the first time. We hope to identify these birds this winter when they have settled in their chosen burrows.

What condition were our returning chicks in when they fledged?

All but two of the recovered chicks fledged from Mana at, or over 380 g, reflecting closely the recommendations provided by Bell et al. (2005) from the Maud I. translocation project, that chicks should ideally fledge at weights greater than 387 g to improve their chances of survival and return. The two lighter chicks that had fledged at 365 g and 335 g had relatively smaller wings than the others and were therefore smaller individuals in general. In addition, all but two birds had spent longer than 19 days on Mana prior to fledging; again this reflects the Bell's recommendations that chicks have an improved chance of returning if they are kept at the release site for longer than 18 days.

Chicks had emerged from burrows to explore on the surface on Mana for between 3 and 11 nights before fledging. All the 2007 chicks had either completed wing growth at time of fledging, or wings had slowed right down to a rate of <1 mm/day.

How did intensive post-transfer management at the release site effect chick survival?

Of interest in terms of management at the release site is that five of the recovered chicks are considered to have had their first emergence potentially delayed (overall emergence period reduced) because we delayed blockade gate removal to ensure chicks carried enough weight to survive if they disappeared, while still trying to allow enough time for each to explore on the surface. We now know that this strategy does not appear to be detrimental to the chicks.

Also of interest is the fact that one of the returned birds was a fledgling of concern because its excrement was particularly green on the day prior to fledging. Our seabird experts were wondering if there may be an issue with chicks fed for long periods on the sardine and soy oil diet. It is good news indeed that the observed 'symptom' has not led to a compromise in the bird's survival, and that we now have confirmation that the diet is suitable for hand-feeding chicks of this species at least up to 32 days from fledging.

How old are our birds breeding at?

After the shearwater activity first noted at South Point burrows 99 and 100 in 2008, the next burrows at South Point to be activated by flutterers (6 and 7) were in March 2010. A 2005/06 and a 2006/07 chick have since been recovered at these burrows, and it is highly likely that the 2005/06 bird first activated them—this bird would have been 4 years old in the 2009/10 season. This fits with Bell et al. (2005) observations on Maud I.; here, the earliest recorded breeding age was 5 years, and they considered that birds were likely to first return to the colony 1 year prior to that (i.e. at 4 years of age). We know also, that our first breeding pair of fluttering shearwaters (at the Northern Colony site in 2010/11) contained a 2005/06 bird.

How important is this chick return information?

All this data will be really useful in the translocation project currently underway on Mātū-Somes. Once again, the work of FOMI is proving valuable in terms of setting the bench-mark for other projects around the country.



Helen Gummer

Potted News

Sue and Frank left Mana Island early in May to take up a post on Stephens Island, an even more remote and secluded existence. We wish the both well and thank Sue in particular for her support of FOMI over the past 5 years.

Paul, PJ, Ranger and Eric Stone, seconded, are currently holding the fort until such time as a replacement Ranger is appointed.

Helen Gummer, see her report over the page is planning on carrying out a survey of the Fluttering Shearwater nesting sites in August sponsored by FOMI.

Brother International NZ Ltd enjoyed an absolutely brilliant day, weather wise, on Mana on Friday May 4, and after a walk around the island carried out a clean up of the beach down to the hole in the rock. Brother provide us with funding annually to support the sea bird projects and in particular the Shore Plover.

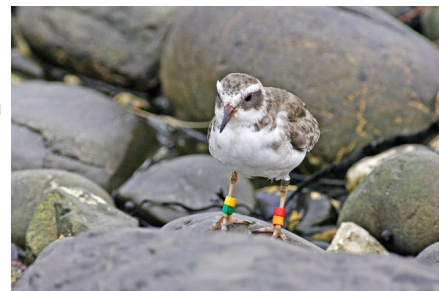


Gannets, of the concrete kind, are to be relocated to a new and hopefully more attractive site, this year. Brian Bell has managed this project.

Bellbirds translocation is scheduled for July to top up the numbers on Mana, Jason is managing that project.

Bio diversity, a project to identify both species and locations for suitable planting to enhance the major planting taken place over the past 20 years, Linda is managing that project.

Shore Plover are still a worry. After the rat predation which has set the project back, a recent release has seen some more resident birds, but again they have been recently seen frequenting the Fire Station beach at Plimmerton.



Kiwi Rowi, are to be introduced to Mana Island in June, 20 in total and split evenly between the sexes. This is great news as it is some time since there was Kiwi on the Island.

Volunteer Opportunities

Regrettably there have been DoC Staff changes on the Island which has meant that the Volunteer work Schedules have been put on hold until such time as a new appointment has been made, and more importantly, a boat skipper is available to provide transport.

In the past we have prepared a schedule for a year to cover off Nursery Work, Planting, Weeding, Threatened Plant planting and Maintenance as well as general maintenance. These trips have been for 1 or 2 overnight stays.

Once voluntary work opportunities become available they will be published in a Newsletter which is available on our web site.

To make a booking for these work trips email info@manaisland.org.nz or telephone 04 2338411

Your Committee for the 2012 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen Vice President; Irene Swadling, Secretary; Ian Hoare Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Linda Kirkmeester, Dale Shirtliff, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), an IWI representative yet to be appointed.

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

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