



July 2013

## FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 52

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua, 5247

### Special points of interest:

- Editorial
- Storm damage
- Volunteers
- Flax Weevils
- Fairy Prion
- Committee

### President's Editorial

Hi

Well that was quite a storm and a wet which hit us last month. Interesting to note the debate on whether it was better or worse than the Wahine Storm. It really doesn't matter, does it, with the amount of damage sustained we have to be thankful that this one had no deaths attached, well human ones any way. The number of trees felled, power lines down, slips, overflowing drains, disrupted roads and failed sea walls are all enough to remind us that nature is what it is, a force to be aware of and mitigated against, but unlikely to be controlled. All this, of course, relates to our experience in the lower North Island, spare a thought for the mountains of snow which fell in the South and the impact that has had on the stock farmed down there and some of our native species.

Of course our Island was not exempt and a brief outline of some of the impact is covered elsewhere in this issue.

Storms, of course have been happening elsewhere, and I don't mean off shore. The political storms rage on, in the national and local political arena, as well as in the public service. Frankly I am not too fussed about the lone rangers, Winston and Peter, (how come they share that name?) who are both allowed to punch above their weight on ridiculously small voter support.

I am somewhat more interested in the debate on how many local Authorities should govern us and at what cost, both in \$ terms and in the human cost. It does seem inevitable that there will be change, and in my view there should be. We have too many Territorial Authorities for a relatively small population, and many duplicated services, which given economies of scale should bring reductions in costs. How many and where are the questions, not when.

A down side I perceive is that in our City, and now I am talking parochially of Porirua, it is difficult not to rub shoulders with our Councillors and Regional representatives, who have all been very supportive of Mana Island. Our current Mayor Nick, and past Mayor Jenny, have both shown keen interest in the progress over the past 20 years. I was pleased to be invited to meet with Nick Leggett and we, both Brians, from your Committee had a fruitful meeting to discuss progress, access, support, the future including tourism and flight corridors.

So much for the positive, it is disappointing to know that whilst the DOC Island Staff have had their positions confirmed, effectively the combined manpower on Mana and Kapiti has been reduced to one ranger on each and the concept of servicing both Islands with a single boat has been confirmed. As to other staff, including specialists, support and management some have yet to be confirmed or positions applied for. Let's hope that all the incredibly skilled and devoted staff are not lost to the conservation world. It will be the end of July before the full impact on DOC will be clear.

Inevitably this has meant a hiatus in the planning of work on the Island and volunteer opportunities. Fortunately we do have 4 significant projects which we are working on in the interim which at this stage require minimal DOC input.

I trust you have a warm winter.

**Brian Paget,**  
President

## Storm damage

Jeff, the Ranger, reports that the macrocarpas on the landing area, the Shaggery, were both felled and there was significant wind damage around the tracks including another couple of macrocarpas sitting across Weta and Astins valleys. On the plus side is that some of the windfalls have created light wells for planting canopy species and there are plenty of self seedings to fill the holes. It also means that we don't have to justify cutting them down.



## New Zealand Birds Online

The digital encyclopaedia of New Zealand birds

You may have been aware of the fact that Colin Miskelly, Curator of Terrestrial Invertebrates at Te Papa since 2010, took on the challenge to Project Manage and Edit this project which was launched last month.

“The intended audience for the website was anyone with an interest in New Zealand birds, from novice to professional. We made an early decision to use crowd-sourcing for the main types of content, namely written texts and digital images. Funding was obtained early in 2011, and the project was underway. Recognised experts on many New Zealand bird species were contacted later in 2011 and invited to contribute texts. Each author was provided with sample texts, a template and instructions, to ensure a consistent style. Concurrent with this, the web design company [Signify](#) was contracted to prepare a pre-live website to receive texts, images, sound files and other content. This was populated with a comprehensive database of the names, conservation status and distribution of all 457 species of New Zealand birds, to provide a framework for the crowd-sourced content.”

It is a fantastic achievement with great images and sound bites. If you want to indulge yourself for an hour or two a visit to the site is well worth it.

**[WWW.NZBirdsOnline.org.nz](http://WWW.NZBirdsOnline.org.nz)**

### Volunteers Needed

FOMI have a need for volunteers to fill the following positions:

**Secretary** a position which requires arranging Committee Meetings and recording minutes

**Web Master** (or Mistress) capable of maintaining our web site and providing input to it's upgrade

**Mechanical Engineer** to survey our Caravan to ready it for the next burrowing seabird release schedule for January 2015

If you have an interest email [FOMI@manaisland.org.nz](mailto:FOMI@manaisland.org.nz) in the first instance or discuss with a Committee Member.



## Flax Weevil Translocation in 2004

In the last Newsletter reference was made to the Flax Weevil and the impact it was having on the Flax on Mana Island. A number of visitors to Mana since 2004 have asked why they were transferred so I reprint some of the information prepared by DOC in 2004 proposing the transfer of 80 from Maud Island which you may find interesting.

**Species to be transferred**-Flax Weevil (*Anagotus fairburni*); Threat status: not threatened. 1

**Need and Appropriateness** - The highly modified ecosystem of Mana Island is thought to have caused the extinction of an unknown number of large invertebrate species formerly found on the island. A major predator, the mouse, was in plague numbers for many years, and this undoubtedly had catastrophic impacts on large, palatable invertebrate species. With the eradication of mice and the restoration of a variety of habitats, it is becoming more appropriate to introduce species likely to have been eradicated in the past.

Large weevils were part of the original Mana Island ecosystem. Reintroduction of weevils will benefit Mana Island's long-term goal of restoring threatened species, restoring typical communities and restoring ecological processes of the island. The transfers will contribute to the Mana Island Ecological Restoration.

**Context**- It is part of the Mana Island Ecological Restoration Plan. The transfer will contribute to the Mana Island Restoration task, reintroduce a diversity of invertebrates. It also provides an opportunity to demonstrate that island restoration involves more than eradicating mammals, planting trees and translocating birds.

**Conservation Outcome**- To establish a self-sustaining population of flax weevil on Mana Island

**Potential Sources**- Marlborough Sounds; Maud Island, Stephens Island, Te Kakaho Island and D'Urville Island. A population is also found in the higher altitude Tararua Ranges.

Miskelly (1999) recommended sourcing flax weevils from Maud Island because the island is accessible, flax weevils are very abundant there, and the climatic conditions are similar to Mana Island (cf. high altitude populations in the Tararua Ranges). The population of weevils on Maud Island is high and its predator-free status will mean the source population is unlikely to be affected by the removal of some weevils.

**Preferred Source** - The Marlborough Sounds islands are the closest, most ecologically appropriate and has an ecosystem most similar to Mana Island. Weevils are likely to be best adapted and able to cope with the new release site. Maud is preferred because of the large population already on the island, there will be minimal impact to the population with the removal of 150 animals over 3 years.

**Ecological Requirements**- Although much of Mana Island is not forested, re-vegetation of the island is underway. The established flax plantings will provide food for weevils. These food sources are considered sufficient to support a viable population.

Many of the flax planting on Mana Island are connected through a variety of flax corridors which will allow dispersal to a variety of sites on the island. Some human transfers within the island may be appropriate in future years to assist dispersal.

The flax weevil (*Anagotus fairburni*) is a large flightless weevil was once widespread throughout New Zealand but is now found predominantly on rodent-free islands. The flax weevil is host-specific on wharariki (*Phormium cookianum*) and harakeke (*P. tenax*), and was classified as Category C by Molloy & Davis (1994). Flax weevils still occur on wharariki at high altitude sites in the Tararua Ranges (Ian Cooksley *pers. comm.*), but are thought to have been eradicated from mainland coastal habitats in eastern Cook Strait. "



Photo Brian Paget



Photo Dave Hansford



## Planning for the next round of Fairy Prion Translocations, Brian Bell, Project Manager

FOMI is now starting the planning for the next round of fairy prion translocations from Stephens Island (Takapourewa) to Mana Island. FOMI will be project managing this in conjunction with DoC and Iwi (Ngati Toa and Ngati Koata) under a sponsorship deal with the oil exploration company OMV.

The primary objective of encouraging the establishment of a fairy prion colony on Mana is to increase and improving nutrient cycling on the island.

Actual translocations are scheduled for January 2015 and 2016 with 100 chicks in each year. Key people are Colin Miskelly, Helen Gummer and Barry Dent, all of whom were involved in the 2002 – 2004 translocations. While the earlier translocations were successful in many respects, this round is needed to ensure the critical number of birds nest so that the colony gets well established and grows. There are currently around five breeding pairs who frequent Mana.

Our main tasks and timeline over the next year or so are:

### Winter/Spring 2013:

- Finalising double-chamber artificial burrow design (a.s.a.p.) and installing a prototype this winter
- Choosing (pegging out) the exact location for the new fairy prion burrow site. This is likely to involve a site visit to discuss options in relation to terrain (steepness of slopes and associated safety and stability aspects), existing vegetation, sound system, and current known active fairy prion and diving petrel burrows
- Discussing the current sound system - quality of sound, are replacement parts required? Translocation proposal drafting begins.

### Summer/Autumn 2013/14:

- Check prototype burrow condition; and install the next updated version if necessary
- Construct the number of required artificial burrows on agreement of final design. Translocation proposal reviewed and submitted.

### Winter 2014:

- Organise a burrow installation field trip for early winter (June-July) preferably before diving petrels are incubating; this would be at least one full w/e with six fit and experienced volunteers
- Organise chick collection trip logistics
- Start organising chick-feeding team requirements  
Stock take of existing release site equipment; start purchasing required equipment.

### Spring 2014:

Finalise field teams (chick collection from Stephen's and chick-feeding on Mana).

Check out Te Papa's website for all you need to know about fairy prions including breeding timing and duration (<http://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/fairy-prion>).



Photos by David Cornick

### Your Committee for the 2013/14 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen Vice President; Dick Fernyhough, Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Linda Kerkmeester, Dale Shirliff, Irene Swadling, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Reina Solomon, (IWI representative ) and a 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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