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FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 53

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua, 5247

Special points of interest:

- Editorial
- Obituary, Vince Waanders
- Fluttering Shearwater
- School Trip
- Committee

President's Editorial

Hi

Here we are, Spring has sprung, after an incredibly warm August, it is way ahead of itself. You may wonder where the birdies is, but there is no question that on the mainland they have risen and have commenced their breeding cycles in large numbers which bodes well for the season, provided they can hang on in the current spate of gales. I have been impressed by the kowhai this year and the number of Tui on the Camborne walkway are incredibly vociferous, and their flights seem to be more like drunken jet pilots.

On to more serious topics, that of what and where is DOC at the moment. It seems that the whole process of a review and reorganisation has dragged on and on and is still not resolved, as promised a month or two ago. This must be disheartening for those who have conservation at heart, as it has effectively stopped any communication and cooperation with the many conservation groups such as ours, until they have sorted out their structure. This is particularly worrying given that the supposed priority is to have increased community and sponsorship involvement in the conservation area. As I write we have still an unclear picture of the areas of responsibilities within DOC for this region and I understand that despite redundancies and changes there are still some 200 vacancies unfilled.

It makes things very difficult to plan the work required and the obligations we have to our sponsors and members to see progress and results of their investment. Whilst your Committee have made huge progress in the planning of current projects we need now to move to the implementation stages, and without DOC input and commitment to our partnership we will be under severe pressure to perform. Let's hope that the position will improve over the forthcoming month.

I did touch briefly on politics in the last Newsletter and with local body elections coming up shortly I would commend you to seek out and support those candidates who are committed to supporting environmental issues in your area.

You may have noted that we invited interest in some voluntary positions in our last Newsletter and I am pleased to report that we have been successful in fulfilling those. In particular we welcome Julie Harrison to the Committee as Secretary. We have also embarked on an update of our Web site which will permit a much improved ability to maintain and add to the content. This should go live in the next month, and any contributions to the content would be welcome.

Brian Paget,
President

Helen and Dale at work on the Fluttering Shearwater site on Mana Island, August 2013, see page 3 for report.



Vince Waanders—dedicated conservationist—died 18 August 2013



Vince had incredible motivation for life and enormous passion for conservation. He was fit, fearless, and only in his early forties when death came from natural causes. It seems unbelievable.

Vince grew up in Pukerua Bay, so Mana Island would have been a familiar landmark to him. Cycling to his earlier electronics job in Paremata, he will have seen the island most days. Did he then anticipate his huge contribution to its restoration in later years?

Vince's induction into conservation was in the mid-2000s when he met Fergus Wheeler, working on the Nga Uruora restoration project on Kapiti Coast. Vince became involved in the Paekakariki–Pukerua Bay railway escarpment project, first volunteering on working bees and bait station 'runs'. Later he was employed in the weed control team, his first big step away from relying on electronics skills to earn a living.

On a Mana Island planting trip in winter 2007, Vince greatly impressed then DOC ranger Grant Timlin with his capability, attitude and humility. In no time, he was signed up as the island's weed contractor, taking on essential tasks that are the backbone to rebuilding ecosystems. He spot-sprayed thousands of plots in preparation for planting, documenting his weed control work electronically with precision. He planted thousands of trees. He helped re-roof the work-sheds, and even made the wooden cabinet for the island's visitor book in the Kiosk.

On Mana, Vince first glimpsed into the world of seabirds. Outside weeding hours, he became intrigued by activity at the FOMI caravan at South Point where volunteers hand-fed the 2008 translocated fluttering shearwater chicks until they fledged. Without hesitation, Vince grabbed the first opportunity to become a chick-feeder. Right from the start, he showed great skill as a 'natural' bird handler. Reg Cotter soon took him on a nocturnal visit to Mana's sooty shearwater colony; Vince's enthusiasm encouraged Reg to invite him on the little blue penguin project on Matiu/Somes Island later that year. Fuelled by interest and curiosity, Vince even discovered a previously unknown diving petrel colony on Mana while weeding!

Friendly, reliable and conscientious, Vince became a sought-after field-worker on a range of bird projects, from the Hauraki Gulf down to the Subantarctic. His gentle bird-handling and effortless hand-feeding technique made him highly recommended for seabird translocations, particularly in remote locations like Chatham Islands. Never overwhelmed by any task, he used his initiative and practical skills to solve many problems, usually offering a one-word guarantee "Done!" before he'd even started. He worked around the clock, arranging any time off work (e.g. stoat control, captive species management) to volunteer on bird projects (surveys, tagging projects etc.), leaving one island to travel to the next. Absorbing everything he could along the way, Vince was fast becoming an important member of the ornithological community, ready to take on project and expedition leadership roles.

Parents Rob and Liesbeth Waanders, and brother Eric will be very proud of Vince's many achievements, and should be credited for shaping him into the kind and caring soul he was, 'walking the talk', living and breathing conservation in a way that inspired and mightily impressed us all.

Vince disappeared as unassumingly as he appeared in our lives. None of us were prepared for his departure. I doubt he would have bargained on such a well-attended affectionate send-off and celebration of his life at Whenua Tapu Crematorium. In keeping with his preferred low profile, Vince's plain coffin lay beneath a sea of native ferns and foliage – and a small bunch of daffodils from Mana Island.

Helen Gummer

Fluttering shearwater monitoring and burrow maintenance trip—Mana Island, 22–30 August 2013

Helen Gummer



Objectives

1. To identify fluttering shearwater adults visiting two artificial colony sites on Mana Island at the start of the 2013/14 breeding season, in order to:
 - Assess return rates of birds translocated there in 2006–2008;
 - Determine if new immigrants have been attracted into the sites.
2. To undertake pre-breeding season burrow and colony site maintenance.

Conclusion

A total of 51 adults fluttering shearwaters (24 pairings and three other birds) were identified on Mana I. during this August 2013 monitoring trip. This compares to 36 birds identified last year August 2012 (12 pairs and 6 singles). We can now report that 27% of chicks successfully fledging from Mana I. following translocation have now been recovered as adults (i.e. are known to have survived), and 24% of successfully fledging translocated chicks have returned to Mana I. The six chicks originally translocated to Mana I. and found as adults on Mātū/Somes I. are continuing to visit Mātū/Somes on a regular basis (Shane Cotter pers. comm. 2013). I had expected to recover more 2008 birds during this trip; however, it is possible they are visiting the island, as indicated by burrow sign, but not as regularly as birds that are looking set to breed this season, i.e. they did not visit during our monitoring period.

The survival rate of translocated chicks is extremely encouraging, with survival so far exceeding that found for translocation projects involving diving petrels, fairy prions, and the small gadfly petrels—Chatham and Pycroft's petrel. An overall return rate of 12% was reported for fluttering shearwaters translocated to Maud I., with considerable variation between transfer year cohorts, but this may have subsequently increased. The percentage of chicks recovered on Mana I. from the 2008 translocated cohorts will almost certainly still rise, given that some of the 2007 chicks were only picked up for the first time this year, i.e. there is likely to be another influx of 2008 birds this season and these will be picked up in 2014.

Last season (2012/13) there were 18 burrows of breeding status. One of these may have had 2 eggs laid in it, although this was never actually confirmed. A total of 14 chicks were banded in early 2013 (13 chicks banded by Helen on 3 January 2013, and a late-reared chick was banded by Graeme Taylor on 22 January 2013).

We could expect up to 27 breeding attempts by fluttering shearwater pairs this coming season if the 24 pairings confirmed in August lay, and if the three single birds in burrows 4, 75/89 and 97/98/101 find mates over the next month or two. There is also a small chance that some other burrows showing signs of visitation, where no birds were captured during this monitoring trip, attain breeding status later in the season.

Six or seven nights still seems to be an effective period of time to catch the majority of birds because there is a reasonable chance of encountering some suitable seabird weather conditions over this period. This period also fits in with the boating schedule and allows enough time for burrow and colony site maintenance.



This is an extract from a report by Helen Gummer who has been contracted by FOMI to monitor the progress of the translocations of Fluttering Shearwater in 2006, 2007 & 2008. For further information on Flutterers go to <http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz>



Plimmerton School Classes Travel to Mana Island

Story and Photographs by Dale Shirliff

Classes from the year 5 and 6 Hongoeka Syndicate have been travelling to Mana, each odd year for around 18 years. Children, their parents and the teachers have planted trees, gathered in the protection tubes from around plants and cleaned the litter off the beach. When classes visited this year the activities included cleaning up the beach, weeding at the gannet site, baiting and setting up tracking tunnels and identifying the creatures that enter the tunnels.

Ranger Jeff, his wife Alicia and two sons Finn and Brodie welcomed the 5 classes. Jeff gave an update on recent events such as the capture of Takahe to attach transmitters. The children received a short history of the island, learned what animals they could expect to see and a few important rules. There was a chance for questions too. Jeff explained their activity and the kids enthusiastically carried this out.

Classes then walked the Tirohanga Track, stopping in at the Gannet site, the light-house site, completed the Southern Track and then departed. These were memorable experiences for all concerned.

As a member of the FOMI committee and as a past teacher of the school it was my privilege to assist with trip coordination, support the teachers and help guiding around the island.

The school has been very fortunate to have the services of Eliot Falconer and his crew who provided transport on his boat, from the old Seacat wharf. Elliot's boat, Predator, is ex Stewart Island and handles the tricky seas around Mana very well. A ramp runs off the bow to deliver passengers directly onto the gravel shore, removing the need to moor and dinghy passengers in. Eliot plans to make his boat available to other schools to visit Mana.

Trips took place between 13 and 19 August with landings around 9.30am and departures around 2pm.



Your Committee for the 2013/14 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen, Vice President; Julie Harrison, Secretary, 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

