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President's Editorial

Hi

What a fantastic early spring we have had, above average sunshine and rain and a below average wind, ideal conditions for growth of our trees and a promise of a great breeding season for all our animals and birdlife on the Island. Today, of course, it is blowing a gale and snowing down South, just to remind us that this is the windy season.

We have, over the past 3 months, managed a couple of trips to Mana Island, one was a Sponsors trip and the other a Hui with the DOC Partnerships Team to discuss the way forward under the new structure.

Our Sponsors, OMV NZ Ltd, had a fairly small team so we topped the trip up with a number of our members and provided Jason & Dale as guides for the day. Amongst those on the trip was Alan Wilde who responded to Jason's suggestion to provide us with some feedback and thoughts for the future. I hope Alan does not mind but his email reads as follows:

"Hello Darlene, My name is Alan Wilde my wife Shelagh and I visited Mana Island on the Friday trip 18th July, 7am start. It was great to have the opportunity to see the Island again, and to catch up on what has been going on there, Jason Christiansen asked us to make any comments or suggestions that we might have.

I have the impression DOC wants to move along now and make the Island more accessible to the public, is this right? A thought I had on this topic was to enlist the help of Friends of Mana Volunteers, to escort parties around the Island so as to relieve the pressure on a few of you having to arrange everything. I would envisage suitable volunteers going through a short training course in the history of the island, and the development that has taken place. Then arrange through a roster for two or three volunteers to be available once a month throughout the year, to accompany visitors to the Island. It would generate a regular source of revenue for the ferry service, and publicity and revenue for you to maintain and upgrade the facilities on the Island. At present there are lots of people who would like to visit the Island, but do not know who to contact, or how to go about it. I am sure if asked friends of Mana could easily make up parties of like minded people who would love the opportunity to visit the island just as they visit Kapiti. I thought some seats at the top of the island would allow visitors the chance to sit a while, and take in some of the million dollar views out over Cook Strait. A map for everyone visiting the island would be appreciated I am sure, Displays (glass panels) in the museum would benefit from a cloth cover or something similar, to keep the glass clean and allow the contents to be read. Also some lighting if possible. We had a great day Darlene, and wish you well with progress on the island. Looking forward to taking our family for a visit when it is possible."

My reply to him was:

"Thanks for your comments and I am pleased that you enjoyed your day out. The Committee have, over the past few years, arranged for trips to Mana for our Friends, Sponsors and groups such as Forest & Bird and Tramping Clubs, and have always provided a guide or two for those trips.

It is only in very recent times that we have had access to a suitable boat with walk on walk off access, and we work very closely with the boat owner and DOC to provide the best possible experience for visitors.

The reality is that with the recent restructure of DOC their ability to provide services over and above their obligations to maintain the Island and the endangered species on it has meant that we, FOMI have a more important role. The Committee recognise this and are taking practical steps to provide training for guides and suitable interpretation material for what is anticipated to be an increasing number of visitors. The owner of the boats used in the transport at the moment recognises that a commercial charter service is not viable at this time, and is focussed on school trips and one off charters for groups such as ours but we are working closely with him with the possibility of providing an interpretation centre and bio security facility.

Editorial Continued

Hopefully as time rolls on we will get closer to providing a commercially viable service, and it is true to say that DOC are supportive of this but lack the resources to assist to any great degree. As with a number of issues DOC are leaning towards collaboration with sponsors and public support to achieve what used to be their core functions. To this end we are undertaking another release of Fairy Prion over the next 2 years and a review of the bio-diversity on the Island, both with the assistance of Sponsors which we have arranged.

As you can see we have, over the past 14 years, contributed a substantial amount of volunteer resource and sponsorship for projects on Mana Island and are committed to the future of our Island."

This prompted me to think that we, the Committee, are not doing as well as we might in the area of communications as all Alan's comments have been in the forefront of the Committees mind, as well as our role in providing funding and support for the conservation projects on the Island. I am not sure how we can best do this, my initial thoughts are to enlarge our web site to provide more chat and opportunity for exchange of dialogue and even publishing our minutes so those who have an interest can follow the decisions we make, although this may not give access to all the background information pertaining to them. The principle reason for the Hui with DOC was to better define our role and for DOC to produce some guidelines which would allow FOMI to act more independently and minimise the dependency on their input. There are, of course, areas of expertise in the Department which is not only world class but essential to the conservation of the species and environment of Mana Island, but they do lack the resources they once had and have substantially more domain to watch over. Whatever we can do to assist, we will, and providing some degree of control and facilities for the increasing demand for access safely is an objective we have. Hopefully we will have some clarity on these issues and our dreams in the near future, in the meantime we progress project by project, and attracting sponsorship as well as membership subscriptions and a modest income from arranging trips to Mana Island more frequently. An exciting future awaits.

Cheers
Brian

We would welcome your feedback and comments to FOMI@Manaisland.org.nz

Brief Notes

Takahe

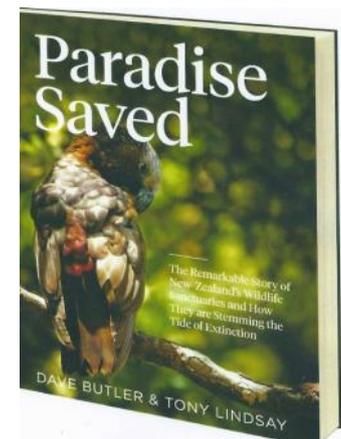
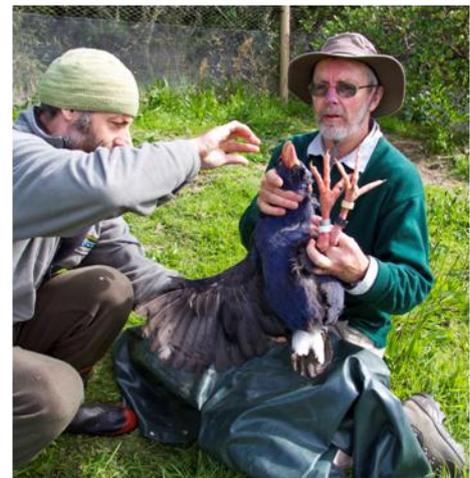
Jeff and Dale prepare Uncle Arthur for his injection. Arthur is an old but grumpy Takahe and as you can see those feet pack a real punch, not unlike the Kiwi.

Shore Plover

We reported in the last Newsletter that a decision had been made to transfer the 5 remaining Shore Plover to Mt Bruce and consequently 4 of the 5 have been transferred, the last one has proved to be somewhat more reluctant and wary, and is occasionally seen on Mana Island and the Plimmerton site behind the Fire Station, no doubt looking for company.

Paradise Saved

Many of you took advantage of the special offer to purchase this book at a reduced price and we have distributed 33 of them. The book covers some 130 sanctuaries in New Zealand, is beautifully illustrated, and details their history and conservation gains. It also includes information on how to be involved and get in touch with all the conservation groups listed. It will make a great Xmas present and at an RRP of \$55.00 a bargain. Needless to say that Mana Island is included as one of the many shining examples of the conservation work carried out since the beginning of the 1800's.



New fairy prion burrows installed Brian Bell FOMI

1 August 2014

Fairy prion supplementary translocations to Mana Island are planned for 2015 and 2016, under project management by FOMI's Brian Bell. But before transfers can proceed, it has been necessary to install a new set of artificial burrows at the current colony site to accommodate the transferred chicks when they arrive from Stephens Island. This is because many of the burrows used to house the fairy prion chicks in the 2002–2004 transfers have since collapsed or disappeared under vegetation. Others have been taken over by fluttering shearwaters, diving petrels, fairy prions and even a white-faced storm petrel pair!

Fairy prions nesting on Mana have often headed for burrow sites on the steeper slopes, so 100 artificial nesting chambers have been installed just south of the currently active fairy prion burrows, on a grassy slope. We are trialling a modified design for this project. Fairy prion burrows are quite small and small boxes can be less stable in the ground than larger ones. So instead of 100 small boxes, we chose to try 50 double-compartment boxes instead. Box construction kept Barry Dent busy in his garage earlier this winter (a great effort indeed) and David Moss (DOC) busy ferrying boxes to and from quarantine. To see the job through, Barry also joined the installation team on Mana—Dave Cornick, Peter Gaze, Sue Freitag and myself—at the end of July. We were also very grateful for assistance with digging from Mark Tito (DOC).

Many thanks to Jeff Hall (DOC ranger) and all the volunteers from OMV and FOMI, for preparing the site for us earlier in July, and delivering the boxes and beach gravel to the site. This meant that we could get stuck into digging as soon as we arrived. The boxes were relatively fast to install (2½ days) largely because the weather gods were on our side and lots of rain earlier in the week had softened the soil. A keen wind was all we had to battle with on a couple of afternoons. Thanks diggers, for an outstanding job!

Later this year, a sound speaker will be moved nearer to the 'semi-detached' housing complex. All compartments have built-in drainage and good indoor-outdoor flow via the usual plastic pipe arrangement. It is hoped that these smart new boxes will be easy and quick to access for chick-feeding and monitoring of adults in future years.



All photos by our intrepid photographer and volunteer Dave Cornick



Fluttering Shearwater - Annual Monitoring 2014 by Dale Shirtliff (FOMI)

25 August -1 September

Helen Gummer (Our specialist seabird contractor) and Laurie Smith (FOMI volunteer) began the monitoring of fluttering shearwaters on the night of 25th August. The monitoring is an annual event to check on returning birds from the 2006, 7 & 8 translocations of chicks. I replaced Laurie as planned on the 27th for the remaining nights.

Monitoring involves walking up to the site at the southern end of Mana each night between 8pm and 2am and visiting the burrows roughly once each hour. The solar powered sound system which simulates the sounds of a fluttering shearwater breeding site combines with the birds' homing instincts to bring the birds in to return to a burrow they had used previously or to 'prospect' for an empty burrow and a mate.

As birds are discovered (we do 5-6 rounds each night) they have their leg bands and burrow numbers checked and recorded, the bird is then weighed and given a temporary mark on its head. Once a bird is recorded and marked we attempt not to disturb it again. To further minimise disturbance to the birds no flash photos are taken.

A simple but very effective way of checking if a bird has entered a burrow is the placement of 2 small sticks vertically (we call them 'fences') in the burrow entrance. As birds move in and out they brush the sticks over in the direction of travel and save us having to lift all burrow lids. We reset them when we do a new round.

Birds most often return on wet and breezy nights. We didn't have any of these. On all nights we had almost clear skies and a view of the waxing moon. The birds' instincts were clearly calling them back as 45 birds were recorded. Of the birds recaptured 42 returned were translocated 'chicks.' Five were first-time recoveries. Three birds of unknown age had already been banded as new 'immigrants' in previous seasons.

Data Summary - Established pairs were found in 14 burrows; 4 new pairings were revealed; 4 birds of breeding status appeared to be awaiting the return of mates; other burrows had single birds, some of these quite vocal (calling for a mate); some burrows of established pairs appeared to have been visited but were now vacated - a sign they have mated and left until egg laying.

The signs are looking positive for a good breeding year. Eggs will be laid from the second week of September to late October. Incubation and chick-care is shared and takes around 52 days. Rearing takes a further 70-80 days. Chicks fledge in January/February.

Ranger Jeff Hall will check burrows around 8 September for the first eggs and visit at regular intervals to check on laying, incubation and hatching progress.

Thanks to Jeff for looking after us, to Laurie for his sterling effort for 2 nights and to Helen for her outstanding management of the process – right through to the detailed report writing, transferring data to spreadsheets, instructions for Jeff and sending off the data to relevant groups/individuals



Helen doing a daytime inspection of the fluttering shearwater burrows.



Burrow Entry



Dale completing the gravel filling of the new fairy prion burrows .

Your Committee for the 2014/15 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen, Vice President; Julie Harrison, Secretary, Dick Fernyhough, Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Linda Kerkmeester, Dale Shirtliff, Irene Swadling, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Reina Solomon, (IWI representative) and co-opted Membership Officer, Darlene Adams and co-opted Volunteer Officer, Sue Chesterfield.

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

