

Site 18 – Flax Weevil

Flax weevil were introduced to Mana in 2004 just south of here. Flax weevil are now only found on the mainland at the top of the Tararua Ranges and on offshore islands throughout New Zealand. The flax weevil have established so well that they have been causing damage and even killing some of the flax plants.

Site 19 - Wetland Restoration

The wetland here was the last major land change that the island has undergone. In 1998 a bulldozer and digger created the seven different water levels in front of you now. The area has always been damp, but was drained in the 1970s to allow for pastoral farming.

Site 20 - Private Farming Era Ends

In 1973 the Crown bought the lease of the island from the last private farmers John and Margaret Gault for a research and quarantine station. All the buildings before you were built by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries as part of their sheep breeding research station.

Site 21 – Wellington Green Gecko

In 1998 green gecko were released on Mana Island. Since then there have been several other releases but to date no green gecko have been seen on the island. Spotted skink have also been released here and seem to be surviving.

Site 22 - Wetland Species

Brown teal (pāteke) now live in the wetland and are breeding on the island. The threatened freshwater native fish, banded kōkopu, were discovered in 2013 are now living in the streams here as well. The concrete pad to your left are the remains of the old cattle yards on the island.



Site 23 – Bell's Gardens

In 1832 three Sydney merchants arrived on Mana. John Bell was assigned to live on the island. In this site hidden in the bushes are Bell's gardens. A historic peach tree is still found in the garden. In 1835, meat and vegetables were available for passing whalers and traders. Tobacco was also grown.

Site 24 - Māori Connection to Mana

1300AD Kupe visited the island and named it “Te-Mana-o-Kupe-ki-Aotearoa” which translates to “The Ability of Kupe to cross the ocean to Aotearoa”.

It appears Mana Island was first settled by Māori around 1400 and this continued until 1820.

In the early 1820s, Ngāti Toa people from Waikato, and Te Atiawa from Taranaki, swept into the region. The Ngāti Toa leader, Te Rauparaha, and his nephew, Te Rangihaeata, both built whare (houses) and developed kumara gardens on Mana Island. The houses were along this beach area.

Site 25 - Original Vella Farmhouse

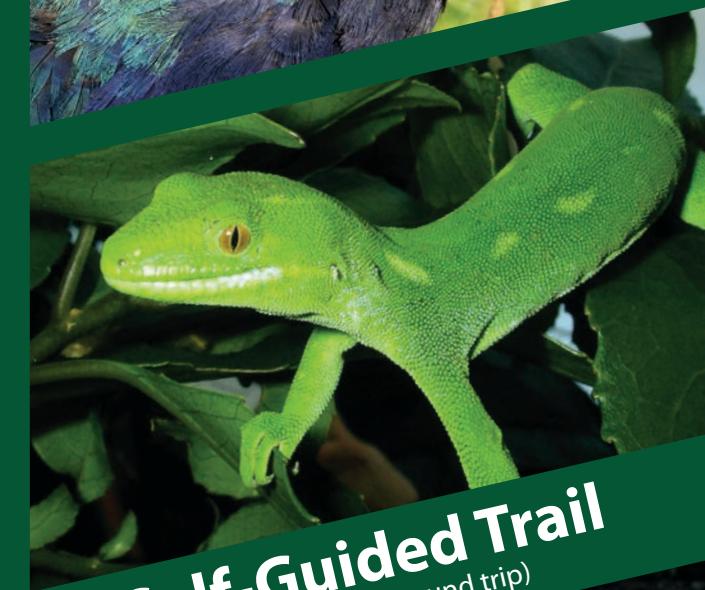
In 1886 the Vella family obtained a Crown lease and farmed the island for almost 70 years. Timber from the old lighthouse keeper's cottage was used to construct a homestead just to the east of here. You can see the remains of the gardens and compost bins. The homestead burnt down in the early 1980s. About 20m west of here, John Bell, the original island farmer was buried in 1838. No planks could be found for a coffin, so he was buried in a rum barrel.

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Mana Island



Self-Guided Trail
(approx. 1-3hrs round trip)

Site 1 - Farming Begins on the Island

John Bell arrived on the island in 1832 and brought with him 103 merino sheep and 10 cattle. This woolshed was built on the site of one of New Zealand's earliest wool exports in 1836.

Site 2 – Whaling, McGregor’s Skink & Mouse Eradication

During the 1830s the whalers of Cook Strait used Mana Island's vantage points to spot whales, and the foreshore to boil down blubber. Here you are also overlooking rocky shore platforms which were the stronghold of McGregor's skink. Thanks to mouse eradication, they can now be found all along the east coast and even inland. Mouse eradication was completed in 1991, and at the time Mana was the largest island in the world to be cleared of mice.

Site 3 – Earliest Tree Plantings

Here you are overlooking some of the earlier plantings. These plantings started in 1987 in the valleys with the aim to link up with remnant native forest in Forest Gully. The trees along the downhill side of the track were planted in 1996, and the trees at the top in 1997.

Site 4 – Views to the City

The views between the trees you can see here are of Porirua City; the suburb of Titahi Bay to the south east, the New Zealand Police College behind and to the north east is Plimmerton.

Site 5 – Later Tree Plantings

Here you can see milk tree and to the left titoki. Both species were planted here in 1998. The milk tree seed has been collected from the four surviving trees on Mana. Milk tree male and female reproductive parts are found on separate plants. Pollination is challenging with low numbers of widely dispersed trees.

Site 6 - Forest Gecko Fence

This low fence was built in June 2015 to house the translocated forest (ngahere) gecko which were transferred from the mainland. Once they settle in and begin breeding the fence can be removed. So far, there have been 30 individuals released with more planned over the next few years. The project is a partnership with Winstone Aggregates.

Site 7 - Takahē

This takahē capture pen is used for health checks and translocations, which are sponsored by Mitre 10. The birds get used to coming and going from the open pen, until capture day when they can get in but can't get out.

Site 8 - Original Forest Remnant

You are overlooking the only original forest left on Mana. It is mainly mānuka and kānuka forest. Since the removal of livestock, the understory of bush has thrived and many plant species have established. The original surviving kohekohe and milk trees can be found down in the gully. Over time they will emerge to become the dominant tree cover, along with rātā, tawa, tōtara, miro, mataī and kahikatea.

Site 9 - Bulk Plantings

The early plantings were bulk plantings to establish tree cover quickly. It was not until recent years that species were selected to better fit the landform. To your right are clusters of cabbage trees and toetoe which were thought suitable for takahē habitat. Wide spaced planting of ngaio and olearia create shelter before planting other early colonising species.

Site 10 - Potential Gannet Colony Site

In 1997 a potential gannet colony site on the western clifftop was painted white to simulate guano and 100 concrete gannet decoys positioned. A loud speaker playing calls to attract the birds was installed in 1999 but only three birds were ever seen and the site had become overgrown. FOMI prepared a new site east of here on the northern cliff top in 2012. Real gannets have been seen on site since 2016.

Site 11 – Historic Gardens

Near the lighthouse site are rectangular enclosures which would probably have been used by the lighthouse keeper in the mid-19th century for growing vegetables. These were constructed using the ditch and bank technique, with hedges to protect the gardens from stock intrusion and coastal winds.

Site 12 - Lighthouse

In 1863 the Mana Island lighthouse was built here on the northwest corner of the island. This was only the second lighthouse built in the Wellington province. It was shut down in 1877 and moved to Taranaki in 1881.

Site 13 - Speargrass Weevil

Forty one speargrass weevils were introduced to Mana in 2006 near here on the cliffs. They came from Wellington's south coast where their host plant – speargrass – is disappearing. The weevils are doing well, with signs of population increase.

14 - Sheep Burial Site

In 1978 suspected scrapie disease was found and the island's total flock of approximately 3000 sheep was destroyed and buried just west of here. They ended up being the last sheep to graze the island. Cattle were farmed until 1986.

Site 15 - Seabird Sound System

There are several large speakers to the south of here along the cliff edges to help attract seabirds. These speakers are solar powered and operate at night to mimic the sounds of a natural seabird colony.

Site 16 – Progress with Seabird Restoration on Mana Island

Seabirds are the most notable feature of our ecological restoration efforts on Mana. Once seabird colonies establish it may be possible to reintroduce tuatara, which originally co-existed in harmony with seabirds, living in the seabirds' burrows and feeding on their eggs and the chicks. Seabirds now nesting on Mana include sooty shearwater, diving petrel, fairy prion and fluttering shearwater.

Site 17 – Rātā & Cooks Scurvy Grass

Northern rātā were once all over the island, but there is now just one remnant plant on the south eastern face below you. Cooks scurvy grass is a soft fleshy plant that loves highly fertile areas like seabirds' nesting sites. The only original plants to survive farming are down below you on the top of the hole in the rock.