



Newsletter No. 73

April 2018

Friends of Mana Island NEWS

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New FOMI President and Executive member elected

Our AGM in March was well-attended with about 50 people coming along. We elected a new President – John McKoy, and a new Executive member – Richard Grasse. You can [read about them on our website](#).

Our special thanks to Graeme Taylor from DOC for a fascinating presentation about the challenges of translocating seabirds from the Chatham Islands to Mana Island. The variety and abundance of seabirds on the Chathams is remarkable.

You can read [Brian Bell's 2018 President's report](#) on our website.

We also showed our [new video](#) by Kaboose Media for our 20th anniversary.



John McKoy, new FOMI President

From FOMI's new President, John McKoy

Well, I have to admit to being a little surprised, and to feeling more than a little weight of responsibility, upon finding myself as the new president of FOMI!

Brian Bell is clearly a hard act to follow, but it's a task that is made much more exciting because of the great foundation that has been laid by the previous holders of the position, by the fantastic executive team that FOMI has, and by the huge support from so many volunteers who continue to contribute so much.

It is great to pick up the role in the 20th year of FOMI's existence and I'd like to remind you to take a look [on our website at the various activities](#) that we have arranged to commemorate this milestone.

As part of this I'd like to congratulate everyone who took part in the very successful anniversary picnic on the island on 25 March - a well-supported event on a brilliant day. This was also a great opportunity to say hello to the new ranger team, Nick and Gen (and trainee Theo, their young son), and to farewell and thank Chris and Mara who have moved to Kapiti Island.

**20th anniversary video
on YouTube now**

Watch [our cool new video](#), generously sponsored and produced by Kaboose Media for FOMI's 20th anniversary.

FOMI has done wonderfully well over the last 20 years, but there is still plenty more to do to achieve our vision of *Mana Island as a self-sustaining Cook Strait indigenous ecosystem and a repository for threatened species*. Apart from the restoration activities, we need to ensure that we are measuring and recording progress, enhancing educational opportunities, and continuing to make the island available to the public through positive visitor experiences.

Particular projects we intend to make significant progress on over the coming year include the white-faced storm petrel translocation and the restoration of the Waikoko Wetland on the island. We will be continuing with the very popular guided walk programme, in fact all five visits planned until the season ends in June are already fully booked. Members will also have an opportunity to participate in five weekend work parties between April and December – you will have received the *Work Opportunity Schedule* with details of these.

I'm looking forward to a great year ahead! A special year in which our theme is "Celebrating Our Volunteers". *Cheers, John*

"Celebrating Our Volunteers" - 20th anniversary news

We hope you will join us this year as we celebrate the 20th anniversary of Friends of Mana Island. The theme is "Celebrating Our Volunteers".

Our calendar of anniversary events

August 2018 – Display at Pataka's Bottle Creek Gallery. We will be mounting a display that will include photos, a model of the island, videos and a memories board for people to record their memories. We also plan to have some public talks about restoration work on the island. Keep a look out for details.

15 September 2018 – Anniversary celebration dinner. This will be at Plimmerton Boating Club on Saturday 15 September. We will let you know when bookings are open. Keep the date free!

[Bookmark the anniversary page of our website](#) and keep up to date with what's happening.

Glorious day for FOMI's 20th anniversary picnic on Mana Island



The weather was perfect for our celebration picnic on Mana Island on Sunday 25 March 2018.

Two boatloads of picnickers of all ages made the trip across to the island. Some visitors went on guided walks, others roamed the island sightseeing.

We all met back at the shore for short speeches and a special chocolate cake, decorated with leaves from native plants and shells.

Our new President John McKoy (pictured left) spoke, as did Glenys Denz (right) who was involved when FOMI was set up 20 years ago. She had the honour of cutting the cake.

More [photos of the picnic](#) are on our website.



Entries are open for our 20th anniversary photo competition

Have you entered our anniversary photo competition? It is open until the end of June 2018.

If you have ever taken photos on the island, dig them out and pick your best ones to enter. There are four categories and cash prizes for the winners. See the [photo competition page](#) on our website for all the details. And send us your photos!



February and April working bees attract all ages

by Dale Shirliff, FOMI executive

The first two working bees of 2018 on the island were in February and April.

The February trip saw our group of 10 make a serious dent in the bindweed/convolvulus population, particularly in the wetland and adjacent area.

The key objectives of the April trip were to carry out maintenance of the fluttering shearwater and fairy prion artificial burrow sites, more convolvulus/bindweed clearing from the wetland, monitor the trial flax planting, and review the island photo point areas. Another key task was the banding of sooty shearwater chicks. A record number of 96 chicks were banded this weekend – a combination of a good breeding season and outstanding teamwork in trying, windy conditions.

[Read more about the working bees](#) on our website.



Annemieke with a huge sooty shearwater chick. The chicks are often double the adult weight at this stage.



Fluttering shearwater monitoring results are promising

The results of the recent monitoring of fluttering shearwaters are very positive. They confirm a 33% survival rate of all three translocated chick cohorts combined, so far exceeding that found for translocation projects involving any other seabird species in New Zealand, with the exception of the Chatham Island taiko.

In addition, the 28% return rate of fluttering shearwaters to Mana Island is more than double the overall return rate of 12% last reported for fluttering shearwaters translocated to Maud Island.

This is another resounding success for the professionals and volunteers dedicated to the restoration of Mana Island. Congratulations to the monitoring team this past season and those who took part in the original fluttering shearwater translocations from 2006-2008.

You can [read an interesting extract from Helen Gummer's report](#) about the monitoring on our website.

Mana's Ngahere geckos carry radio transmitters

A group of geckos on Mana Island were fitted with tiny backpacks in February, as researchers hope to shed light on how far they move when transferred to new homes.

The Ngahere geckos came from GBC Winstone's Belmont Quarry via a three-year translocation programme. They are part of a radio tracking study to evaluate whether a penned release is likely to improve translocation success for the species. [Read more on DOC's website...](#)



Ngahere gecko on Mana Island (Photo by Lee Barry, DOC)

Reconnaissance trip for white-faced storm petrels by Brian Bell, project manager

In February a FOMI-led trip was undertaken to Chatham and Rangatira Islands to help with plans for translocating white-faced storm petrels to Mana Island. Team members were Brian Bell (FOMI President (at the time) and project manager), Graeme Taylor (DOC seabird scientist) and Cathy Mitchell (seabird contractor).

The purpose of the translocation project is to establish a breeding population on Mana. The aim of the trip to the Chathams was to build relationships with key stakeholders and to determine the logistics involved in transferring the chicks. Because meetings with all stakeholders did not go ahead as hoped, further meetings are planned for later in 2018.

Travel to Rangatira Island from mainland New Zealand involves a plane trip and boat transfer, both of which are susceptible to delays which did occur over this trip. Once on Rangatira Island, the team found many burrows containing chicks close to the DOC hut. There were plenty of chicks to select from and proximity to the hut will allow for easy collection.

Challenges identified include the small diameter of the birds' burrows which can make chick extraction difficult and the risk of burrow damage when moving off the main tracks. Despite this the number of burrows is high and there are plenty to allow for collection of the target number of chicks.

The trip was considered a success. Links with stakeholders were established and will be built upon in the coming year. The translocation team was able to gain first-hand experience of the island and the logistics that will be involved if the translocation is to go ahead. Another trip to the Chathams will be made in September to progress the project with the aim of translocating birds to Mana Island in February 2019.



Reconnaissance team: Cathy, Brian and Graeme, showing chicks, measuring gear, burrow marker poles and typical terrain on Rangatira Island. (Photo: Erin Patterson)



Chick about one month before fledging. (Photo: Cathy Mitchell)

Nigel our ‘lonely’ gannet puts Mana Island on the world map *by Philippa Sargent, FOMI executive*

In case you haven't already heard the sad news about our first resident gannet on Mana Island here is an update. There is a surprising upside to this sad story however...

Nigel's story - Nigel died in January this year. He was found by the DOC ranger, Chris Bell, on the nest he had built for his concrete mate. Nigel had wooed for more than two years, since his arrival on the island in late 2015. His death came just a few weeks after three other gannets were spotted frequenting the concrete gannet colony, near Nigel but not in his spot so they didn't socialise together.

Nigel's unrequited love and untimely death became an international story with news outlets from around the world contacting FOMI and DOC for interviews, photos and video footage. Suddenly Mana Island, Nigel, and the concrete gannet colony were in the spotlight. There was an outpouring of affection for Nigel on social media.

Nigel had poems written about him, people did drawings, and his concrete mate gained a name, 'Connie'. Ranger, Chris Bell, was kept very busy with telling his story to journalists, and our vice-president Linda Kerkmeester was also interviewed on BBC World Service and ABC Radio Australia talking about FOMI's connection to the gannet colony project.

Nigel became famous, and the knock-on effect was a sharp rise in our Facebook followers, many more visits to our website, and an increased understanding of the restoration work being undertaken on Mana Island.

[See our web page devoted to Nigel](#) with photos, poems, videos, news stories.



Nigel with some of the concrete gannets. They are wooing each other, but sadly Nigel missed out. (Photo by Chris Bell, DOC.)

Guided trips to Mana Island with a difference *by Philippa Doig, FOMI Executive*

Some very interesting groups have visited Mana Island in the last couple of months.

On 10 March we had a group from the Austrian Club. In 1953, 190 Austrian builders arrived in Titahi Bay to build houses prefabricated in Austria in answer to a housing and skills shortage in New Zealand. These young men had to be well educated and trained, as well as being of good character. In the words of an 85-year-old I met on the island on our trip - 'New Zealand got 190 perfect young men!'

The Austrian Club is formed of the original builders, now in their 80s, and their descendants. Only 10% of the young Austrians went back to Austria, possibly because their fares home were not paid by the New Zealand government! The rest settled in New Zealand, especially in and around Titahi Bay. It was a privilege to meet and talk with these Austrians and show them around Mana Island.

On April 7 we also privileged to host about 65 descendants of the Vella family who farmed Mana Island from the 1880s until the early 1950s. With the help of social media Robert McClean gathered family members from far and wide to visit Mana Island. A highlight of their trip was planting eight trees in memory of Mariano Vella, Mary (first wife) and Elizabeth's eight children. The trees were planted in the vicinity of the Vella homestead site and were sourced from the nursery on Mana Island.

Request for a graphic designer to help us with a small job

We need two display panels designed (probably just text) to be part of our upcoming 20th anniversary display, running for a month at Pataka Art + Museum in August.

Our theme is "Celebrating our Volunteers".

We will write the text and provide graphics (like our logo). Please get in touch to find out more via our [Facebook page](#) or email fomi@manaisland.org.nz



It's time to renew your FOMI subscription

Annual membership subscriptions are now due. The subscriptions we receive from our members help fund the many projects carried out each year. We have recently sent subscription requests to current members. Thanks to everyone who has paid already.

As a FOMI member you receive:

- Our quarterly newsletter sent direct to your inbox, with news about FOMI's projects and activities.
- Emails with volunteering opportunities, in particular for weekend working bees on Mana Island. Members get preference for these.
- Notice of the AGM each year, with the performance report and President's report
- The ability to vote at the AGM.
- A discount on trips to Mana Island (\$50 instead of \$60.00)
- Invitations to special conservation events.

See our website under [Join Us](#) for how to pay a subscription, or see the email you received as a current member.

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