



Newsletter No. 76

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Friends of Mana Island NEWS

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Message from FOMI President, John McKoy

Kia ora koutou. This last newsletter for 2018 is a chance to reflect on a very busy and productive year for FOMI and look forward to what is shaping up to be a busy summer and new year.

Highlights for the year include:

- the increasingly popular guided visits programme (18 trips, 37 volunteer guide days, and 515 visitors)
- a very busy work party programme (6 weekend trips involving 49 members and associated experts)
- the establishment of the very interesting flax weevil trial on Mana Island
- our very well patronised 20th Anniversary projects
- and a 30% increase in our membership numbers.

Thank you all for your interest and support!

A special highlight in recent months has been the approval by DOC of our proposal to translocate North Island fernbirds from the magnificent Rotokare Scenic Reserve in Taranaki – to Mana Island Scientific Reserve. The proposal still requires confirmation that enough birds are available at Rotokare - but we are quietly confident. This translocation was preceded by two successful translocations to Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve, in 2017 and 2018.

Our proposal is to transfer 40 fernbirds between April 2019 and June 2020. The project is supported by our sponsor OMV and will be managed by Kevin Parker of Parker Conservation, New Zealand's leading expert in translocating these birds. *Enjoy this [short video of fernbirds](#) at Rotokare.*

A second highlight was getting verbal advice of upcoming DOC conditional approval of our proposal to translocate up to 250 white-faced storm petrels from Rangatira Island in the Chatham Island group to Mana Island. This complex and challenging project has been developed over the last 2-3 years, is also sponsored by OMV, and is expected to begin with the transfer of about 50 birds in February 2019. The project is being managed by experienced wildlife biologist Cathy Mitchell and is under the technical guidance of Graham Taylor of DOC.

Another upcoming project, which has been a while in development, is the restoration and enhancement of the Waikoko wetland on Mana Island. The wetland was established in 1998 but has undergone some significant changes in the meantime which have resulted in the need for some maintenance and replanting.



Fernbird. (Photo: New Zealand Birds Online.)

We are also taking the opportunity to enhance the visitor experience by improving access, allowing a close-up view of the wetland and wildlife, and providing visitors with better information. Preparations are underway to complete most of this work over the summer of 2018-19.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and thanks to the members of the FOMI executive for the great deal of hard work that they have contributed over the year to make all of this stuff happen – very many thanks Team!

A very special thank you is also due to Brian Bell, our past president, for the massive effort that he put in to get the fernbird and white-faced storm petrel projects off the ground. Kia ora rawa atu Brian.

Ngā mihi, John McKoy

Spot a takahe or two on Mana Island by Philippa Doig, FOMI Executive

One of the highlights of visiting Mana Island is the relatively high chance of seeing a takahe or a pair with a chick.

These birds were declared extinct in 1898 but were rediscovered almost exactly 70 years ago in the Murchison mountains (20 November 1948) by Geoffrey Orbell.

The current population of takahe in New Zealand is more than 350 – not bad for a bird that used to be extinct.

On pest-free Mana Island we now have the largest breeding colony of takahe outside Fiordland. In March this year, 18 takahe (including chicks from Mana) were released into the Goulard Downs area of Kahurangi National Park.

Later they were joined by more birds to take the numbers to 30. More releases are planned in early 2019. The takahe chicks had their own Air New Zealand chartered aircraft from Queenstown to Nelson!

On 13 November this year, the first takahe eggs were discovered in Kahurangi National Park in a nest with three parents – takahe are experts at divorcing, partner swapping and communal parenting! So, the next time you walk the Heaphy Track, you may see a takahe in the wild, on mainland New Zealand, that hatched on Mana Island.

On Mana Island seven of the eight pairs of takahe nested in spring 2018 and there are now (late November) four confirmed chicks aged 2-6 weeks. There is still the possibility of more chicks as two pairs failed in their initial breeding attempt, but there is enough time left in the season for them to re-nest.

The takahe you see when you visit Mana Island are contributing to the population recovery of these iconic birds, one of our national taonga.

The dates for FOMI's season of guided trips through to June 2019 are on our [website](#) now. We hope to see you soon.



A takahe on Mana Island (Photo: Christopher Stephens, December 2018)

December weekend work trip saw many jobs ticked off by Dale Shirtliff, FOMI Executive

Getting a 4000 litre water tank onto the *Charmaine Karol* on the Friday afternoon was the first challenge of this trip. We managed it, just!

It left no room for our volunteers to climb aboard via the back steps so it was up the side of the boat and through the front entrance to the cabin. The problem of getting the tank ashore was solved by attaching a rope and floating it around the side of the boat to the beach to be hauled up into a hollow out of the breeze.



The volunteers on the December work party.

The tank was then rolled to the Lockwood house, tied on to the trailer and taken up to the flax weevil project site near the top of Central Track. The beginning of a very busy weekend for our group of keen volunteers...

Read the [full report of the working trip](#) on our website.

For more about the flax weevil trial on Mana Island [listen to an interview](#) with scientist Colin Miskelly.

Opportunity to join the FOMI team – membership secretary role

Our long-serving membership secretary Darlene Adams is standing down after many years of service to FOMI. So we are looking for someone to take over this role.

As our membership secretary you would be responsible for keeping FOMI's membership records up-to-date, reconciling subscriptions with the treasurer's finance reports, and sending out emails to our membership database from time to time about FOMI news. Our membership numbers have increased by 30% this year as the profile of FOMI has grown.

We think you would enjoy being part of a group of passionate conservationists, and making a valuable contribution to the smooth running of our organisation. Full support would be provided to help you in the role. Interested? To find out more, email: fomi@manaisland.org.nz

New lighthouse signage installed

When you stand on the site where the lighthouse was on Mana Island, you can now easily spot the location of other lighthouses in the vicinity.

Thanks to the efforts of Jason Christensen, we have new signage showing the distances to these lighthouses – like the Brothers which is 28km away.

The Mana Island lighthouse operated from 1865 to 1877. To find out why it was extinguished and other history about Mana Island, visit our [website's history section](#).



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