



Friends of Mana Island Inc.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2018

FOMI AGM, 20 March 2019

Introduction

2018 was an extremely busy and successful year for *Friends of Mana Island* with several larger projects getting underway, the celebration of our 20th year, a very significant increase in our public exposure, guided day trips in high demand, 6 very productive weekend working trips, and a great increase in the number of members. All of this on top of some significant restoration milestones for Mana Island.

Visitor Opportunities

One of FOMI's key objectives is to assist DOC in managing visitor opportunities and experiences on Mana Island and our contribution in 2018 has been very significant. Demand for guided trips has been high and we increased the number of trips from 17 in 2017 to 21 in 2018. We estimate that we hosted about 610 guided visitors – up from 430 in 2017. Interpretive material and signage have been upgraded, and guide training and upskilling has continued. A great deal of work has been put in by Executive members and all of our guides to make this happen. I must also gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Eliot Falconer who has made most of this work possible by providing an excellent vessel to bridge the gap between Mana and the mainland.

20th Anniversary Action

Much of the increased interest in Mana Island, and a great increase in the number of FOMI members (from about 150 in 2017 to 196 at the end of 2018,) arose from our 20th Anniversary activities – which were designed to celebrate the contribution of volunteers in the restoration of Mana Island. We started off with an anniversary picnic on Mana in March and our first photo competition was a great success, with over 120 entries from a very talented group of photographers – we are using some of these photographs in our publicity material. The exhibition at Pataka and the associated expert talks were a wonderful success and many very positive reviews and comments were received about this. A wonderful centrepiece for the exhibition was the model of Mana Island created by volunteer modelmaker Doug Royson.

Volunteer Contributions

We must acknowledge, and thank, once again, the many volunteers who support the wide range of work on our weekend working parties – which are organised every couple of months to carry out a multitude of maintenance and monitoring tasks on the Island. The total number of volunteer hours contributed in the year ending June 2018 was estimated at 5500 – up from around 4400 in the previous year. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of our Volunteer Officer, Hannah Kyle Parker, for her efforts in organising volunteers for the Working Parties and associated activities.

These volunteers are at the heart of the purpose of Friends of Mana Island, and they are the reason we have been able to make a huge difference over the last 20 years.

Major Projects

In 2017 we secured a major sponsorship from OMV New Zealand Ltd for a series of projects – all of which were recommended in the *Mana Island Ecological Restoration Plan* developed by DOC.

After a lot of planning and negotiation, led by past President Brian Bell, we finally received the necessary approvals and authorisations from DOC to proceed with the translocation of white-faced storm petrels from Rangatira Island in the Chatham Islands group to Mana Island. This is a 3 year project involving 3 transfers of birds in February 2019, 2020, and 2021, aiming at a total of 250 birds. This is a significant step in our aim of increasing the population of burrow-nesting seabirds on Mana Island. Preparation work got going at pretty short notice before Christmas to ensure a successful transfer in February 2019. By the time you read this we will have completed a very successful transfer of 48 birds to the Island - under the leadership of wildlife biologist Cathy Mitchell.

Another part of the OMV sponsorship was a project to transfer 40 fernbirds from Rotokare Scenic Reserve in Taranaki to Mana Island. Authority to proceed with this project was eventually received in late 2018 and we are proceeding with preparations for the transfer of up to 40 birds in April 2019. The good news is that Rotokare have confirmed that there are enough birds present to support the proposed transfer. The Project will be supervised by very experienced biologist Kevin Parker who also supervised the two successful fernbird transfers, in 2017 and 2018, to Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve.

The other major project initiated in 2018, with the support of OMV, was the restoration of the Waikoko wetland on Mana. The wetland was created in 1999 to provide a freshwater coastal habitat for bird and aquatic wildlife. It is currently silting up and needs culvert maintenance, repair and some replanting to improve habitat for wetland birds and aquatic wildlife. A new wetland walkway will be constructed to enhance the visitor experience with signage and seating. A bird hide has been designed and will be pre-fabricated on the mainland for installation on the edge of the wetland with the help of volunteers in the summer of 2019. Most of this work was completed in January-February this year.

Other interesting projects which have been set up in 2018 were the series of experiments to investigate the ecology of flax weevils on the Island and a new transfer of green geckos.

More details on these and other activities are available in the Performance Report.

Relationships

In looking back at previous President's reports, I note a recurring theme about relationships with the Department of Conservation. I am very pleased to report that current relationships are in excellent health – at all levels. We have regular meetings with senior DOC staff to review progress. Day to day co-ordination is through the very responsive and helpful DOC staff on the island and in the Wellington office. DOC is also the main channel of communication and coordination with Ngati Toa on matters relating to the island.

I would like to acknowledge the service that our Membership Secretary, Darlene Adams, has given to FOMI. Darlene is a long-time member who contributed as Secretary from 2005 to 2012 and has continued to manage our membership processes very efficiently until now. She is taking a well-earned break from juggling with emails and membership applications in her evenings.

I'd also like to acknowledge another kind of goodbye. In 2018 Brian Paget passed away. Brian, who in 2016 was made a Distinguished Life Member, was one of FOMI's foundation members. Brian made a huge contribution to the establishment of FOMI. He gave us 16 years of dedicated service, including as President 2003–2007 and 2012–2015; and as Vice-President 2008–2011. He will be sorely missed.

Secrets of Success

When I first accepted the nomination for this role last year I did it on the assumption that the excellent Executive team at FOMI was likely to remain in place – knowing that without committed and active people in such roles many community organisations can easily become ineffective and fade away. I have not been disappointed. Every member of this great team, along of course with all of the other enthusiastic members and volunteers, has done a wonderful job over the last year – I'm proud to present this report after my first year as President in the knowledge that this commitment remains intact for 2019. FOMI is in good hands.

John McKoy

President, Friends of Mana Island

March 1 2019.