



FAIRY PRIONS ALL AT SEA

Three weeks to the day after arriving at Mana Island, the last of the 100 fairy prion chicks transferred from Stephens Island in January has headed out to sea.

While these birds spend the next three years in the changeable and sometimes extreme conditions of Cook Strait, it is hoped that the first of the 240 chicks transferred from Stephens Island since January 2002 will return to Mana Island later this year.

Describing the three year project to re-establish a breeding colony of fairy prions on the island as “very successful” Friends of Mana Island president, Brian Paget, said it was particularly pleasing that all chicks fledged without a single fatality.

This is despite eight chicks having to be moved to drier accommodation this year when their burrows became flooded because of torrential rain. One chick was even found floating, quite happily, in several centimetres of water in its burrow.

“This is a tribute to the Department of Conservation, our contractors, and particularly, the many volunteers who fed the chicks during their stay on Mana Island.

The project had enabled techniques used in seabird transfers to be refined” Mr Paget said.

“This means that transfers involving other seabirds elsewhere can proceed more smoothly, more cheaply, and with a higher chance of success.”

The Friends of Mana Island was established in December 1998 to promote and enhance the Scientific Reserve on Mana Island and to encourage the general public to take an active interest in all aspects of conservation on the island.

In addition to the fairy prion project the Friends have provided support for several other projects and activities, including organising and substantially funding the volunteer effort in planting 85,000 trees. Future species transfers planned include yellow-crowned parakeets and flax weevils next month and fluttering shearwaters in 2005.