



FOMI Newsletter

February 2015

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 60

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua, 5247

Special points of interest:

- Editorial
- AGM
- Whitaker's Skink Search
- Fairy Prion Translocation
- Summer Trips to Mana Island
- Fairy Prion Images
- Your Committee

President's Editorial

Hi

What a summer we have had, well certainly great for us townies but looking pretty dry for our farming community and for that matter the conservation community with the ever present fire risk associated with warm sunny weather.

January was the climax of our Fairy Prion project for this year with the translocation of 100 chicks from Stephens Island into their condominium for a short period of time and lovingly cared for by our volunteers whilst they remained on land. We are now happy that they all departed in good shape for 2 or 3 years foraging in our oceans. This Newsletter is more about a visual celebration of the successful conclusion of 2 years of planning and a wind up report from Brian Bell, our project manager and the financial support of OMV New Zealand Ltd. The release was observed by the Associate Minister of Conservation, Nicky Wagner, her husband and support team, our Mayor Nick Leggett and wife and a host of others, around 45 in all, who enjoyed an early lunch and stroll, or in some cases a struggle, up the hill to the release site on the Western side of our Island. The weather was brilliant and it all went according to plan. You will have been flooded with blogs which fully cover the event so I will say no more, apart from my personal thanks to our team who have put it all together, and to the volunteers who supported them. A great project with a perfect result which hopefully will be repeated next January.

Our challenge for this year is to maintain the momentum which has been generated and to find sufficient work and projects, together with the requisite funding, to provide opportunities for our members to participate in the continuing restoration of the Island and husbandry of our endangered species.

We look forward to the challenge and are grateful for your support and hope you will join us at our AGM in March. This year we have a vacancy on the Committee and would like to introduce some new and younger blood. If you are keen, fit and interested in making your mark on conserving our environment please email fomi@manaisland.org.nz and we will send you the job specification.

Let's make 2015 another great year.

Cheers

Brian

The 16th Annual General Meeting of Friends of Mana Island Inc.

will be held at

The Mana Cruising Club Rooms

Ngatittoa Domain

Porirua

At 7:30 pm **Thursday 19 March 2015**

Presentation of the Annual Report and Accounts

Election of Officers for the 2015-2016 years

Followed by

Colin Miskelly, Curator Terrestrial Vertebrates, Te Papa

Searching for Mana Island fairy prions among the wildlife treasures of Stephens Island

An account of the January 2015 Fairy Prion collecting trip



Whitaker Skink Search on this Summer by Gillian Candler, volunteer

Along the Pukerua Bay coastline, several working bees have been held on the Whitaker skink project. The only known mainland population of Whitaker skinks is located here but they are at considerable risk from predators, so the project aims to both reduce predator numbers and to catch some skinks to add to a breeding programme for eventual relocation to Mana Island. The project is being led by Dale Shirtliff from FOMI and this summer the scientist involved is Don Newman, also a volunteer.

In early January, ten volunteers worked to uncover and refresh around 90 pitfall traps. The pitfall traps are large tins placed so their lip is at ground level, a wooden lid covers the tin. As they are only used over summer months, finding them again was a challenging task as they are hidden away amongst undergrowth in rough stony ground. Some had disappeared completely perhaps under small rockfalls and a number were rusted right through.

This particular group of volunteers is reasonably familiar with the terrain, as we have been working in teams monitoring pest traps around the project area. All the same, the scree slopes and trailing vines led to a few slips and trips before we were finished.

Since the working bees, volunteers have been working on a roster to spend the morning out with Don Newman, helping him check the pitfall traps. A typical morning is spent removing rocks holding down the lid, lifting the lid to see what has been caught, identifying and releasing the lizards, re-baiting the trap with a piece of pear, and replacing the rocks so that the traps blend in once more. When pitfall traps are not in use, a long stick is placed in to ensure any skinks or geckos that fall in are able to climb back out.

In our first two weeks we caught around 40-50 lizards each day that the traps were open. Around half of them were geckos. The geckos are removed first and released back into the undergrowth, but not before they've given the friendly helping hand a bite or two. The skinks are examined more carefully to identify which species they belong to before they too are released. Any Whitaker skinks would be kept and quickly transported to the herpetologist looking after the captive Whitaker skink population. At the end of the first two weeks none have been caught.





Fairy Prion Translocation - Progress Report February 2015

Brian Bell, Project Manager

Another successful chapter has been completed in the story of Mana Island Fairy Prion Translocations. All 100 chicks collected on Takapourewa/Stephens Island in January have now fledged and gone to sea. This makes a total of 340 and 100% chicks successfully translocated, which must be some sort of world record. At this point the project is under budget with another year of translocations in January 2016 to go.

This is an outstanding example of the partnership between Friends of Mana Island, DOC, Iwi (Ngati Koata and Ngati Toa) and sponsor OMV all cooperating to achieve this outcome. Details of the translocation have already been well documented in several blogs (see below) so I won't go into details apart from a big thank you to all involved.

Chick collecting team: Colin Miskelly (team Leader), Lonae Paul, Anaru Paul, Anneke Mace, Clinton Purches, Jason Christensen, Brian Bell

Chick feeding team: Helen Gummer (team leader), David Cornick, Ros & Derek Batcheler, Gillian Candler, Fenella Fenton, Linda Kerkmeester, Luke Rawnsley, Sue Chesterfield, Amy Doyle, Ali Hull, Anne Graeme, Helen and Tony Griffiths, Katy Cornish, Brian Bell, Brian Paget

DOC: Polly Hall, Andre de Graaf, Jeff Hall, Di Batchelor, Phillip Clerke, Roy Grose, Paul McArthur, Rob Stone

Ngati Koata: Louisa Paul

Ngati Toa: Reina Solomon

This blog posted by one of the volunteers.

<http://explorediscovernature.blogspot.co.nz/2015/01/feeding-fairy-prions-volunteers-week-on.html>

And this blog by the Plimmerton Rotary Club

<http://plimmertonrotary.org.nz/Blogs/Fairy+Prions+Arrive+by+Helicopter>

And these blogs by Te Papa

[A box of fluffy birds – moving fairy prions from Takapourewa / Stephens Island to Mana](#)

[A box of fluffy birds – the sequel. Fairy prion chicks fly from Mana Island](#)



Summer Trips to Mana Island

Just a reminder that trips to Mana Island have been arranged for Members and friends departing from the Mana Marina at 10 am on the following days:

Saturday 21 February

Saturday 7 March

Saturday 21 March

Seats are available on all these guided trips at \$45.00 per head.

For bookings and further information email fomi@manaisland.org.nz



Fair Prion Translocation Images 22 January 2015



Photos by David Cornick



Photos by Phillip Reidy

Your Committee for the 2014/15 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen, Vice President; Julie Harrison, Secretary, Dick Fernyhough, Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Linda Kerkmeester, Dale Shirtliff, Irene Swadling, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Reina Solomon, (IWI representative) and co-opted Membership Officer, Darlene Adams and co-opted Volunteer Officer, Sue Chesterfield.

To contact any of the above email them at contactus@manaisland.org.nz

