



FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INCORPORATED

PO BOX 54 101, MANA 5247

Newsletter Number 34

February 2008

Hi Folks

The year is well on now, and whilst we have had some fairly warm weather you can hardly say that it is settled yet, let's hope it will.

The release of the Flutterers has gone off with military precision, thanks to Helen and her team and of course Barry, our intrepid project manager. They have mislaid the odd bird, had a couple get stuck in the tubes to the "condo", a few playing swapsy, but the majority of the 94 chicks translocated from Long Island have gone to sea.

The other good news was that a pair of Shore Plover got their act together and set up home under a log alongside the slipway and produced some offspring.

We have a few working trips coming up shortly and hopefully will finish off the Gannet refurbishment and get them back into place.

Our AGM is coming up, details elsewhere, and it would be really great if we had a good attendance and competition for the Officers and Committee of FOMI. Whilst the 20 year restoration plan has expired, but is not yet completed, there is still plenty of volunteer input required in conservation and to prepare for the future. If you have a yen to participate at the highest level then offer your services. Feel free to contact me or Darlene, our secretary, as we would like to have as many nominations in hand before the AGM so we can all be well informed on the candidates.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM

Cheers

Brian

Friends of Mana Island Inc AGM

Wednesday 12 March 2008, 7.30pm
Plimmerton Hall, Sunset Parade, Plimmerton

Agenda

Election of Officers: nominations will be received prior to the AGM.
Contact the Secretary for details by e-mail: darlene.adams@adcold.co.nz

To consider a resolution to amend the Rules of Friends of Mana Island Inc as follows:

"Clause 5 is amended by the insertion of the following new wording at the end of the clause:

Any person who has rendered significant service to the society
may be elected as an honorary life member with full membership rights.

Their membership status must be confirmed by vote at an annual general meeting.

Honorary life members shall not be required to pay a subscription."

Guest speaker: Colin Miskelly

"Scales and Salty Feathers - Progress with restoring lizards and seabirds to Mana Island"

News from the Island *from Grant, Sue, Frank and Piripi*

It was early to bed on New Years Eve so five of us could catch the eight o'clock ferry to Picton on New Years Day for the first leg of our trip to Long Island (Kokomohua) in Queen Charlotte Sound to gather the last cohort of Fluttering Shearwater chicks for transfer to Mana island.

We spent five days camped on Long Island which is a fantastic example of what an ecosystem can become with a little effort. Bellbirds and Robins began the glorious dawn chorus followed by Saddlebacks and Kakariki. There are also Pigeons, Falcons and Kiwi all in a wonderful example of regenerating Cook Strait Coastal forest.

On the fifth day we flew the ninety four chicks, packed in cat boxes, by helicopter back to Mana where groups of FOMI volunteers spent the next four weeks feeding them. The orange caravan on the hill at the south end of the Island is the operations base for this part of the

project which is funded and managed by FOMI.

A Forest and Bird funded lizard survey has taken place led by lizard guru Tony Whittaker. Several days and nights were spent searching the Island for Duvaucel geckos, Green geckos, Goldstripes and McGregors. A lot was learned but sadly no Greens showed up. Three Duvaucels were found on the second night very near the release site at Forest valley, one an unmarked adult which indicates they have produced offspring on Mana.

The Nursery is back to full production with about fifteen thousand trees growing on for the coming planting season. We have grown four or five of the most hardy species to patch in some of those areas which have been planted in the past but for a number of reasons have not grown. The vast majority of these plants were potted up by our dedicated volunteer, Jack Elphick. Titoki seed collected by Alan Cory and



Kelvin Hunt has also grown well.

We have four Takahe chicks and one set of twins.

The Shore Plover have produced one chick which is seen from time to time scurrying around the beach front near the boat shed. The next transfer of twenty five young birds from Mount Bruce will take place on 18th February. These birds will be temporarily housed in the aviary on the beach front until they 'fix' Mana as their home. This project is funded by the National Wildlife Trust at Mount Bruce.

As usual for this time of year the Island is very dry and will probably soon be closed to all visitors until further notice.

Anecdote *by Christine Els*

I arrived at work this morning at 175 The Terrace, Wellington and walked past a bird. Initially I thought that it was a pigeon and I had startled it, but looking at the bird again I noticed it wasn't a pigeon but a bird with webbed feet. It wasn't a duck, so I thought it would be best to leave it and check up on it later. When I did this, it was still there exactly where I first saw it. I went upstairs and found a box, lined it with tissue paper and proceeded back downstairs. It had disappeared but I looked around the building and found it again huddled in another corner. I picked it up, put it in the box with some water and called the SPCA. When the guy arrived he said it was a Fairy Prion and they were 'sort of rare'. He named it 'Derek aka Fairy Prion' and was going to take it to the native bird sanctuary. I am glad I had spotted Derek and that he will be safe. I had a very interesting morning - What an experience :)

What have the Maintenance Volunteers been up to?

by Allan Corry

I answered the call for FOMI volunteers to participate in a three day working holiday on Mana Island. Weather wise it was looking good for our party of six (Marion Mertens, Amanda Salt, Lynda Reynolds, Holly Mumford, Stacey Gasson and myself) when we met at the Mana cruising club. On the smooth crossing a shag flying parallel to the boat, beat us to the Island.

As we approached, the red historic wool shed came into view against bush covered hill sides that were bare twenty years ago, reminding me that the Island is transforming into a sanctuary for endangered species. This was also bought home to us as we stepped ashore and a flock of recently introduced Shore Plovers were seen feeding next to the boat shed.



Sue directed us to our accommodation where we changed into overalls. We were split into groups, some to paint exterior windows at the woolshed (a job started by previous volunteers) and others to scrub and paint the beachside bogs, loos, or long-drops, whatever you like to call them. Two days of preparation, under-coating and a top coat of DoC's flax colour had them merging into the bush so well that I hope the visitors can find them! While working, Kakariki (yellow crowned parakeets) were flitting around plucking Manuka Flowers for nectar.

After work the hot weather prompted the girls to go swimming. The cool water temperature slowed their entry and the swim was abandoned on seeing sting rays nearby. Staying over on Mana is a social event with lots of tasty food, a few drinks, card games and chatty times. All part of the enjoyment. When it got dark the girls took off for a torch light exploration, finding numerous geckos and meeting penguins wandering along the track. Each

morning we woke to the sound of birds. On the beach, oyster catchers probed the sand and the pair of paradise ducks guarded their precious last remaining chick from savaging gulls.

Grant organised us into three groups. Holly and Stacey pricked out 1200 Manuka and 1200 Kohuhu seedlings - a great effort that had Grant smiling with satisfaction. Amanda, Linda and Marion walked to the top of the hills to find and remove 600 to 700 yellow plastic tubes, used to protect new plantings from wind, grass growth and pukeko. I headed to the six year old Fairy Prion nesting burrows to repaint the numbers, allowing continued monitoring of those birds that have taken up residence. The site was unrecognisable to me as trees and shrubs have grown as nature intended.



On our walk around the Island, from the cliff top vantage points we saw gulls circle the sea and rocks below and gliding in the up draughts. Out to sea tidal currents ebb and flow and shearwater feed on schools of surfacing fish. For me every visit brings new natural sights and types of work - this time de-rusting the tractors roll-bar canopy. Last time it was track trimming overhanging branches. What will it be next time? Volunteer and find out!!

Fluttering Shearwater Update as at the end of January 2008 by Barry Dent

Ninety-four chicks were successfully installed in their burrows on 5 January 2008.

Peak feeding volumes have now been reached - 56 tins of sardines per day, meaning long hours for the volunteers and contractor. The birds have mostly settled well. One will have a visit from the vet next Tuesday to clear up an eye problem. About 25 gates are now off, and several birds have emerged, at least two having to be recovered from nearby flax bushes, but the remainder returning to their burrows as hoped.

There is a concurrent experiment running at the artificial colony site, using a sound system to broadcast calls at night to attract seabirds to Mana. As early as last summer there was some evidence of seabirds visiting one or two of the artificial burrows, and this January several feathers have been recovered from burrows 1 and 100, two of the closest burrows to the speakers. Burrow 100 has had a scrape made and grass added by a visiting bird. These have been all-but positively identified as belonging to fluttering shearwaters.

Recently some video monitoring equipment was used to record two nights' footage of a fluttering shearwater visiting burrow 100 from the night of 15/16 January. It arrives above the burrow at 23:21 and goes into the burrow at 23:22. The bird is clearly unbanded on the right leg and very probably unbanded on the left (all the night's footage reviewed in slow motion to check this). It starts to emerge at 00:57, comes out and collects grass, some of which is stuffed into the entrance pipe. At 01:01 the bird goes back inside. It re-emerges at 02:14 and collects more grass. At 02:20 it disappears out of frame to the right. At 03:31 a bird appears on the ground above the burrow and goes inside at 03:32. At 04:36 it begins to emerge. It collects more grass, and exits right of frame at 04:40.

Although it is possible that different birds have been seen in the above observation, I think it is likely that it is the same bird, because it entered and exited in the same way each time. It is likely to be a young bird, 'practising' for pairing up and nesting in a later year. There is zero chance it will nest this year.

Bird-attracting speaker systems are starting to gain acceptance as a worthwhile technique, with positive results from overseas and at least a couple of sites in NZ, not the least of which is Mana, where unbanded fairy prions have nested close to a sound system (again in conjunction with a translocation experiment, so it may not be possible to say that the speakers were the sole cause, since translocated chicks were expected to be returning as adults at the same time and may have influenced others to show up). The translocated fluttering shearwaters are some years from returning and this result is either a random event, or down to the sound system.

Burrow 100 is very close to one of the speakers and I think the evidence speaks for itself. Similar sound systems are starting to proliferate around the country with recent installations at Mana, Matiu/Somes, the Chathams, Cape Kidnappers, the Sounds, and the Kermadecs (3 systems) to my knowledge. At about \$5000 a throw and hopefully very little maintenance, they are at least a useful tool to complement the big translocation experiments (eg the present three-year flutterers transfer, at about \$40,000 raised by FOMI, approximately 3000 hours of volunteer effort, and significant logistical support by DoC).

Wanted!

New people for the Committee

Please contact darlene.adams@adcold.co.nz if you would be interested in being on the FOMI Committee

They're a great bunch of people!

Shore plover breeding on Mana Island by Dr Colin Miskelly

One of New Zealand's rarest birds has surprised conservationists by breeding within months of their release on Mana Island, off Wellington's west coast.

Shore plover, a wading bird found only in New Zealand, do not usually breed until at least two years old, but this pair was less than a year old when they laid. Their two eggs were found on 22 December in a scrape (a depression in the ground) under a log. One of the chicks hatched on 17 January and the nest was being checked again this evening to see whether the other egg had hatched.

The breeding pair were among 41 captive-reared juvenile shore plover moved to Mana Island between March and May 2007. The small flock there is monitored by members of the Ornithological Society and Friends of Mana Island.

Sue Caldwell, a Department of Conservation ranger on Mana Island, said she and her husband Frank Higgott had noticed a pair of shore plover exhibiting territorial behaviour on the island from the beginning of December. Ornithologists observed the birds' behaviour, but failed to find the nest on a monitoring trip in wet and windy conditions on 19 December. Ms Caldwell returned to the site three days later and found the nest with two eggs being incubated.

"This early breeding is an exciting development, and is an encouraging sign that Mana Island provides suitable habitat for shore plover to establish and build a population," she said.

"We're hoping that they'll be able to thrive on the island. On the mainland the birds are vulnerable to human disturbance and predators."

Shore plover are small, colourful shorebirds that occurred throughout New Zealand until the mid 1800s. Introduced predators wiped them out on mainland New Zealand, and they were reduced to about 130 birds on Rangatira (South East) Island in the Chatham Islands. Ten pairs are held in captivity, mainly at the Pukaha Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre in northern Wairarapa. Young birds produced by the captive flock are released on to predator-free islands as soon as they are old enough to fly.

Shore plover are strong fliers, and colour-banded birds released on Mana Island have been seen on the adjacent mainland at Titahi Bay and Petone Beach. Some have wandered as far as Blenheim and the Manawatu Estuary, and one even flew back to its aviary at Pukaha Mount Bruce. Further releases of juvenile shore plover on Mana Island will begin in February.

Find out more about New Zealand's wading birds on the [website of Te Ara: The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand](#)

Find out more about Mana Island on the DOC website: [www.doc.govt.nz>places to visit>wellington>kapiti](#)

Find out more about Pukaha Mount Bruce on the DOC website: [www.doc.govt.nz>places to visit>wellington>wairarapa](#)

For more information please contact: Colin Miskelly. Phone 04 472 5821 or 021 266 2211



Photo: Colin Miskelly/DOC

NZ shore plover male, Rangatira Island

History

Denis Fairfax is continuing with his research into the history of Mana Island. He is currently amassing information on William Hendle who was the first lighthouse keeper on the Island. If you have any information for Denis, please contact him through Brian@caduceus.co.nz

See you at the AGM

Wednesday 12 March

Plimmerton Hall

7.30pm





Mana Island T Shirts

\$20 each plus \$3 freight

Sizes S to XXL

Order from tshirts@manaisland.org.nz

Alternatively send your order
with remittance to

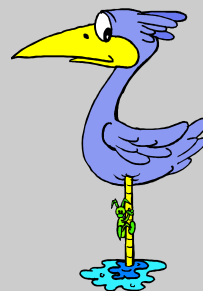
PO Box 54 101, Mana 5247

Supply your name and physical address for delivery

Don't Forget AGM

Wednesday 12 March
at
Plimmerton Hall

7.30pm



Open to non-members

Bring your friends!

Bring your partners!

Bring anyone you think would be interested!

Volunteer Opportunities

Stone Gannet painting

Six people

Monday 3 March - Wednesday 5 March
Monday 17 March - Wednesday 19 March



Planting

Ten people Monday — Friday

19 - 23 May

26 - 30 May

2 - 6 June

9 -13 June

16 - 20 June



If you are interested please contact

Jo Greenman; jogreenman@paradise.net.nz 021 038 0295

Your Committee

Brian Paget (President), Doreen Douglas (Vice President/Newsletter), Darlene Adams (Secretary), Barry Dent (Treasurer), Kelvin Hunt (Volunteer Coordinator) Jo Greenman, Jason Christensen, Ian Cooksley (DoC), Tama Coker (Iwi Representative)

Visit our website: www.manaisland.org.nz

Newsletter kindly sponsored by Mana Transport Ltd