



April 2008

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- Members Day Trip 10 May
- Annual Report for 2007
- Reptile Survey on Mana Island
- Takahe Report
- Shore Plover Report
- Subscription Renewals
- Gannet Make-over



FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

FOMI Newsletter 35

President's Editorial

Well, here we are again. Back to the future. It's hard to credit that it's been seven years since I was last President of FOMI and much has happened since then. Dave Cox for the next two years and then Brian Paget for the last five have moved FOMI on from a raw group just starting to make a difference on Mana Island to one with a proven track record of performance and a peerless reputation within the Department of Conservation and the local community. Their efforts will certainly make my job easier and I thank them.

The new Committee met for the first time last night and I must say it was a bittersweet experience. Some old faces were still there, thank goodness, but some like Doreen Douglas and Kelvin Hunt were missing. I'll miss both their company and the massive contributions they both made to the work of FOMI. Hopefully, they will still continue their involvement, even though they have moved on. On the other hand, we welcomed Alan Shepherd and Brian Bell onto the team and I look forward to working with them. Overall, these types of changes are a good

thing. Every organisation needs a mix of old heads and new ideas and enthusiasm if it is to move ahead. As a retread, I certainly have plenty of ideas and I am sure that the rest of the Committee do as well. What I would like, though is feedback and suggestions from the members. We all share a love of Mana Island and I am not arrogant enough to believe only the few of us on the Committee have the monopoly on good ideas and insights. It's good to be back!!

Colin Ryder



Mana Island Open Day Sat 10th May 2008

\$50 (Payable in Advance)

Return transport to Mana Island on Wild Cat Charters

Depart 9am Mana Marina

Depart 4pm Mana Island

**Guided walk and
an opportunity to plant a tree**

Bring your own lunch, water, strong footwear and suitable clothing

To book contact Jo: jogreenman@paradise.net.nz



Annual Report for the AGM of Friends of Mana Island Inc (FOMI) for year ending 31 December 2007

Good evening and welcome to this 9th AGM of FOMI

As always I have difficulty remembering what I did last week let alone last year and the fact that we are almost at the end of the first quarter of this year has meant a substantial amount of research has gone into this report.

One reason for that is that FOMI is a very active and well resourced organization and the Committee always find heaps of things to do and is always looking forward for more. The process of delegating responsibility to project managers within the committee works very well. This would not happen without the full on enthusiasm of the DoC field officers.

To pick off a few highlights of the year.

The Fluttering Shearwater release in January saw 91 birds released in the second wave, and of course this year we have completed the project with the release of another 90 birds. Full credit should go to Lynn Adams and Helen Gummer for their expertise and tenacity, and to Barry Dent for his immaculate organisation of the volunteers. It should be remembered that last year we had Holly Freifield from Hawaii participating and learning from their expertise in an area in which DoC is recognised as being a world leader. FOMI fully funded these releases.

I should note that Grant Timlin was confirmed as Supervisor on the Island, and Sue Caldwell appointed as Assistant and arrived with Frank and Pipiriri as additional baggage.

Planting, which has long been the focus of volunteer input over the past 20 years, slowed to a modest 7,000 trees, and was managed in small groups staying longer and thereby being far more efficient. This was partly brought about by the lack of suitable transport to the Island and the cost. The down side is that there are less opportunities for members and volunteers to gain access to the Island. The tree planting numbers will be much the same this year.

To compensate for this lack of opportunity for access we arranged for a members day in March last year which was fully funded and guided. We have arranged a similar event this year.

A project which has stuttered

along was the refurbishment of the Gannet colony. They had become decidedly shabby, unattractive to both birds and humans and overgrown. We were able to persuade Resene Paints to donate all the materials necessary and the volunteers finally finished the makeover this year. The repaint did raise a few interesting questions about what and how birds see. It is suggested that birds do not see white rather they see UV refraction and white paint pigments absorb 90% of UV light. The debate rolls on. In the meantime they are yet to be resettled.

Shore Plover have been released on the Island, and although we have not yet been involved in this an application for funding has been made to ensure that this project continues over the next 2 years. Surprisingly for such young birds a pair did get it together this year and reproduce.

Talking about funding you will note from the Accounts that we had a good year in the respect, having raised over \$27,000 in the year. Our primary sponsors have been the Mana Community Trust, The Community Trust of Wellington, Kapiti Forest and Bird and Hill Young Cooper. I have been able to get representatives of all these sponsors over to the Island to see the result of their much appreciated support for conservation projects.

Touching on publicity, we have managed to maintain our profile over the year with a National Radio Spectrum program, display and lecture at Conservation Week at Pataka, a Heritage and Environment Award from Porirua/Wellington Airport Community Trust and a finalist in the Community Trust of Wellington/Airport regional awards. From time to time we do appear in the local KapiMana News and the Dompst.

We have arranged for Maintenance trips to the Island and planting of endangered plant species during the year.

There was some excitement late in the year with the Fairy Prion release bearing fruit, which I am sure Colin Miskelly will cover later this evening.

The Historic Committee has been a little in abeyance with Denis Fairfax spending some time in the UK, but there have been some interesting pieces of information coming to light

about Johnny Knox and a relative of one of the original Light House keepers. Looking forward we have been advised that Pataka is planning a major exhibition about Mana Island early next year and invited input from us.

FOMI can be proud of the fact that we have contributed over 2000 person hours in volunteer work on the Island during the year, which of course does not include the work put in by your Committee. This equates to another person full time on the Island for over a year.

The health of the Takahe, Brown Teal, Robin, Kakariki, Lizards and Weta has been generally great during the year. Some territorial battles in the Takahe world has had an impact on the number of chicks this year. We did, for a time, monitor the progress of the Yellow Crowned Kakariki but it has become patently clear that they love the place and there is enough food to sustain them.

This year there are a number of retirees from the Committee. They all have played an important part in the life of FOMI and will be missed. Doreen, as the bridesmaid, has produced 34 Newsletters and whilst that may not be her last a potential relocation up the coast makes meetings more difficult. Doreen's contribution to the Island will be sorely missed. Kelvin has decided to throw in the towel as well. He has been Secretary, Planting and Volunteer coordinator, bird collector, painter and feeder and a generally fantastic contributor. He does say he wants to keep in touch and we will keep him up to that. Paul Quinn, a new boy on the block last year, resigned earlier in the year to go life styling in the Wai-kato.

As for me, I gave notice last year that I was not willing to do another 2 year term, and happily retire from the Presidential role after 5 years. Time for a change. FOMI will be 10 years old this December, I look forward to the party.

Thank you

Brian Paget, President.



Reptile Survey on Mana Island Colin Ryder

In 1993 the Wellington Branch of Forest and Bird funded a successful search on Mana Island for the endangered gold stripe gecko. Since then four other species of skinks and geckos have been re-introduced to the island, the brown skink has been re-discovered and the numbers of gold stripe gecko and the equally threatened MacGregors skink were thought to have grown markedly.

As part of its Joint Venture with FOMI (under which it has agreed to fund up to \$5,000 per annum for the

conservation of reptiles and invertebrates), the Branch decided to fund a lizard search organised by the renown herpetologist, Tony Whittaker, to establish what has actually happened over the past 20 years since the mice were eradicated.

Results have been very positive. As expected, the range and numbers of MacGregors skinks and gold stripe geckos have increased out of sight with the latter being found in bush habitats; whereas previously it had only been found in flax bushes, The range of the spotted

skinks (introduced from Matui/Somes Island) has also grown substantially. Juveniles of the speckled skink and Duvaucel gecko were also found.

The only surprise was that no Wellington green geckos were found but that is thought to be because they are very cryptic – like trying to find a relatively small number of green needles in a really big green haystack. Other planned reptilian translocations to the island include the robust and Whitakers skinks and the tuatara.



Takahe update from Sue Caldwell, DoC

It has been an eventful few months in the takahe world; a 'mast year' in the beech forests of Fiordland increased food sources for rodents, causing their numbers to explode and in turn cause a large spike in stoat numbers – rodents are the staple diet of stoats. Unfortunately this did not bode well for breeding takahe in the Murchison Mountains – there was a large decline in breeding success due to stoat predation of both adult birds and their young. DoC in Te Anau does however, have a large predator control area in place, and good breeding success was achieved within this zone. For us on predator-free Mana Island, the affect of the stoat population explosion in Fiordland meant that two of this seasons chicks were readied for

transfer to Burwood Bush in Te Anau. FOMI and Sir Ed produced two chicks from their first clutch of the season; and the family group was caught in early February and placed in a quarantine pen on the island for three weeks. This allowed health checks, disease screening and vaccinations to take place. The two chicks, nicknamed 'Hilary' and 'Tensing'; were ready for transfer on the 5th March, and made the long trip to Burwood via helicopter, airplane and car journey. Who said takahe can't fly? The good news is that the two settled in very well and were accepted by their foster mum at Burwood Bush Reserve. They will first learn to adapt to a diet of mountain tussocks and grasses at their new home, before being released into an

expanded predator control area in the Murchison Mountains later this year. It has been a milestone for the islands involved in takahe conservation as the programme has completed full circle with the return of these chicks to Fiordland.

In summary the takahe breeding season on Mana was a busy one – and we still have two chicks remaining on the island – one with T2 and Puffin; the other with Tebee and Toru. They will be caught, checked and banded when big enough. Sadly, one bird departed to 'takahe heaven' – it was goodbye to two-year old male Tama last month, he broke his right leg in two places and died of shock as a result of his injury. At present, the total population now stands at around 36 birds.



Shore Plover update from Sue Caldwell DoC

Most of you will be up to date with the first successful breeding attempt of a shore plover pair on the island – the chick successfully hatched on 17th January, and was fully fledged by mid-February. It was banded in late February, and by mid March was testing out its new-found freedom - spotted by a local at Hongoeka Pa at the north end of Plimmerton, before returning to the island a few days later.

The island-bred chick enjoys the company of the

islands latest arrivals – a group of 20 juvenile shore plover were transferred from Mt Bruce and Issac Wildlife Trust on the 18th February, beginning the second year of a five-year programme. These young birds were held in the portable aviary on Mana for ten days, before being released. There is a second transfer of a small number of birds from Mt Bruce scheduled for the end of April.

Another notable event over this period was the reappearance of our 'inter

-island' shore plover (from last years transfers to Mana) RO-YO. She has been seen regularly at Petone Beach by Sue Frietag, and turned up on Mana once again on the 24th March.

So, the current shore population on Mana stands at 23.

Finally, a thank you to those who find time to keep an eye out for Mana shore plover 'winging it' to the coastline on the mainland, your support is much appreciated.



Gannets in their new feathers

The refurbishment has now been completed thanks to Resene and a large group of artists under the watchful eye of Kelvin, who have meticulously reproduced each feather in the correct place. They are now residing in their new colony and awaiting some live company: Yeah Right!!

Your Committee this year is :

Colin Ryder President, Brian Paget Vice President, Darlene Adams Secretary, Barry Dent Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Jason Christensen, Ian Cooksley (DoC Rep), Tama Coker (Iwi Rep), Jo Greenman and Allan Shepherd.

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

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Images provided by David Cornick, Brian Paget, Clare Wilford and Colin Miskelly

