



July 2008

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 36

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

Special points of interest:

- Takahe accident
- Open Days
- Nature moves
- Holly's Award
- Morag Exhibits
- Pigeon Post
- Newsletter Options
- Committee Chat
- Jason calls it a day
- Subscription Renewals
- Committee

President's Editorial

We are all used to a stream of good news stories about what's happening on Mana Island. Species translocations, tree planting, surprise discoveries (such as the bittern) and a host of other positive developments have made the island a public relations bonanza for the Government and the Department of Conservation as well as an amazing conservation success. Life's not like that, though. Every so often, something will happen that will remind us that we are not always right, people sometimes make mistakes or do stupid things. There will always be setbacks. What's important is how we respond to them. Mana Island last made

headlines for the wrong reasons. A DOC worker culling pukeko shot a takahe instead. As you may imagine, everybody involved was gutted.

What I found interesting was DOC's response to this unfortunate event. Rather than trying to bury the problem and hope the media wouldn't find out about it, they adopted a more proactive strategy. They analysed the incident, developed operating protocols to reduce the likelihood of it happening again and then went to the media with a more well-rounded story. This went along the lines of "*we stuffed up, we're sorry, and this is what we are doing about it*". This approach turned the incident into a one day media wonder. While the De-

partment would have been acutely embarrassed at the time, at least they avoided the possibility of allegations of incompetence and cover-up over a far longer period of time.

There is a saying that we learn more from our mistakes. It is clear that DOC has learnt some hard lessons from this one. Openness and honesty have ensured that even more mistakes weren't made and aggregated an already bad situation. The Department should be commended for that.

Colin Ryder



Open Days

Despite the scheduling of 5 Open days they were all cancelled due to weather. This is particularly disappointing for those who booked and were willing to, and in many cases did, pay up in advance. The Committee agreed to try again later in the year, preferably after the equinoxial gales. Voluntary work groups are still required for weeding and maintenance and planting will be required next year from May to July. To volunteer contact planting@manaisland.org.nz or call Jo on 0210380295.

NATURE TAKES NEXT IMPORTANT STEP IN ISLAND RESTORATION Colin Ryder

There was a very important little sentence buried in Grant's and Sue's June report from the island.

"We even have a few resident Tui and a couple of Kereru sticking around and a Bellbird was seen by Grant's garden a couple of months ago so we must be doing something right."

What we've been doing right has been planting almost 500,000 seedlings over more than 20 years as the first step to restoring a forest ecosystem on Mana.

What's important about the presence, and, hopefully, residency, of these species on the island?

Well, apart from their own intrinsic worth, they are all

keystone species: agents of change that will facilitate the transition from an artificially created forest to one with a structure modified and maintained by natural processes.

The kereru, aka the New Zealand Pigeon, (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) is one of the largest species in the world, at about 800 grams. Now that the moa is no more, it is the only widely distributed bird species capable of swallowing large fruits whole and then dispersing the seeds in its droppings. Because of this ability, several podocarps, such as miro and matai, and hardwoods, such as karakara and tawa, are almost completely dependent on

the kereru for their dispersal. Plant species planted on the island which make good kereru tucker include miro, tawa, kowhai, five finger, pate, wineberry and the aptly named pigeonwood.

On the other hand, both the bellbird (*Anthornis melaura*) and tui (*Prosthemadera novaeseelandiae*) are members of the honeyeater family and feed mainly on nectar and berries. They are thus important pollinators and seed dispersers of native trees and shrubs. For example, several species of mistletoe are completely dependent on these species for their pollination.



AMERICAN VISITOR GAINS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD Colin Ryder

Some of you may remember Holly Friefeld, who was on Mana Island last year to observe the Fluttering Shearwater translocation under the Hawaii – New Zealand Conservation Exchange Program. Well, Holly was a 2007 Recovery Champion for the US Fish and Wildlife

Service. She achieved her award because of her work as a Vertebrate Recovery Co-ordinator with the Hawaiian petrel, Laysan duck and Mariana Fruit Bat.

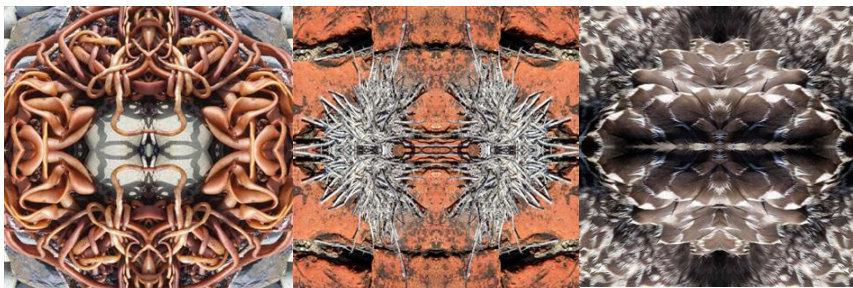
Holly gave a presentation on her experiences in New Zealand at the Hawaiian Conservation Alli-

ance Conference in July 2007. You can see it on <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-5021850683108132955>.

You either have to have broadband or be very patient –the file is about 60 MB!!

Morag Stokes

Some of you may recall that Morag won a "Mana Island Creative Residency" which she took up in February last year, 2007. She has 2 upcoming exhibitions, the first at Photospace Gallery from 24 July to 16 August 2008 and another at the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts from the 4th to 19th of October. She has examples of her work and a diary of her week on her Web Site, <http://www.stokes.net.nz/> I recommend it.





Pigeon Post June 2008

Hello from Mana Island.

Apart from the odd southerly, the weather has been pretty benign so a couple of characters on the island are still strolling around in shorts.

We are well into the winter planting project and have had small groups of volunteers staying over for a few days each week planting out trees in the areas that need a bit of bulking up. So far this season we have planted nearly eight thousand trees and only have about fifteen hundred to go to reach our annual target. It may seem a bit barren still when viewed from the main land, but the shrubs are starting to show up above the grass and with these patches filled in we should start to see larger tracts of shrub land joining up to provide a bit of cover for the ever increasing populations of North island robins and Kakariki etc. We even have a few resident Tui and a couple of Kereru sticking around and a Bellbird was seen by Grants garden a couple of months ago so we must be doing something right.

We had a small group of volunteers over last month to band the seasons Sooty shearwater chicks but the majority had departed, however we are sure the Mana

population is slowly increasing. Vince Waanders is still helping us out, this month with planting and later he will start searching the island once again for weeds. Eric Stone, a Ranger Trainee has also been helping us with the tree planting as part of his apprenticeship with the Department and it has been great to have these capable young chaps on board. Frank now has his Inshore Launchmans ticket and is helping out with the numerous boat trips we seem to do which is a great help to Grant. In fact the last time we had two boatmen on the island was way back when Jason and Grant were the team. Sue has been busy managing yet another Takahe transfer, this time to Pukaha (Mt Bruce) as well as keeping up with the Shore Plover project and a hundred and one other things. Jack Elphick, our stalwart volunteer, has been ferrying plants up the hill from the nursery to keep the planters supplied as well as bagging up plants for next seasons planting.

Our slipway has been inspected and new anodes fitted and at the same time the DOC mooring, that's the northern most one in the bay, has had a new bottom chain and shackles fitted so should be pretty

good now.

Eric pumped another load of diesel into our bulk tank last week so we should be right for a while. I thought I would get it before the price went up!

We have had the Mana Ranger serviced and surveyed recently and the compass checked, adjusted and a new deviation card produced. She could do with a cut and polish too but that might be over doing it.

The fire extinguisher man has completed the annual inspection of our many fire extinguishers so we should be safe for another year.

We have had a bit of interest from a company wishing to help us to be more energy efficient so a man came over recently to work out how he could fit a couple of solar panels to heat the water for the houses. It looks promising and we do get plenty of sunshine here. They are also talking about sending us a couple of flash fridges which will use less electricity so this summer we will have plenty of hot showers and lots of cold beers.

Take it easy, from the island folk.

Newsletter

This newsletter is produced by voluntary labour and distributed with the sponsorship of Mana Transport Limited in Porirua who not only reproduce the newsletter they also provide the pre-paid envelopes and labels, for which FOMI are grateful.

It does seem to me that sponsorship funds would be better directed to specific restoration projects on Mana Island than Membership Services. Whilst services such as the newsletter are important and valued by FOMI as an appropriate means of keeping our devoted membership up to date, the snail mail option has been overtaken by time. Not only is electronic transfer more efficient and cost effective, it has the great benefit of being available in full colour at minimal cost.

Members have 2 methods of receiving the Newsletter electronically, one by email, the other by download from our Website. We are aware of the issue of size and endeavour to produce a Newsletter which will be a maximum of 1 MB.

With the introduction of legislation we must have you permission to email the Newsletter. If you wish to receive an email copy or download the newsletter rather than an black and white (monochrome) snail mail version, please email newsletter@manaisland.org.nz and state your preference.



Committee Chat

Your Committee have the following projects under consideration or action:

- A meeting was held with the Wellington Conservator for DoC to discuss and consider a Memorandum of Understanding between FOMI and the Department.
- The Committee approved the purchase of a second aviary for the Shore Plover release at a cost of \$2,500 which has been covered by a grant from the Wellington Community Trust.
- Denis Fairfax updated the committee on the oral history project, Trevor and Jan Hook being the most recent interview.
- Pataka are planning a Mana Island exhibition to be displayed early in the New Year.
- Allan Shepherd (an "Old Blue" awarded by Forest & Bird) has pulled together a proposal for remote monitoring of the water tanks with an initial cost of \$2,100, funding to be sought.
- The Committee awaits a priority list from DoC providing a schedule of possible projects with their justification so the financial and voluntary input can be sought.
- Planting for the 9000 trees scheduled for this year has been completed with small groups of volunteers staying a few days at a time.



Jason Christensen

Jason surprised us all at our last Committee meeting by announcing that he has resigned from DoC and will take over the family farm in the Wairarapa in August. Jason has been an integral part of the restoration plan on Mana Island and had been incarcerated on the Island for over 10 years. I guess it was inevitable that once he had been released on the mainland that he would seek fame and fortune elsewhere. So he moves from endangered species to domesticated animals, but I understand that he intends to continue his guided tour business in the Tararua's, if he can find the time. He also says that he wishes to continue on our Committee, just so he can keep an eye on things. We hope he will and wish him the best in his new life.



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

For a color version of this Newsletter download one from our web site www.manaisland.org.nz

SUBSCRIPTION

Have you renewed your subscription yet?

We appreciate your support and welcome your membership and any donations.

Editor: Brian Paget

Sponsor Mana Transport Limited, Porirua

