



November 2008

Special points of interest:

- Furniture wanted
- Open Day Report
- 22 Years of effort
- Newsletter Options
- Committee

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

President's Editorial

Your Committee spends a lot of its time discussing possible projects; whether we can afford them; and if we can't, where's the money coming from. There's nothing unusual about this – every household and organisation in the country does it. It's all about setting priorities and mobilising resources to best effect. For an organisation with only 260 members FOMI punches well above its weight. In addition to many thousands of hours of voluntary effort, it has been estimated that it has contributed about \$140,000 of financial support for DOC projects on the island over the last ten years. That does not include subsidising planting trips to the island, publishing our brochure, buying the caravan, the work that Denis Fairfax is doing recording the oral history of the island and meeting a number of other administrative and one-off costs. With members contributing about \$3,000 - \$3,500 annually to FOMI through their subscriptions it is clear that successive Committees have been very successful in lever-

aging this baseline cash to raise the funds for these projects. Most of these have only proceeded because of the generosity of our members through their donations and support from a range of philanthropic organisations; particularly the Mana Community Trust and the Community Trust of Wellington with which we have enjoyed longstanding relationships.

Just to illustrate the point I am trying to make, these are the conservation projects that are either underway or on our books:

Remote Water Tank Monitoring System - \$3-\$4,000 (\$1,000 from the Greenwood Trust and the rest internally funded)

Emergency Repair and Upgrade of Seabird Sound System - \$2,300 (internally funded)

Translocations of shore-plovers – about \$28,500 for remaining three years of project (fully funded from grants from the Mana Community Trust, the National Wildlife Trust and Birdlife International (through Forest and Bird))

Capture and translocation of Whitakers skinks – up to \$21,000 over three years, depending on suc-

cess (no funding yet)

Translocations of bell-birds and whiteheads from Kapiti - \$3-5000 (no funding yet but considering a public appeal)

Planting trips in 2009 – up to \$5,400 (no funding yet)

Installation of Sound Systems for white-faced storm petrels and flesh-footed shearwaters - \$8,000 (net) (to proceed if funding permits)

Support for seabird monitoring system as part of research project – this involves the early purchase of a solar powered electricity supply costing \$1,200 that will be used subsequently in a seabird sound system (internally funded). Quite an impressive list! It's not as daunting as it looks as some of the expenditure is spread over three years and we do have quite a good hit rate with funders as well as very generous members. After all, FOMI committed to the fluttering shearwater translocation project which cost some \$45,000 without the money in the bank. Hopefully, we can rely on similar support from funders and our members in the future.

Colin Ryder

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Lockwood Furniture

Those of you who are or have been regular day visitors to Mana Island, and especially the overnights, will have made some comments about the standard of the lounge furniture available. Not even up to Salvation Army minimum standards.

Should any of you be disposing of "pre-loved furniture" and want a good home on paradise you could donate it to FOMI. Allan would be happy to receive any donations, email him on "owlet@xtra.co.nz"

MANA ISLAND OPEN DAY – 11 OCTOBER 2008 Brian Bell, Committee Member

From the window of my house on the hill above Karehana Bay in Plimmerton, Mana Island dominates the view which stretches from Stephens Island in the north to Mount Tapuanuku in the seaward Kaikoura's to the South. The features of Mana Island that stand out from the main land are the macrocarpa trees on the northern end of the island, Bush Gully which is about two thirds of the way towards the northern end and then the replanting that has occurred on the south eastern valleys. The table top of the island seems mostly still in grass. I have wanted to go back to Mana Island for some time to see how the planting has progressed and to see and hear the birds that had been released on the island. My family moved in to the Pauatahanui area in 1985 and as members of the Royal Forest and Bird Society, Kath and I and our two kids Sam and Emma who were 8 and 6 at the time had taken part in the early planting on the island in 1987 and 1988. I was very keen to see how this planting had fared. The open day held on Saturday 11 October was the opportunity I had been waiting for.

Thirty one of us assembled at Pier F in the Mana Marina and Jason Christensen, (a former ranger) on the island and our guide for the day, briefed us and reminded us to check our bags for rodents. This may seem a bit over the top, but Mana's status as rodent free island was attained through a massive eradi-

cation campaign and is a key to the island's success as a working research and development centre for restoring indigenous diversity to the region. We were welcomed on to Wildcat by skipper Lance and headed out the entrance of the harbour and over the bar. Although sunny the brisk northerly had kicked up the waves and the trip across to the island was a bit bumpy especially for those on flying deck which swayed precariously on the occasional steep and short choppy waves. Even at the mooring the wind was whipping around the corner and disembarking at the breastwork at the island was a bit tricky, but managed without incident.

Before setting off on our tour around the island we stopped at the Lockwood and met Vince and Sue the resident DoC staff along with a rather tame takahe. Everything looked in good shape with lush spring grass and clover covering the flats and the tracks. After outlining the intentions of the day Jason led us along the track heading north above the beach on the eastern side of the island. He explained how Te Rauparaha had established a settlement on the island as a staging point for raids across Cook Strait and north to Taranaki. Maori had kumera gardens to feed the warriors before setting out and also to recuperate before returning to loved ones on the main land. We could see no signs of this original occupation. In the next era European farmers established a sheep and beef farming operation and the original

wool shed, now a historic building, offered fascinating glimpses into this part of the island's history. Cattle were swum out to the island tethered to a dinghy and we saw one of these little row boats in the wool shed. Shearing machinery was still in working order having recently been restored. Littered on the floor of the woolshed were hundreds of what looked like fragments of fine wool staples, but were in actual fact the discarded skins of geckos!

Carrying on up the track we stopped overlooking the beach where a whaling station had once operated and were told about the work done to re-establish the island's population of skinks and geckos. It was an easy climb to the plateau of the island with great views back across to Plimmerton. Jason took us down a ridge and into Bush Gully hoping to see the North Island Robins but they must have been off elsewhere as we had no luck. Bush Gully is a remnant of the bush which once covered the island and is an important source of plant material. It was getting towards mid day when we arrived at the trig on the northern tip of the island. This was once the location of a lighthouse and it was a surprise to all of us that the original lighthouse was lowered down the cliff and taken to Taranaki where it still operates today. Unfortunately it was a bit hazy and we couldn't see





From there we headed south and stopped in a depression out of the chilly wind for lunch. It is very exposed on the west side of the island and any growth that sticks its head up is immediately wind sculptured. Even the flaxes were shredded by the prevailing nor westers. A bit further on Jason drew our attention to a long narrow depression along side the track. This is where 3000 sheep were buried in 1979 after being slaughtered during a scrapie scare. At that time the island was a research centre for exotic sheep breeds run by the then Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. It seems ironical that the sheep were slaughtered on the suspicion of the disease as the risk to New Zealand's sheep industry was too high and the consequences too great to contemplate waiting for confirmation, which had to come from the UK. Towards the southern end of the island we passed the concrete gannet colony complete with recorded sound. These birds are quite lifelike, although we don't know what the real gannets think. Evidently there have been a few gannets come and inspect, but none have stayed so far. A little further on we inspected the Fluttering Shearwater burrows. No birds were in residence yet

as it will be about 2010-2012 before nesting starts. Each burrow consists of a box with a lid and a short tunnel about half a meter offset to the side. The lid allows our volunteers access to take the downy nestlings for feeding of sardine-in-oil smoothies at a caravan parked nearby. To the side of the nesting boxes were a couple of speakers with appropriate bird noises. At this point Jason and I took off to take a look down Forest and Bird Gully, the scene of our planting some 20 years ago. How time flies, hardly seems anything like that. We made a good pace across the southern part of the island and then down the track towards the buildings from where we started. About halfway down we left the track and bush bashed down into the gully to the left of the track. The undergrowth was thick and tangled with a mat of springy vines forming a layer over the ground in places. Most of the trees were 3 to 4 meters high with ferns in the damp spots at the bottom of the gully. The first generation of trees are now well established and form an ideal environment for the next and climatic trees to start pushing up to the sky. Jason was looking for a Kahikatea that was planted at around 1988. At last we found it standing in

water and looking very healthy with a diameter breast height (dbh) of about 10 centimeters. This will be a magnificent tree as it matures over the next 100 years. Back out at the track the yellow-crowned parakeets flitted around us and a single Tui made it distinctive call close by. We discussed the pros and cons of releasing Bellbirds (Koromako) on the island and wondered whether there would be enough food all year round for these birds, particularly in competition with the more aggressive Tui.

We were now back down on the flat and quickly came across the ponds, all three with plenty of water. A solitary pair of brown teal watched us go by. We couldn't dally as it was close to departure time, so it was back for a quick cup of tea and then back on the boat. We packed an incredible amount into the day and my story merely brushes over the history and endeavors of the generations of invaders of this island. Over the next 20 years should see growth take off. All the hard work is bearing fruit with a solid foundation for reversion to something like the state of the island before man intervened. It was a well worthwhile visit made doubly interesting by Jason's lively commentary.



WHAT'S HAPPENED ON MANA ISLAND?

Colin Miskelly of DoC was recently given the task by his Regional Conservator of nominating Mana Island as one of Australasia's twenty top ecological restoration projects. Colin did his usual thorough job and drafted a very comprehensive and impressive nomination. There's enough information in the nomination to form the basis of a number of hopefully interesting and illuminating articles. In the first of these we shall have a quick look at what we have achieved on the island since the farm stock was removed.

1986 - last farm stock removed.

1987 – Mana Island gazetted as a scientific reserve, tree planting initiated, takahe introduced.

1989-90 – mice eradicated, freeing the island of introduced mammals.

1993 – goldstripe geckos rediscovered on Mana Island.

1995-96 – North Island robins reintroduced.

1996 - Cook Strait giant weta and Wellington tree weta translocated from Mana Island to Mātū/Somes Island, brown skinks discovered.

1997 – first diving petrel chick translocation, concrete gannet decoys installed, 250,000th tree planted. 1998 – spotted skinks, Wellington green geckos and Duvaucel's geckos released, Waikoko wetland restored, Friends of Mana Island formed.

1999 – *Mana Island ecological restoration plan* published, diving petrel chick translocations completed, first breeding by diving petrels.

2001 – brown teal released.

2002 – first fairy prion chick translocation.

2004 – speckled skinks, yellow-crowned parakeets and flax weevils released, fairy prion chick translocations completed, initiation of inter-planting of canopy tree species, second diving petrel colony discovered.

2005 – first breeding by yellow-crowned parakeets and fairy prions.

2006 – first fluttering shearwater chick translocation, first release of Wellington speargrass weevils. 2007 – first release of shore plover (captive-reared), first breeding by shore plovers.

2008 – fluttering shearwater chick translocations completed, 500,000th tree planted.

During most of this 22 years there have been ongoing programmes of weed control (main species targeted: boxthorn, boneseed, kikuyu grass, *Senecio glastifolius*) and attempts to establish or bolster nationally or locally threatened plant populations, including Cook's scurvy grass, large-leaved milk tree, *Euphorbia glauca*, *Pimelea aridula*, *Muehlenbeckia astonii*, *Rubus squarrosus*, *Fuchsia perscandens*, matagouri, and the grass *Trisetum antarcticum*.

Been a busy bunch, haven't we?

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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