



FOMI Newsletter

February 2011

FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

FOMI Newsletter 44

Special points of interest:

- Editorial
- AGM Notice
- Sound System on Mana
- News from Sue on Mana
- Mana Island Shearwater Chick
- Committee

President's Editorial

Hi

February. Hot, steamy weather. Sausages on the barbecue. `Back to the grind-stone at work as the Christmas holidays start to recede in the memory. And, oh yes, time to arrange the next Friends of Mana Island AGM.

My major responsibility on the night – besides chairing the meeting – is to present the Annual Report. Besides thanking those involved in progressing our mission, it gives me the opportunity to review what we've done over the past 12 months, mention what we intend to do over the next 12 months; and provide some qualitative commentary about the Friends and our opportunities and challenges.

I might be slightly delusional and I might be tempting fate, but the forthcoming President's report is going to be one of the most positive yet. I feel that FOMI is in a very good space. Okay, we still have unresolved challenges, such as the need to find a boat that can take large numbers over to the island, but overall things are going well. The birds are breeding, the trees are growing and DOC are working hard and well to sustain the relationship. We've agreed a strategic direction and will be focusing on four major workstreams. (Boy, I love those managerial buzzwords). Best of all, we're having fun while adding value and I've never been happier (that's not quite true but you know what I mean).

So turn up at our forthcoming AGM. We've got a inspirational and interesting speaker, you can find out in more detail what the Committee has been doing with your and other people's money and, if you're that way inclined, you can ask those awkward questions to try to burst my little bubble.

Colin Ryder, President



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is given to members that the AGM of The Friends of Mana Island Inc. will be held at the **Mana Cruising Club**, Ngatittoa Domain

7:30 PM, 30 March 2011

The purpose of the meeting is to present the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts and to elect the Officers and Committee Members for the 2011 year.

The speaker will be Dennis Keall who will talk about his work with lizards, with emphasis on the Mana species. He will bring some animals to illustrate his talk

ANATOMY OF A MEETING

Contributed by Colin Ryder

Every month your Committee gets together to progress the business of the Friends. While many members would regard the thought of attending Committee meetings with as much relish as speaking in public or going to the dentist, there are Committee meetings and there are Committee meetings. Let's face it. If we didn't have a Committee and we didn't have a Treasurer and we didn't have a Secretary, then we wouldn't have a FOMI.

Proposal to install sound systems on mana island to attract Burrowing seabirds

An extract from a funding proposal for a sound system which has now been installed.

THE PROJECT

Burrowing petrels are foundation species on many New Zealand islands, providing major nutrient inputs (droppings, regurgitations, and corpses) for terrestrial ecosystems, and habitat (burrows) for many invertebrates and reptiles. Accordingly, restoring colonies of burrowing seabirds to Mana Island is one of the six key tasks identified in the *Mana Island Ecological Restoration Plan*. The success of many other restoration projects, including the re-introductions of threatened plants, reptiles, and invertebrates, may depend on burrowing seabirds being re-established.

Three species of burrowing petrels have been translocated to Mana Island over the past eleven years. Embryonic colonies of diving petrels and fairy prions have already been established on the island and a three year project involving a third species (fluttering shearwaters) was completed in early 2008, with some birds returning already. The fairy prion and fluttering shearwater projects were both resourced by FOMI.

The techniques trialed and proven on Mana Island are now being used elsewhere, including with the critically endangered taiko, Chatham Island petrel and Huttons shearwater. Experience has shown that the use of sound systems to help attract seabirds to new sites will be also important to the success of these projects.

While translocations may also be necessary to ensure the re-establishment of some seabird species, it has been demonstrated elsewhere that others can be attracted by sound stimuli only. It is intended to use this relatively cheap and straightforward approach on Mana Island to attract two species; the white faced storm petrel and the flesh footed shearwater.

The Department of Conservation also intends to trial satellite based, remote control technology on these installations. This would involve adding some software and a satellite phone access system (using the Iridium satellite network) to enable remote monitoring and control of the sound systems.

Management options to be tested would include being able to assess the status of batteries and other electronics, remote programming and control of calls being played (targeting species likely to be visiting at that time of year) and being able to turn off the system to preserve battery life if sunlight levels are too low or if no target species are likely to be present at that time.

If successful, such technology will materially reduce both the need for maintenance and lifetime costs as well as improve effectiveness.

It would enable call systems to be employed cost-effectively to attract a wide range of seabirds to safe havens in countless remote locations internationally. The Audubon Society in the United States, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the United Kingdom and Birdlife International have all expressed interest in this initiative.

A new framing design for the supports for the solar panels and speakers will also be trialed on one of the units. The design is intended to provide an extra margin of security for systems placed in locations with unstable soils and/or subject to high wind loads.

As with the projects involving the other seabird species on Mana, volunteers will be mobilised by FOMI to prepare artificial burrows in the vicinity of the sound systems.

THE BIRDS

White faced storm petrel (*Pelagodroma marina maoriana*) (Image 1)

This very abundant species breeds on a number of islands off North, South, Stewart, Chatham, and Auckland Islands. The species often only breeds on one island in an island group. The only (relatively small) population in the Cook Strait region is on Sentinel Rock in the outer Marlborough Sounds.

The largest populations of this species elsewhere are on islands with a similar topography to that of Mana; i.e. with a headland or flat area. It could well be that the island would have been the regional stronghold for this species in pre-human times because of this characteristic and the fact that it is large enough to enable the storm petrels to form colonies without competition from other larger, more aggressive, seabirds.



The other seabird species being reintroduced to Mana Island only form colonies on or near cliffs because they need up draughts to become airborne.

While a new population on Mana Island is not necessary to improve the species' conservation status, the storm petrel would be the only seabird considered thus far for reintroduction that would have the potential to bring the significant ecological benefits mentioned earlier to most of the island.

Experience has shown that other petrel species are very susceptible to acoustic attraction, and sound systems are being used in locations such as the Kermadecs and the Chathams, as well as overseas, to encourage them to return to their former sites.



Image 1



Image 2

Flesh-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus carneipes*) (Image 2)

This is another relatively abundant species but it has been under pressure in recent times because it is a common by-catch of fishing (both commercial and recreational) and because it may be susceptible to predation by introduced mammals.

In New Zealand, they breed on the Hen and Chicken Islands, Mercury Islands and on Karewa Island, off Waihi in the Western Bay of Plenty, as well as on other small islands, including Titi Island in Cook Strait.

News from Sue On the Island as at 2 February 2011

Shore Plover: Total of 18 nests so far this season, with two nests still incubating. Total of nine chicks banded to date, with at least five still too small to band yet. We now have second-generation Mana-bred birds here after two of the Mana-bred birds from 2009/10 bred successfully this season. Transfer and soft-release of eight birds from Pukaha/Mt Bruce completed 27/1/11 by Rose Collen. Second and final 2011 transfer planned for early March (Helen Gummer)



Takahe: Have 31 resident birds (adults and sub-adults) after transfer of T2 and Puffin to Zealandia on 28/1/11. Monty re-released into her territory and doing well. Have six chicks from 10/11 breeding season at present, mostly second clutch.

Bellbird/Whitehead: Heaps of whitehead sightings over the past month, plenty of unbanded (juvs) appearing around the houses/buildings, House valley, and Forest Valley and they are very vocal. There has also been several confirmed sightings of bellbirds, both banded and unbanded birds, mostly around houses/buildings, so it appears they have successfully established and bred here – quite an achievement. We've trialled the lure-call tape (with female bellbird call only) and it works well, even lures in whiteheads at forest Valley! We plan to map all of the data collected to date, as it is six-months post release.



Mana Island chicks signal seabird transfer success

Extracted from a DoC press release dated 21 December 2010

Mana Island's first 'home grown' fluttering shearwater chick bodes well for the success of a 13-year effort to return three seabird species to the island

The chick hatched in November from an egg laid by a breeding pair in specially designed artificial burrow. The male parent has been confirmed as one of the 225 fluttering shearwater chicks transferred from Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds to Mana Island, between 2006 and 2008. The female of the pair had been lured in from the sea by loudspeakers set up on the island.

Two other pairs have nested on the island so there may well be further chicks this breeding season. Fluttering shearwaters were the last of three burrowing seabird species tricked into believing Mana Island was home, as part of a plan by the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Friends of Mana Island (FOMI) to restore the island's ecology.

Along with diving petrels and fairy prions before them, the fluttering shearwaters were translocated as chicks to Mana from islands in the Marlborough Sounds, reared by volunteer human parents in artificial burrows and hand fed sardine smoothies prior to fledging. All three species are now breeding on the island.

The news of the fluttering shearwater chick has delighted those involved in restoring the island

"This is another major and exciting milestone towards the restoration of ecosystems on the island, DOC's Mana Island ranger Sue Caldwell said.

"It's one of many examples that the island is evolving and changing quite rapidly, and the support of volunteers and the local community is really helping this restoration process along." It's extremely positive," said FOMI president Colin Ryder, acknowledging the funders of the seabird transfers, in particular the Mana Community Trust and the Community Trust of Wellington.

"We look forward to more seabird transferees arriving home to raise their young."

"It's fantastic that the shearwaters are back and breeding," says Dr Colin Miskelly from Te Papa, who has been closely involved in the translocations.

"So much effort goes into each translocation, and it can be a long, nerve-racking wait for the birds to mature and return to breed after four or more years at sea."

In another twist this season, Mana Island's first 'home grown' fairy prion chick has now returned as a breeding-aged adult.

The seabirds spend their life at sea, reaching maturity at four-years-old. More are expected to 'touch down' on the island over the next few years.

Image by Dave Cornick



Your Committee for the past year has been:

Colin Ryder President, Brian Paget Vice President, Darlene Adams Secretary, Barry Dent Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Jason Christensen, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Tama Coker (Iwi Rep), and Allan Sheppard and Irene Swadling.

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

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