



August 2012

## FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 48

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua

### Special points of interest:

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- Rowi Release
- Rowi Story
- Bellbirds
- Kakariki
- Shore Plover
- Committee

### President's Editorial

Hi

It is hard to believe that our AGM was 5 months ago and the last Newsletter was in May. Doesn't time fly when you are having fun.

I am pleased to report that the new Committee are settling in to their work and some of the administrative glitches which seem to be inevitable when the key positions of Secretary and Treasurer are changed after a prolonged period in office, are now ticking along as we all become familiar with our new roles. The delegation of areas of interest for nominated Committee Members to manage is proving to be very effective.

We have already achieved a surprising amount together with DOC, and Mana Island is proving to be a very important link in the Conservation chain. This Newsletter will cover off a number of projects which have been carried out recently and a number which are work in progress.

Our relationship with DOC has been particularly rewarding, despite the reviews that they seem to have suffered in the past and undergoing at the present. In line with current Government Policy the Department are being asked to do more with less, both in terms of funding and inevitably personnel. This has had an impact on both access to Mana Island and the number of projects which staff can comfortably manage. At the moment it looks most likely that both Mana and Kapiti Islands will be managed and serviced by the same team, including a single boat.

These changes will open up more opportunities for FOMI, of course, to provide the necessary grunt to carry out the various existing projects and any upcoming ones. The skill level of volunteers will have to be upgraded as well, again the requirement to do more with less. No longer do we require boatloads of people willing to plant hundreds of trees. We will now need volunteers skilled in monitoring and translocating birds, baiting and monitoring predator controls, monitoring pit-fall traps, arboreal skills, threatened plant knowledge and many others.

To provide this support we need not only financial members but members who either have the skills or are willing to be trained in them. If your membership has lapsed, or you have a particular skill or have an interest in gaining one, let us know by contacting any of the Committee or by email to [icontactus@manaisland.org.nz](mailto:icontactus@manaisland.org.nz).

Cheers



Photo by David Cornick



Photo by Davie Hansford

## Return of the Rowi to the North Island, 19 June 2012

I was privileged to be invited to represent FOMI on this important occasion and to witness the culmination of the effort put in by DOC and the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust.

For those of you who may have missed the Press release It follow:

“Rowi, the world's rarest kiwi species, is returning to the North Island after an absence of hundreds of years. Twenty juvenile rowi will be going to Mana Island near Wellington to establish a new colony in the hope of improving the breeding prospects for the species. Normally they would be going home to Ōkārito in South Westland from their crèche on Motuara Island in Queen Charlotte Sound.

‘By sending a juvenile population north to predator-free Mana Island, we’re making it possible for the rowi to breed with much less human interference.’ says Iain Graham, Operation Nest Egg™ Ranger. ‘We expect that the absence of predator pressure, better breeding conditions and less competition for territories will ensure that the Mana Island rowi produce a high number of chicks that can eventually become part of the home population in Ōkārito.’

The Department of Conservation removed the 20 rowi eggs from the Ōkārito forest to protect them from predators - stoats and other introduced pests - as part of BNZ Operation Nest Egg™. After they were hatched at the West Coast Wildlife Centre in Franz Josef, the chicks were raised to maturity on predator-free Motuara Island in the Marlborough Sounds. The juveniles are now ready for their long term OE. The rowi will be transferred by New Zealand Air Force helicopter from Ngāti Toa Domain across to Mana Island. Thanks to conservation efforts led by DOC and the BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust, rowi numbers have slowly been increasing from a low of fewer than 200 birds in 2007. Pest control in Ōkārito forest is ongoing but reinvasion rates of stoats and rats mean that supplementing natural breeding using the BNZ Operation Nest Egg™ programme has guaranteed a better level of success in producing young adult rowi.

BNZ Save the Kiwi Trust executive director, Michelle Impey says saving the critically endangered rowi has been a priority ‘At one point it looked like the rowi decline was a tragedy in the making. It’s been a fantastic relief to see BNZ Operation Nest Egg in action; this tool has been vital in bringing the population quickly back to a point where the species, with nearly 400 birds, has a future. Still we want to get the population even higher to secure a robust population. The Mana project can help achieve this.’



‘The next generation of young Mana-born rowi can help to reclaim the natural range of their ancestors further north from

Ōkārito Forest.’ says Wayne Costello, DOC Area Manager for Franz Josef. ‘Natural breeding is far preferable to intensive management and the outcome from the Mana colony may set a trend for other species of kiwi that are constantly under threat in their mainland sanctuaries.’

The Ngai Tahu hapū on the West Coast, Kati Māhaki ki Makaawhio, are kaitiaki – guardians for the rowi on the Coast. When the young kiwi go north to Mana Island, Ngāti Toa Rangatira will take over the kaitiaki role for the small isolated colony. With no kiwi currently on Mana, the iwi are keen to embrace the opportunity to be involved in such an exciting project which holds so much hope for rowi.”



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*





## The untold Story

You may have noticed that the plan was for the Rowi to be transferred by the NZ Airforce in an Iroquois helicopter from the Ngati Toa Domain. The birds were duly loaded along with their escorts of members from DOC, the Kiwi Trust and Iwi representatives and duly made the necessary two trips across to Mana Island. All passengers and crew were duly attired in life jackets and clothing to combat the open-sided, draughty, noisy, drizzly flight across the ditch. High Drama indeed.

The Press, on the other hand, were all travelling in the comfort of a Helipro and were dropped outside the Lockwood.

The drizzle persisted during the ceremony and the release of the birds, some in Weta Valley and the rest in Forest Valley. A sumptuous lunch, prepared by the local Rugby Club was enjoyed by all.

The time came to return to the Mainland, the Press in their leather bound Chopper and the rest of us by courtesy of the Air Force.

At least that was the plan.

The first flight in the Iroquois was duly completed, then the aged machine decided it had had enough, and literally retired to the grass on the domain for the next 2 days.

Fortunately for the 7 of us patiently awaiting its return, Helipro came to our aid and we enjoyed the First Class armchair ride back home.

It does make you wonder about our expenditure on Military hardware.

Some images of the day.





## Potted News

### Bellbirds (Korimako) hitch a ride to Mana Island

60 Bellbirds flew by Helicopter from Kapiti Island to supplement the 43 birds released 2 years ago on Mana Island.

The transfer follows months of planning and is the culmination of a partnership between the Friends of Mana Island (FOMI) and the Department of Conservation (DOC).

The FOMI project manager, Jason Christensen, was delighted with the response from volunteers and commended the organisation by Melody McLaughlin and the DOC team in capturing the birds on Kapiti and the release and monitoring of their progress over the next few days on Mana Island.

Peter Simpson, Programme Manager, DOC, said he was pleased that FOMI and their supporters have undertaken this second phase of the Bellbird transfers. It is in line with the restoration plan of establishing a self sustaining forest and bird population on Mana Island. Most translocations need a second follow up release to rebalance the ratios of male and female birds, and this transfer is no different.

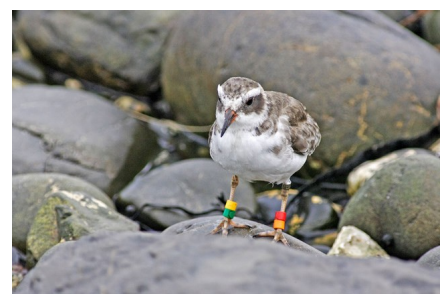


### Breaking News

As we go to press we have learned that the Yellow Crowned Kakariki we transferred from the Chetwodes in 2004 have bred (or is that inbred as we only released 26) so successfully that it is proposed that 30 birds will be translocated from Mana Island and will be released in Boundary Stream Mainland Island. In return it is proposed that 20 birds will be transferred from Whirinaki to improve the genetic diversity on Mana Island. Another transfer is scheduled for 2013. The plan is to carry this out in the first week of September 2012.

### Shore Plover

We are still concerned about our Shore Plover flock and their activity in Plimmerton when they should now be thinking of returning to Mana Island to mate. Should you see any on a regular basis please let us know. Whatever you do in Plimmerton keep your cats indoors at night and control your dog.



### Your Committee for the 2012 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen Vice President; Irene Swadling, Secretary; Ian Hoare Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Linda Kerkmeester, Dale Shirtliff, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Reina Solomon, (IWI representative).

To contact any of the above email them at [contactus@manaisland.org.nz](mailto:contactus@manaisland.org.nz)

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