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FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 57

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua, 5247

Special points of interest:

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- Fluttering Shearwater burrow maintenance Report from Dale Shirtliff
- Brother International NZ Ltd Sponsors Trip
- Colin Miskelly on Legal Protection of Native Birds
- Committee 2014-2015

President's Editorial

Hi

Well we are now into Winter, so I am told, and the shortest day has passed us by, ending one of the mildest and windless Autumn's on record.

Makes one wonder whether climate change has in fact arrived by stealth and we still refuse to acknowledge it or deal with it in any positive way.

Recent events have also got me wondering about whether we are really doing enough, or care enough, to deal with the plight of a number of our endangered species. It is with some concern that the Recovery Group for the Shore Plover have, following the rat incursion on Mana Island in 2011, a predator incursion on Portland Island in 2012, and the establishment of a new colony on Motutapu Island, concluded that there is insufficient captive breeding capacity to produce enough birds for large releases on all three sites. It has been recommended that the remaining Shore Plover on Mana Island be captured and returned to Mt Bruce to increase the supply of birds from the captive breeding program. DOC have indicated that a new release of birds to Mana Island may be a year or two away. FOMI have allocated funds to assist in an upgrade for the Mt Bruce facility to ensure that the captive breeding program succeeds. We will be sorry to see the birds go, but with only around 300 left it is in their best interests.

Do we have or maintain good enough facilities for captive breeding sites and for that matter pest control? One rat and dire consequences.

This also got me thinking about the other endangered species we have on Mana Island, Takahe, Brown Teal and Rowi, for example which also hover around the Critical or Threatened classification. Are we doing enough to ensure their survival? Further than that we are struggling to get enough Whitaker Skinks into captive breeding so they can be released on to a predator free environment.

Predator free Islands or areas are critical to the survival of these endangered species and just one minor incursion can have a major impact, as has been experienced with the Shore Plover.

I am reminded of a presentation by Colin Miskelly some time ago, when he outlined the decline in the number of species over the years and the trend which must be of concern, a look at www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz will provide a useful reminder of the birds which can be categorised as being threatened.

We are fortunate to have sponsors to assist in our efforts, but I wonder whether that is enough.

Cheers

Brian

Mana from the Fire Station at Plimmerton and the 5 remaining Shore Plover residents



Whitaker's Skinks & Fluttering Shearwater Burrow Maintenance Trip by Dale Shirtliff

Dennis Keall breeds Whitaker's Skinks and other skinks and geckos at Wainuiomata. Dennis is a financial advisor who has developed skill and knowledge in breeding rare and endangered lizards, following up on his life long interest in this subject.

I visited Dennis on 25 May to view his operation and to gather information on what he saw as the future for Whitaker's skinks. Of the Whitaker's caught at Pukerua Bay Scientific Reserve he has run a successful breeding program, producing 26 young skinks over the last 3 breeding seasons. Over this period no more Whitaker's have been caught which means there is a limited gene pool available to help ensure their long term health and survival – hopefully in a colony to be set up on Mana Island.

Dennis is positive about FOMI's pitfall trapping programme at Pukerua Bay. He had ideas on revised, hopefully more effective trap placement. FOMI has yet to decide whether to fund the trapping over next summer.



An old man Whitaker's Skink collected in the 1960s, so it's around 50 years old.

Dennis, in front of a gecko cage the sunny spot is great for basking, behind the glass.

Fluttering Shearwater Burrow Maintenance Trip

Laurie Smith (FOMI volunteer), Jeff (Ranger) and I worked on the fluttering shearwater site 29 and 30 April. All 101 burrows had their entrance trenches and tubes cleared. All lids had soil and grass cleared back 3-5 cm on 3 sides to allow easy access and water-tightness.

A number of flax plants were overgrowing burrows and were obscuring them and restricting access. These plants were removed or severely pruned back. Jeff helped out by weedeating the site and assisting with flax control. He chose to assist and his efforts meant we could complete the task. Helen Gummer, who oversees the fluttering shearwater project, has seen these photos and is pleased this has been done well and done while the birds are absent - before they begin showing up soon for the breeding season.



Brother International NZ Ltd, Sponsors of the Shore Plover



One of the obligations FOMI has to our sponsors is to provide them with an Annual working trip to Mana Island for a number of their staff. For the past two years we have taken staff to Mana and provided limited work opportunities, and given the reduced options for planting we decided to divert their energies to planting in the mainland, at Whitireia Park, which will in time provide a very important flight path for birds migrating to the mainland. Brother were very keen on this option and still wished to retain an interest in the Shore Plover project. We arranged, through DOC and the Wellington Regional Council, for half a day of planting in June, at Kaiua Bay, and between the 9 of them they managed to plant some 400 plants, pingao, carex, sand tussock, wiwi, bidi bidi and tauhinau.

What is really important now is to continue this relationship which is now in its 4th year. Brother have changed their approach to sponsorship and have expanded their web site to cover a world wide project called Brother Earth.

Brother Earth was launched for two reasons: First, in order to share our wish and on-going efforts for environmental protection. And second, to introduce the various environmental technologies that we develop. Our goal for creating Brother Earth is to explain our activities in an easy-to-understand way to the general public while offering everyone an opportunity to readily join one of our projects, such as "Click for the Earth." If this sounds like something that may interest you, visiting Brother Earth is the first step to learning about Brother's numerous environmental activities.

Our funding from Brother will be dictated by an International program which requires you and all our supporters in NZ to vote on line, preferably on a daily basis. If you can find just a moment to vote every time you first access the Internet each day and go to this URL you will see the image below. Then just press the donate button.

It is estimated that this could provide us with up to \$10,000 annually.

<http://www.brotherearth.com/en/top.html>

Click for the Earth

When you choose the activity you want to support and click the "Donate" button, Brother will make a donation of one yen (about one cent USD) per click on your behalf.

[Donation Reports](#)

Click Points

Today's Total: **327 pt**
Overall Total: **208,338 pt**

Country/Region	Project Description	Points Available
Peru	Conserving the tropical rainforests	10,850 pts
Canada	Developing forest resources through tree planting	7,379 pts
Mexico and South America	Support for tropical rainforests conservation	8,022 pts
USA	Reforestation through planting trees	39,625 pts
New Zealand	Habitat restoration for endangered species	7,380 pts
Australia	Supporting research survey on manta ecology	7,370 pts
Japan	Forest conservation by tree-planting and removal of non-native species	38,651 pts
China (Inner Mongolia)	Efforts to combat desertification	12,836 pts
China (Shenzhen)	Tree planting and removing non-native plants	17,718 pts
China (Hong Kong)	Forest conservation through tree planting	7,370 pts
Thailand	Efforts for mangrove reforestation	8,327 pts
UK	Contributing to reforestation at a former quarry site	42,810 pts



What was New Zealand's first fully protected native bird? A blog from Colin Miskelly

This is an edited extract of Colin's on line Blog at <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2014/07/03/what-was-new-zealands-first-fully-protected-native-bird/> . For detailed information log on to his blog.

I suspect that this is a question that few people have given much thought to. The answer should be as much a part of our conservation heritage as our first national park (Tongariro, 1887). The national park answer can be found in many conservation reference books and websites, but few authors have attempted to name our first fully protected native bird.

Before 1903, the only legal mechanism used to protect native birds was to add them to the native game list, then to exempt them from hunting. To list a rare native species as 'game' is contrary to modern understanding and sensibilities – but the alternative at the time was year-round slaughter. Native birds were killed for food, sport, feathers, and as desirable specimens for museums and private collectors – and for the latter at least, rarity commanded a higher price.

The first native birds to be added to the game list in order to protect them from hunting were the [white heron](#) and [crested grebe](#) in 1885 – and some authors have suggested that they were our first fully protected birds (i.e., protected in 1885). This is incorrect on two counts. Both species were protected at the behest of the Otago Acclimatisation Society, who noted that “they are fast disappearing”. But it took a further three years before all acclimatisation districts exempted them from hunting – just in time for the 1888 game season. By this date, one other native bird species had been fully protected for a decade. This was well understood at the time – by politicians, naturalists and hunters – but appears to have been forgotten or overlooked by authors and researchers in the 108 years since most of our native birds were protected in 1906.



The [huia](#) was one of New Zealand's first fully protected species (in 1892), but this was not enough to save it from extinction. Image: Te Papa



The tui – New Zealand's first fully protected native bird. Image: Tony Whitehead, New Zealand Birds Online

The unlikely answer to the riddle is the [tui](#) – now one of our most abundant and widespread native birds (unless you happen to live in Canterbury). The tui was added to the native game list in 1873, when it was listed in the Protection of Animals Act 1873. Five years later, the Wellington Acclimatization Society [yes – they alone spelt it with a 'z'] requested “We should also wish the Tui to be excepted from native game”(in a letter to the Colonial Secretary, 4 March 1878). Not only was the tui exempted from hunting nationwide in the 1878 game season, but the exemption was applied in every acclimatisation district in every year until the tui (along with kiwi, kakapo and many other species) became absolutely protected in 1906.

For more information on the history of protection of New Zealand wildlife, see this recent Te Papa publication: [Miskelly, C.M. 2014. Legal protection of New Zealand's indigenous terrestrial fauna – an historical review. Tuhinga 25: 25–101.](#)

Your Committee for the 2014/15 year is:

Brian Paget, President; Jason Christensen, Vice President; Julie Harrison, Secretary, Dick Fernyhough, Treasurer and a Committee of Brian Bell, Linda Kerkmeester, Dale Shirliff, Irene Swadling, Rob Stone or his representative (DoC Rep), Reina Solomon, (IWI representative) and co-opted Membership Officer, Darlene Adams and co-opted Volunteer Officer, Sue Chesterfield.

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

