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FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INC

FOMI Newsletter 62

P O Box 54101, Mana, Porirua, 5247

Special points of interest:

- Editorial
- MFE Trip
- Gecko's and FOMI
- Work Party Report
- Ngahere Gecko Release
- Mana Teen Camp
- Your Committee
- Sponsored by Adcold Refrigeration and Contracting

President's Editorial

Hi

On a day like today it makes you wish that one was in the winterless North but it is good to see that even they have copped a load of this particular weather event. That has also got me thinking about the impact of weather and our efforts to look after and maintain our Island. Of late we have had plans thwarted by weather which has meant cancellation of working trips and in particular the erection of an enclosure to contain the transfer of Ngahere (Forest) Geckos to Mana Island. You may be aware of a debate held recently in Porirua to raise funds for the walkway around the Pauahatanui Inlet which was based on the proposition that the inlet be filled and converted into an International Airport, which would cost less than extending Rongotai and release that land for Industrial use. Inevitably, of course, some locals took the moot seriously and were vocal in their indignation. The Team who supported the motion won comfortably, supported by the Mayor and the Real Estate heavy weights despite the impassioned plea of Hekia Parata. There were some great concepts promoted, including a direct link from the International Terminal to the resort on Mana Island, connected by a tunnel, causeway or bridge, so that tourists could enjoy the wonders of Mana Island and the endangered species thereon. Sounds like an unlikely scenario or dream, but is the not an opportunity here, to promote Mana Island as a Tourist destination in much the same way as Matiu Somes or Tiritiri Matangi Islands? They are both reserves but have the advantage of a Ferry Service which provides a reliable (mostly) service and supported by volunteer groups. We have a tricky piece of water between Mana Marina and the Island which is very much dependent on a favourable wind and a suitable craft. Things have certainly improved over the past couple of years with the advent of Eliot Falconer and his craft, but of course overnight stays are not available to the public at this time. Will that change in the future? I expect so. If that is to be the case then some consideration and planning needs to go into providing appropriate facilities to attract

If the weather keeps this up maybe we could have a skifield as well, at least the Takahe would feel at home!

Cheers

Brian Paget
President.



Gecko Release Day
Photos by Brian Paget

Ministry for the Environment Trip to Mana by Robert Mclean

Despite flooding during the week around Porirua and Kapiti, Sunday, 17 May dawned fine and the seas were calm enough for a crossing to Mana. The intention of the trip was a day-out on the island for the Planning and Kaahui Taiao teams of the Ministry for the Environment (MfE). It would be a time to learn about the cultural and ecological history of the island, with plenty of opportunities for relaxation and team building. Partners and children were also invited. So many of the group had 'always wanted to go' to Mana! A total of 30 made it to the island, including Jason Christensen from FOMI. Our 1st stop was to the Lockwood House for welcome, introductions and lovely morning tea. This was followed by a short mini-tour by Jason around the wetland and associated historic areas with the children and adults alike delighted in both flora and fauna, especially the geckos. After our little walk, we were hungry enough for a shared lunch back at the Lockwood. With this sustenance, many felt energetic enough to walk to the top of the island and enjoy beautiful and stunning views. Some of the group went with Jason to the southern end to Titi Wainui/Fair Prion nesting areas. Another group headed for the northern lighthouse site for the views and sun. Our last stop was the historic woolshed. We all returned safe and happy back to the Mainland by 3 pm. A big thank you to FOMI especially to Brian Paget who help with the organisation and Jason Christensen for the tour guide. Feedback from the group was really positive and everyone had a greater understanding and appreciation of Mana Island, its history and the work by DOC and FOMI. We came away with real appreciation for all the voluntary work done by FOMI over the years and the challenging times ahead as DOC moves to empower more community involvement in conservation.

Robert McClean, New FOMI member and trip organiser



Geckos and FOMI from Ian Free

Sometimes we receive accolades and Ian and a friend of his joined us from Auckland on one of our visitor trips to Mana Island in March which was guided by Jason. His Bio background is that he completed a Master of Creative Writing at AUT University at 84.

If only I were young and fit enough
To fly to Mana and to wield a spade!
But ancient muscles are no longer tough
To dig the trench, despite not being paid!

Instead I send my greetings and my praise.
I had a perfect visit, March 21st.
In perfect weather, most wonderful of days!
So uplifting I thought my heart would burst!

And now you'll build a pen where geckos breed.
Good luck to them, may fertile be their seed!
And their breeding true, no miscegenation
And FOMI not a Figment Of My Imagination.
All strength to your arms,
Ian



Work Party 1-3-May Report



The work Party of 9 volunteers together with Sue, Linda and Dale from the FOMI Committee departed on Friday evening and returned on Sunday after carrying out a number of tasks including weeding, and light welling. The weather was brilliant and the group attacked their tasks with enthusiasm and achieved some impressive results. The concept of having at least a day and a half of volunteer work is justification of the arrangement which FOMI has agreed with DOC to share the boat cost for such trips 4 times per year. The limitation is not the capacity of the boat, but the capacity of the Lockwood to house them for 2 nights. The light welling is a precursor to providing floral diversity and adding or releasing tree species and it is hoped that specialist groups of volunteers will form to carry out this task.

For those who may be interested in participating in these trips in the future should set aside the weekend of 31 July –2 August and register with Sue suechesterfield5@gmail.com.

The marine image was not part of the activities but observed by Dale & Gillian at the Fluttering Shearwater Site.



Ngahere (Forest) Gecko Release by Brian Paget

What a perfect day midst some terrible weather which delayed not only the planned release but also the installation of the enclosure. A gap was spotted in the weather so a decision was made to release the 23 Gecko who had completed their quarantine at the Zoo. Regrettably the short notice meant that Winstone Aggregates could not be represented as funders of the project, but FOMI, Ngati Toa, DOC, ZOO, EcoGecko, and Taranaki Whanui were all represented. Anneke had us all well organised and Trent and the ZOO had the animals under control. The enclosure is impressive, designed to keep the animals in, not as usual to keep predators out (of course there are none on Mana Is). After the usual formalities of handing over the care of the animals from the lwi the lizards were all dispersed into their assigned locations. It is expected that a further 5 animals will be released once they have completed their quarantine. EcoGecko have to be congratulated on getting the fence around the half hectare set aside for them and Jeff for making sure no Takahe or Rowi were fenced in.



Photos by Brian & Kath Bell



Mana Teen Camp – 7-11 April 2015 by Lynn Adams

(As a bit of background, this initiative was arranged by BirdsNZ and supported by DOC aimed at 16-18 year olds during the School Holidays to develop their skills and interest in bird ecology. Unfortunately there were no registrations from FOMI members or their children/grandchildren so we sponsored our allocation to Ngatitua. Ed.)

On the afternoon before departure, and on close inspection of the weather forecast, it was decided to turn the "Mana Island Teenage Field Camp" into the "Mana/Matiu Teenage Field camp". Unfortunately with rain and gale force winds predicted for several days and the sea too rough to get out to Mana Island it was decided to go to Matiu/Somes Island until the weather improved. While the logistics were quite rushed, it was a fortunate change of plan because we had an opportunity to see penguins and tuatara up close on Matiu and experience another island. By Thursday the weather had abated enough for us to get out to Mana Island. By the time we got off Matiu/ Somes and up to Plimmerton and out to Mana it was mid afternoon. We were able to get mist nets up for a couple of hours before the rain again set in. On Friday the mist netting was again affected by periods of rain but with putting nets up and furling them during periods of rain we were able to have a reasonable catch rate. On Saturday we had our first fine day of the week and were able to mist net in the morning before getting ready for an early PM departure.

Although we did not catch big numbers of birds we had a great variety and sufficient to be able to give trainees experience and by the end of the trip they were all competent in handling birds. We colour banded a number of birds to give added experience. We caught 6 birds of an amazing 16 species.

Species caught were - *Bellbird - 17 all colour banded, Blackbird - 4 also colour banded, Chaffinch - 1, Greenfinch - 1, Goldfinch - 3, Dunnock - 6 colour banded, Yellow Crowned Parakeet - 11, Fantail - 1 colour banded, Grey Warbler - 1, Whitehead - 7, NI Robin - 1, Kingfisher - 3, Tui - 2, Silvereye - 3, Welcome Swallow - 1, House Sparrow - 1 colour banded.*

We had hoped to catch some of the original transferees of Bellbird, Yellow Crowned Parakeet and Whitehead but were unsuccessful.

We encourage visitors to keep an eye out for band combinations and report these to the Birds New Zealand Wellington regional recorder: nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com

As well as the mist netting teams under the guidance of Graeme and Shane they went to the Sooty Shearwater colony and were able to band over 40 chicks.

A smaller group of teenagers were given the opportunity to do non-bird work at various times, being on Mana was too great an opportunity to to miss and see awesome lizards ! Our late arrival did limit what we could achieve so on an adjusted schedule Dominique, Cameron and Lynn headed over to the original McGregors skink site where Don Newman did his research. We were hoping to find and set up the original 20 pitfall traps and catch some of the marked animals. Luckily the site has some good land marks because the site looked completely different from 5 years ago when the traps were last opened. Vegetation had increased height and density, and all tracks were overgrown. We searched for about 1/2 an hour for one trap without luck and Lyn, who had confidently claimed it would be easy to find them, declared a new plan. Instead we started looking in new sites to see if we could extend the known range of the populations which has spread very quickly in recent years. Many of the Friends will be interested to hear that McGregors are now found close to the Lockwood within the known range of spotted skinks! Teenagers also had the opportunity to spotlight geckos at night and most got to see goldstripe geckos and raukawa geckos which were out in abundance just outside the Lockwood. The response to flax weevil was mixed, even without telling of the remarkable population explosion on Mana since the reintroduction. Other lizards seen included glossy brown skink, northern grass skink and copper skink.

Several giant weta were found when looking for goldstripe geckos.



Your Committee for the 2015/16 year is:

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

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

Editor: Brian Paget

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