



Newsletter No. 72

December 2017

Friends of Mana Island NEWS

IN THIS ISSUE:

20th anniversary

Historical display

Diving petrels

Two working bees

Flax weevil research

Trip gift vouchers

From FOMI's President, Brian Bell

What a year! So much achieved and yet in some ways it's been a game of prepare and wait with set-backs on two key projects.

On the positive side, we have had a great series of work parties. Dale has managed this super efficiently working with DOC's Mana Island Ranger Chris Bell and teams of FOMI volunteers. Hannah has provided support mustering the volunteers for each trip.



The rata is flowering on Mana Island in time for Christmas.

Chris is moving on to be the ranger on Kapiti Island, with a swap over of the rangers on Kapiti coming to Mana. We have had a great working relationship with Chris and wish him and his wife Mara all the best in the new position. We welcome the new rangers Genevieve Spargo and Nick Fisintzidis. They have a hard act to follow!

Also, very successful has been the ramping up of our guided tours. Jason has done a great job in developing and producing the new self-guided trail brochure with the new marker points around the island. He also manages all the guide recruitment and training.

Organising the actual tours is a major task and, thanks to Philippa, this has gone very smoothly.



DOC ranger Chris Bell talking to visitors on a recent guided trip. They are using the new seats installed by FOMI volunteers.

We now have ten fully trained guides and five in training which will meet the needs for the current season. From August to December this year, 135 people have come to Mana Island on our guided trips.

Our partners' meeting on the island with DOC and Ngati Toa at the end of June was a milestone and brought us all a bit closer together for the benefit of Mana Island's restoration to a pre-settlement Cook Strait ecosystem.

Winning the Wellington Airport Community Award for Porirua City, Heritage and Environment Category was a real highlight and great credit to our many volunteers. We were also delighted that our sister organisation Pest Free Plimmerton was runner-up. A 30-second video was produced to introduce FOMI to the regional judges.

A disappointment has been the inability to get our two bird translocation projects underway. Our proposal for the translocation of white-faced storm petrels is on hold now until 2019. The sticking point appears to be unrelated to the actual proposal, but rather we seem to be caught up in the Treaty settlement process with DOC and Ngati Mutunga the iwi on the Chathams. We remain positive that the translocation will go ahead in 2019.

The Fernbird translocation from Lake Rotokare to Mana Island has also been delayed and we now await the outcome of Pauatahanui's translocation before we decide to go ahead. We expect our translocation will now take place in the autumn of 2019 at the earliest.

As ever, administration is a key function and the efforts of Dick and Philippa as Treasurer and Secretary respectively mean we hum along very nicely. Thanks to John FOMI's records are in much better shape and more accessible to members through the website. He is also getting us ramped up in adopting the citizen science approach to our activities.

Behind the scenes Linda and Jason have been working on a proposal to restore the wetland. We see this as a flagship project for 2018.

Looking ahead, planning is well advanced on a programme of celebrations to mark FOMI's 20th anniversary. Bringing Pip on board as communications manager has lifted our profile on social media and largely thanks to her we have a great programme of events for 2018.

Happy Christmas and may the new year be full of pleasant surprises. *Cheers, Brian*

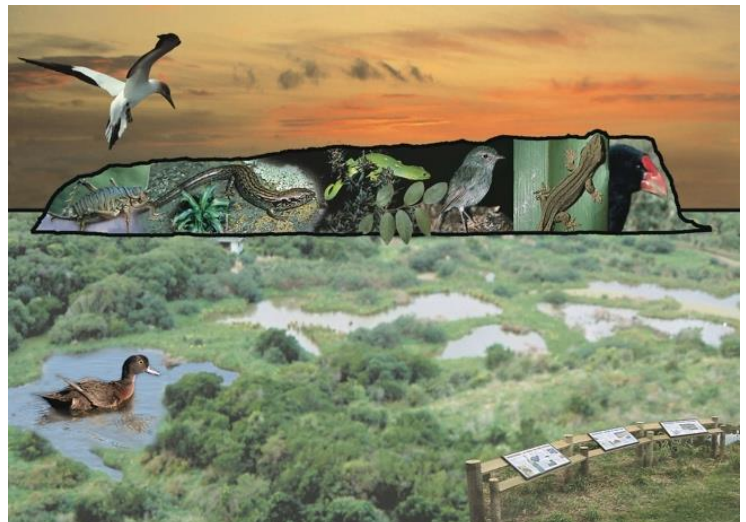
Gift vouchers available - for guided trips to Mana Island

Looking for a cool gift idea?

For the first time, we have gift vouchers for guided trips to Mana Island.

The trip costs \$60 per person (non-members). The vouchers feature this very colourful collage.

To get yours email: guidedtrips.manaisland@gmail.com



It's our 20th anniversary next year and we are celebrating! *by Philippa Sargent, FOMI Executive*

2018 marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Friends of Mana Island. It's a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what our volunteers have achieved over this time on Mana Island.

We hope many volunteers, both past and present, will join us in celebrating the ongoing restoration of the island, in partnership with DOC and Ngati Toa.

Here are some dates to note in your 2018 diaries now.

Our calendar of anniversary events

March 2018 – Special picnic on the island. This will be a fun day out on the island. We will arrange the boat transport. FOMI members and their families will have the first option to go. There will be 60 places available. Cost will be the normal \$50 for members, \$60 for non-members. If bad weather means the boat can't go, we will arrange a mainland alternative. The date (likely to be 25 March) and booking details will be confirmed in the New Year.

From now until June 2018 – Photo competition. Mana Island is a photographer's paradise! We are running a photo competition from now until June 2018. If you have ever taken photos on the island, dig them out and see if they fit the criteria. Or book a trip and take some new ones! The categories are flora (plants) fauna (birds, lizards, wetas etc), landscape/seascape, and people on Mana. And there are cash prizes for the winners. See the [photo competition page](#) on our website for full details.

August 2018 – Display at Pataka's Bottle Creek Gallery. We are thrilled to have been selected to mount a display in the gallery for four weeks in August. Our display will include photos over the years, a new model of the island (produced by Doug Royson), a new video showing volunteers and visitors on Mana (produced by Kaboose Media) and a memories board for people to record their memories. We also plan to have some public talks about restoration work on the island. We are very grateful to Matty and Jess from Kaboose, and Doug for donating their time. Stay tuned for details...

15 September 2018 – Anniversary celebration dinner. This will be at the Plimmerton Boating Club on Saturday 15 September. Details coming later.

All year – Anniversary project. We are working on a special anniversary project in 2018 - the restoration of the wetland on Mana Island including the construction of a boardwalk through this area. This major piece of work will begin next year.

[Bookmark the anniversary page of our website.](#)



PĀTAKA
ART + MUSEUM

New historical display mounted in woolshed *by Jason Christensen, FOMI Executive*



At the November working bee, a new display was mounted in the woolshed.

The display panels date back to 2010 when Pataka Museum had a Mana Island display based on a book by Bob Maysmor. At the end of the exhibition, FOMI obtained the display for a possible visitor centre on the mainland. The panels were stored until this year when the decision was made that such a visitor centre was not viable.

With DOC's help the displays panels were moved to Mana Island and installed in the woolshed replacing the old panels dating back to 1990.

There is a lot of information on the panels so you do need some time to read them all. There's even a rum barrel to peep into and get a surprise!

"A great day out" *by Philippa Doig, FOMI Executive*

We've been surveying visitors after our guided trips to Mana Island and had some wonderful feedback. Here's what people have said:

"Very cool, I liked all the birds that I learned about."

"An interesting and enlightening day out to a local treasure."

"Amazing service. Thank you to all the volunteers who have made this day special for us. Your work is awesome...great explanations on flora, fauna, bird life and historical facts."

"Keep up the fantastic work."

Mana Island has an interesting history. Mariano Vella's family farmed on the island for 70 years. The great grandson of Mariano Vella visited the island recently with family and friends on a guided trip. He is planning a Vella family reunion trip there early in 2018.

The guided trips have strong bookings for 2018, so get in quick if you want to go this summer. There are still places from mid-March, and we do run a waiting list. This season runs until June 2018.

A note about biosecurity – We have been asked by DOC to be more stringent about biosecurity checks for visitors to the island, so there will be more scrubbing of boots and inspecting of the contents of day packs. On our website under the [Visitors section](#) there is a link a video showing how to get ready for the biosecurity check.

To book a trip visit the FOMI website www.manaisland.org.nz and look under [Visitors](#).

Tracking diving petrels on Mana Island

by Dale Shirliff, FOMI executive

Two scientists recently visited Mana Island to track diving petrels. The prime purpose of the trip by Colin Miskelly and visiting French scientist, Charly Bost, was to attach tracking devices to the diving petrels.

Colin has been monitoring the birds since they were translocated to the island in 1997-99.

Two different devices were deployed. The first was a tiny GPS logger which tracked the parent bird's foraging movements for up to 48 hours.

The device was attached to the upper tail feather coverts and retrieved to gather the travel data. Ten birds had the devices deployed and all 10 were retrieved.

Another 10 birds had GLS loggers attached to a leg. Colin will retrieve these in June/July next year. They will track the birds' travels after the chick raising has taken place.

Charly Bost, who assisted Colin, is an expert in attaching these devices.



A diving petrel chick.



Fixing a GLS logger to a parent bird's leg.



Colin weighing a diving petrel chick.



From left, Colin, Charly, Dale.

Flax weevils and *Beauveria pseudobassiana* by Dale Shirtliff, FOMI Executive

If you have been to Mana Island recently, it's likely you will have noticed entire flax bushes with leaves severely notched – great chunks missing from these very tough leaves. You may also have seen flax graveyards – brown piles of decaying flax bush remains. The culprit is the endangered flax weevil.

These invertebrates, endangered except on rodent-free islands like Maud and Stephens, were transferred to Mana in 2004. They have thrived on Mana but have decimated large areas of flax.

We recently carried out research in an attempt to learn why this has happened, when on Maud and Stephens there is only minor flax damage. The research was instigated by Dr Colin Miskelly a long-time advocate and active volunteer for Mana Island.

The research

Soil samples were collected from around flax plants on Mana. A fungus, *Beauveria pseudobassiana*, which we now know is lethal to flax weevils, was found in the samples. We believe this fungus is responsible for keeping the flax weevils to reasonable numbers on Maud and Stephens.

Soil samples on Mana, taken from flax the weevils hadn't got to yet, showed no sign of the fungus. We now believe the adult flax weevils carry the fungus spores with them so that they have free reign on the new flax bushes they move to.

The weevils are flightless so they travel on foot to their next bush. In the absence of a high level of activity by *Beauveria pseudobassiana*, the adult weevils feast on the flax leaves and the larval form attacks the roots. Over a period of just a few months a healthy bush quickly transforms into decaying heap. It takes time for the fungus spores to build up in the soil.

We are now planning how to spread *Beauveria pseudobassiana* to areas of flax not yet suffering from the flax weevil plague. We need to find out the effects the fungus may have on other invertebrates and whether plant irrigation has an effect improving fungus spore counts. Plan details have yet to be decided and permission granted. Watch this space.

You can [read the research paper on our website](#) – “*Beauveria pseudobassiana* and the flax weevil from Mana Island”, by Travis Glare and Jenny Brookes, Bio-Protection Research Centre, Lincoln University, November 2017.

[Photos by John Marris and Dale Shirtliff]



An adult flax weevil.



Flax weevil larvae.



A flax plant eaten by the flax weevil.

Eight working bees done and dusted in 2018 by Philippa Sargent and Dale Shirtliff, FOMI executive

Two working bees in November and December, brought the year's total to eight.

The November trip - Seventeen people went across for the weekend. Jason's group of seven, including Nigel, Barry, David, Richard, Linda and Mark, focused on the woolshed and wetland. The woolshed work involved mounting several display panels, originally used for a display at Pataka. An enlarged seating arrangement was created adjacent to the woolshed. The wetland was explored and weeded and a possible route for a new walkway was GPS mapped.

Dale, Allan and the other Richard carried out maintenance work including removing yellow flowering broom above MacGregor's rock, and retrieving tracking tunnel cards along Tirohanga Track.

Peter, Haritina, Sam and Haritoa made up the gecko monitoring group. Lynn Adams (DOC) brought along teenagers George and Huia to set up a gecko monitoring pitfall trapline. This group is part of 'Birds New Zealand teen'.

After multiple trips with no gecko finds, the gecko group was able to boast four Ngahere gecko catches. Lynn's group set up their trapline on Saturday hoping to trap lizards overnight. They failed to capture any this time, but a larger group of these keen young people will return to Mana several times to continue with this and bird work.

The December trip - Again, it was a group of 17 volunteers. Among the group was a film crew from Kaboose Media, Matty and Jess, who donated their time to get footage on the island. This is for a video celebrating FOMI's 20th anniversary next year. A drone was used for aerial shots of the island. There were also lots of close-ups of birds, lizards, plants and volunteers.

Key tasks included vegetation clearance around the entry tunnels and trenches of the seabird burrows by David C. and Gavin. Helen monitored fluttering shearwaters both nights (assisted by Miguel, Milena and Xavier). Both Helen and Colin spent days and late nights at the bird colony sites. Colin focused on banding diving petrel chicks and checking on returning prions and shearwaters.

Tania, David A., Bruce, Gavin, Jess and Nancy cleared the takahe capture pen fences. There are nine on the island. Tania and David also monitored the flax trial plots dotted around the island. Jess, Nancy and Bruce did a big beach clean-up of plastic and other litter south of the hole in the rock. Other tasks involved karaka weeding and stockpiling of firewood.

The 16 lizard pitfall traps which had been set up on the November trip were opened up and monitored. We found lots of common geckos and a few common and copper skinks.



Allan Sheppard weeding on Mana during the November working bee.



David Cornick being filmed by Matty Warmington from Kaboose Media, doing maintenance on the seabird burrows.

We have five heritage peach trees left for sale



The old peach tree flowering this spring in Bell's garden on the island.

These trees are from Mana Island. We are selling them as a fundraiser for future historic projects on the island.

As part of keeping the historic genetics of the Mana peach alive, we grew some trees on the mainland at secure sites as an insurance policy and these have produced fruit.

They can be collected from Plimmerton. The cost is \$10 for a small one up to 30cm tall, or \$20 for a large one up to 80cm tall.

These are some of the juiciest peaches you will ever taste!

To secure yours email lindakerkmeester@gmail.com for Plimmerton pick up.

Remember to renew your subscription to FOMI

The subscriptions we receive from our members help fund the many projects carried out every year.

As a FOMI member you receive:

- ✓ A quarterly newsletter sent direct to your inbox, with news about FOMI's projects and activities.
- ✓ Emails with volunteering opportunities, including weekend working bees on Mana Island.
- ✓ Notice of the AGM each year, with the performance report and President's report, and the ability to vote.

See our website under [Join Us](#) for how to pay your subscription.

www.manaisland.org.nz