



Newsletter No. 74

July 2018

Friends of Mana Island NEWS

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Message from FOMI President, John McKoy

There has been a great deal of activity going on behind the scenes over the last three months by FOMI executive members and many of our volunteers.

The guided trips to Mana Island have been happening very successfully, and spectacularly in one case, as you will read in this newsletter.



*The humpback whale seen on a June trip to Mana.
(Photo: Jason Christensen).*

It is great to see one of the important objectives of FOMI being so well implemented – ‘to promote the scientific reserve on Mana Island’ – by taking visitors across to the island.

The many tasks on the weekend work parties are also contributing to another of our specific goals – ‘to provide physical support for projects and work approved by DOC’. A quick glance at the latest work party report in this newsletter will give you a feel for the wide variety of tasks undertaken. We have no trouble recruiting volunteers for the work parties – to the point of regular oversubscription! Thanks to everyone who puts their hand up to work on these trips.

Recently, we have been discussing with OMV, our major sponsor, the timeline for the proposed fernbird and white-faced storm petrel translocations to Mana Island. These translocations have been delayed for a range of reasons beyond our control. The discussions have shown us the continuing enthusiastic support from OMV, for which we are very grateful. We have also discussed sponsorship for a project to restore and enhance the Waikoko wetland on the island. This project has been developed by Linda Kerkmeester and Jason Christensen. OMV has responded very positively to the proposal and we hope to get formal approval very shortly. More on this exciting project soon.

Our 20th anniversary year is shaping up well. I had the privilege of collating entries to the photo competition. Some of the numbers are summarised in this newsletter. Thank you to everyone who shared their wonderful images of, on, and around Mana Island. Thank you also to the judges, Destina Munro and Linda Kerkmeester, who are contributing their time and expertise to the tricky task of selecting winners. We look forward to being able to flaunt the best entries soon!

In August we have the most public part of our 20th anniversary celebrations with an exhibition running all month at Pātaka in Porirua. “Celebrating Our Volunteers” tells the story of FOMI and its volunteers, mainly through photos, videos, and a model of the island. We also have several really interesting speakers doing public talks each Sunday. I’m looking forward to attending these. Details are in this newsletter. We hope you can get along to the exhibition. *Cheers John*

“Celebrating Our Volunteers”

20th anniversary exhibition at Pātaka Art + Museum

3 August to 2 September



I'll be there with bells on ...

Our special 20th anniversary exhibition – “*Celebrating Our Volunteers*” – opens in the Bottle Creek Gallery at Pātaka in Porirua on Friday 3 August.

Make sure you get along to see it! This is a special occasion in the history of Friends of Mana Island. The exhibition is designed to recognise the efforts of the many volunteers over the past 20 years.

It features a **new model** of the island meticulously constructed by Doug Royson, using a topographical base from a previous Pātaka display.

There are many fascinating **photos taken over the years** showing volunteers working on the island doing planting, bird and lizard work, maintenance and guiding, plus some beautiful images of the wildlife. We have several **panorama photos** showing the island in the 1980s and how it looks now. Quite a transformation!

There will be **two short videos** showing – one sponsored and produced by Kaboose Media featuring a weekend work party and a guided trip, and the other by Holly Turner of a guided trip she went on.

Two display panels include an interesting **timeline** showing the work undertaken by Friends of Mana Island and the long list of the organisations who have contributed to the island’s restoration.

We will also have a **memories board** for people to record their memories of visits to the island. We look forward to reading these.

Thanks – A special thanks to all the photographers whose photos feature in the exhibition; to Doug Royson for his painstaking work on the model, to Kaboose Media and Holly Turner for the wonderful videos, and to Sue Hobbs from Minimum Graphics for designing the fabulous display panels. All these people gave their time freely to these projects. We are very grateful!

Thanks too, to our Sunday speakers – see next page for details...

Pātaka is located on the corner of Norrie and Parumoana Streets in Porirua. The exhibition is in the Bottle Creek Gallery.

PĀTAKA
ART + MUSEUM

Note - Anniversary celebration dinner. This was to be have been held in September, but we have decided to concentrate our efforts on the exhibition.

Sunday short talks at Pātaka – as part of FOMI’s 20th anniversary ...

Come and hear our island restoration experts talk about “How to Restore an Island”. During each of these short talks (20-30 mins) a volunteer will also give their perspective on the projects.

- Step 1 - Have a Restoration Plan
- Step 2 - Bring back the birds – and keystone species
- Step 3 - Enhance habitat and reintroduce lost species – lizards
- Step 4 - Succession planting – from colonisers to canopy species

Sunday 5 August at 2pm – Colin Miskelly and Colin Ryder Have a restoration plan

- restoring the ecology of an island farmed for 150 years
- mouse eradication and early species introductions
- using science to solve some of the tricky issues

The two Colins are very well known on the New Zealand conservation scene. Colin Miskelly is the Curator Vertebrates at Te Papa (originally a scientist with DOC) and also renowned for his expertise on birds. Colin Ryder has volunteered for many years on Mana Island, including being the first president of Friends of Mana Island. He has project managed numerous conservation projects in the Wellington region, and managed the eradication of mice from Mana Island from 1989-90. This will be a lively discussion about how the restoration work on Mana Island is progressing towards the objective of restoring the indigenous biodiversity of a Cook Strait island ecosystem.



Sunday 12 August at 2pm – Asha Fernandez and Trent Bell Bringing back the lizards

- translocation and reintroduction of lost species
- volunteer involvement and monitoring

Trent and Asha are from EcoGecko Consultants and renowned experts on lizards. They have been involved in many successful translocations to Mana island and the ongoing monitoring work and training volunteers to assist. Together they have a wealth of knowledge to share about these fascinating creatures which are now prolific on Mana Island. There will be opportunities to ask questions and learn to identify some of the various species of lizards that call Mana home.



Sunday 19 August at 2pm –Graeme Taylor Bringing in the birds

- why Mana is well known for its successful seabird translocations
- why seabirds are important to the restoration of Mana
- other birds introduced to Mana Island

As a DOC scientist and all-round bird expert Graeme Taylor has led several translocations of bird species to Mana Island. His knowledge of birds is phenomenal and he has been known to literally call the birds out of the sky! His stories about translocations will make for a very interesting session. He could even be persuaded to demonstrate some bird calls.



Sunday 26 August at 2pm – Linda Kerkmeester Replacing half a million mice with half a million trees

- restoring the flora of the island with the help of hundreds of volunteers
- successional planting – from hardy colonisers to forest canopy

Linda has been volunteering on Mana Island for more than 20 years and is a mine of information about the island’s history and current status. As a landscape architect her speciality is restoration of the indigenous ecosystem from early colonisers to canopy species. She has seen first-hand the transformation of Mana Island. Linda will share stories of successional planting towards achieving a kohekohe/tawa canopy emerging through the early planting by volunteers.



Whale of a time on guided trip to Mana Island by Philippa Doig, FOMI Executive

The 2017-18 season ended on a high note as visitors on a returning boat in June were treated to a close-up view of a humpback whale that breached and blew for the delighted spectators. [Here's a short video.](#)

We have had excellent feedback from visitors spending a day on the island on one of the 16 guided day trips that ran during the season, between August 2017 and June 2018. Seven trips were cancelled, mainly because of bad weather.

We have especially enjoyed seeing photos taken by expert photographers on the island. Some of them really give us a new perspective on the bird life and views from Mana Island.

The dates for next season starting in August 2018 are on our [website](#) now.

Survey draw – Thanks to everyone who completed survey forms for the guided trips over the past season. We have just drawn a winner – Meaghan Kelly wins a free trip to Mana Island. Congratulations Meaghan.

June work trip used the many and varied skills of our volunteers

by Dale Shirtliff, FOMI executive

A lot of tasks were accomplished in a working party trip over the weekend of 15-17 June making good use of the skills of our 17 volunteers.

Flax trial monitoring, lightwelling of trees, transplanting kahikatea, clearing trail culverts and overhanging branches, marking out the green gecko enclosure boundaries, monitoring Ngahere geckos, five-minute bird counts, and recovering tracking devices from diving petrels, were some of the many tasks covered.

[Read more](#) about this work trip on our website.



Heather and Annemieke looking for Ngahere gecko.
(Photo: Dale Shirtliff)



Our band of volunteers after finishing their weekend's work. (Photo: Dale Shirtliff)

Nigel's legacy continues on in a song

Nigel, who was our first resident gannet on Mana Island, now has a song dedicated to him. Dainius Kucinskas, a 24-year-old from Lithuania has composed a wonderful tribute to Nigel and his story of unrequited love.

Dainius says – ‘While listening to a podcast a couple months ago, I heard Nigel's story and was incredibly moved. The story seemed so sad and tragic, yet I found some optimistic light in it. So, being a musician, I wrote and recorded a song for him and for the people who brought him to the island and saw his life unfold. I really hope the song reaches those who take care of the concrete gannet colony and the whole Mana Island community.’

Thanks Dainius, and thanks also to Holly Turner from Forest & Bird for the video footage, which is used in the [YouTube video](#) of the song called ‘Nigel No Mates’.



Nigel by his nest, with his concrete friends, October 2016. (Photo: Christopher Stephens.)

Judging underway for photo competition

Thank you and congratulations to everyone who entered our 20th anniversary photo competition.

We were delighted to receive 115 entries from some very talented photographers. More than half of the photos were in the fauna category – people obviously like taking photos of creatures! Another 30 were of landscapes/seascapes, and the remainder were of flora and people. No entries from juniors unfortunately.

The judges are looking at the photos now and we hope to announce the winners soon.

We will post the winning photos on our website and Facebook for everyone to enjoy.



The hole in the rock. (Photo: Jess Lucht, Kaboose Media)



A fluttering shearwater being returned to its burrow. (Photo: Helen Gummer)

How we monitor the fluttering shearwaters by Dale Shirtliff, FOMI executive

Each year around mid-August a small group of volunteers checks the artificial fluttering shearwater burrows. They are looking for adult birds returning to find a mate and a nesting burrow. This is all in preparation for the coming breeding season.

The birds come in at night, attracted by the bird calls from the speaker system on the cliffs. All the burrows are checked by the volunteers.

Any birds found are carefully pulled out, and have their band and burrow numbers read and recorded. The birds are then returned to their burrow. Sometimes, of course, there are two birds in burrows.

This work will take place on the next weekend work party in August. Dale and Richard will stay on for two extra nights so that there will be a total of four night's monitoring.

The data collected allows us to compare with other years and to predict how the breeding season looks. Helen Gummer, who has a long association with this project, will process the data and follow up with a report when the chicks have fledged early next year. Look out for some results from our monitoring in the end of year newsletter.

Update from DOC rangers – Nick and Gen

Kia ora koutou

It's now been almost five months since myself (Nick), Gen and our young son Theo took up our post as Mana Island rangers, after five and a half years up the road on Kapiti Island. It's been a busy time getting settled onto Mana and learning the ropes of a new motu. We are very lucky to be able to call the island home for the next wee while. As well as finding our feet there have been a few big pieces of work happening on the island:

In mid-May a large helicopter operation took place on the island, delivering a wide range of supplies including furniture, curtains, blinds and kitchenware for the houses, new picnic tables, 300kg of concrete for the new direction signage and a replacement BBQ for the Lockwood. On the back run of these flights we were able to remove 31 helicopter fadge bags of rubbish, which will hopefully be the first of many rubbish removal trips! This included 10 fadges of planting tubes that were diverted from landfill and will be used in conversation projects on the mainland.

Five juvenile takahē were transferred off the island down to the Burwood takahē center in Te Anau in early June. These birds will be fostered with adult pairs at Burwood who will teach them how to feed on tussock before they are released – likely into the Murchison Mountains or Kahurangi National Park. This transfer was delayed several times due to weather so a massive thanks to Ngati Toa, FOMI and Dave Rogan (volunteer from Fulton Hogan who sponsor takahē recovery) for their patience and my 5.00am texts...

Recently a group of 16 rangatahi visited the island as part of Kaitiaki o Te Taiao – a marae based environmental education programme run by Ngati Toa Rangatira. As part of their overnight visit, the group were hardy enough to go for a snorkel (and had to be dragged out of the water!), then went through lessons on rongoa (traditional Maori medicine), plant identification, and biosecurity. The passion these young people had for learning was infectious, and hopefully there is a future island ranger or two in the group!



Fadges full of planting tubes and other materials were removed by helicopter. (Photo: DOC)



Takahē ready for transport. (Photo: DOC)

Heritage peach trees available again

Last year we sold heritage peach trees from Mana Island, and they are available again. Be in quick as they were very popular last time. They are a fundraiser for future historic projects on the island. These are some of the juiciest peaches you will ever taste!

Where do these trees originate from?

In 1832 John Bell arrived on Mana Island to begin farming, bringing with him sheep, cattle, hay, seed, tobacco and fruit trees. Ships often stopped at Mana to replenish their supplies with locally grown meat and produce, and in later years fruit when it was in season.

One fruit tree variety still exists in the historic Bell's garden on the island. It is known as the Mana Island Peach and is likely be a direct descendent from the original shipment in 1832.

There is one large old tree in the garden, and six more were planted by FOMI in the garden recently to eventually replace the very old tree. As part of the management plan for Bell's garden DOC, along with FOMI volunteers, have been clearing the woody vegetation so the ditch and bank garden can be seen again.

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.

We are selling a limited number of the trees. The cost is \$10 for a small one up to 30cm tall, or \$20 for a large one up to 80cm tall.

To place an order email: lindakerkmeester@gmail.com

Thanks to all our sponsors for your support – it is much appreciated!



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