



Friends of Mana Island Inc.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2019

FOMI AGM, originally scheduled for 25 March 2020, postponed to 10 June 2020

Introduction

2019 was another extremely busy and successful year for *Friends of Mana Island* including several larger projects getting underway, guided day trips in high demand, 7 very productive weekend working trips, and a more than 20% increase in the number of members.

Details of our progress are well summarised in our Performance Report 2019 which is available on our website, so I intend to provide some general comments and a brief report on the particular projects that I have been leading. Members of the executive will also contribute brief summaries of points of interest in their areas of responsibility in comments to the meeting.

Volunteer Contributions

FOMI is one of the many volunteer organisations which are, and will continue to be the mainstay of conservation efforts in New Zealand. This is usually in conjunction with, and guided, by DOC. I want to acknowledge, and thank, once again, the many FOMI volunteers who support the wide range of work that we do on behalf of the restoration of Te Mana a Kupe.

The many contributors to our weekend working parties, which are organised every couple of months to carry out a multitude of maintenance and monitoring tasks on the Island, are a major part of the volunteer effort.

The dedicated team of 14 guides has continued to front our contact with the many visitors to the Island – winning a great deal of credit from the public.

The many experts who have shared their knowledge and time to assist with our projects are vital to keeping us on track.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the fantastic contributions of our executive members who have contributed their time and expertise, not only to the governance of the organisation but also to project management, guiding and guided trips, working party teams and building relationships. I am also thankful for the contributions of our Volunteer Officer,

Hannah Kyle Parker, for her efforts in organising volunteers for the Working Parties, and Jim Cox, who very ably took on the role of Membership Secretary.

The unsung heroes in all of our efforts on Mana Island are Eliot Falconer and his team – who for several years have provided a vessel with the capability to land up to 30 people easily and safely on the Island, at reasonable cost. The reliable and adaptable service which Eliot provides makes a critical contribution to our ability to organise working parties, guided trips and conservation projects generally.

The total number of volunteer hours contributed in the year ending June 2019 was estimated at 6700 – up from around 5500 in the previous year.

Visitor Opportunities

A key FOMI objective is to assist DOC in managing visitor opportunities and experiences on Te Mana a Kupe. Demand for the guided trips organised by FOMI has been high and in 2019 we offered 33 guided trips, of which 14 had to be cancelled because of bad weather. We estimate that we hosted about 424 guided visitors – down from 610 in 2018. We also assisted with, or provided guides for visits from Plimmerton School, and some weekday visits by tramping clubs and garden groups. A very special mention needs to be made of Philippa Doig who has coordinated all of this activity.

Major Projects

Great progress was made in 2019 on several major projects.

The first group in the translocation of **white-faced storm petrels** from Rangatira / Hokoreoro Island in the Chatham Islands to Mana Island was very successfully transferred in February 2020. This is a 3 year project involving transfers of birds in February 2019, 2020 and 2021, aiming at a total of 250 birds. This is a significant step in our aim of increasing the population of burrow-nesting seabirds on Mana Island. Preparation work got going at pretty short notice before Christmas to ensure a successful transfer in February 2019. By the time you read this we will have completed a very successful transfer of a further 99 birds to the Island - under the leadership of wildlife biologist Cathy Mitchell.

Another project successfully completed in 2020 was the transfer 40 **fernbirds** from Rotokare Scenic Reserve in Taranaki to Mana Island. Authority to proceed with this project was received in late 2018 and we completed the transfer of 40 birds in April 2019. The project was supervised by very experienced biologist Kevin Parker who also supervised the two successful fernbird transfers, in 2017 and 2018, to Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve. The birds settled in very well, setting up territories over most of the Island. By early spring unbanded fernbirds were regularly seen – indicating successful breeding has taken place.

Many of the key elements in the project to restore the **Waikoko wetland** on Mana were completed in 2019. The wetland was recreated in 1999 to provide a freshwater coastal habitat for bird and aquatic wildlife. A new wetland walkway was constructed in March – April 2019 and a bird hide was installed on the edge of the wetland with the help of

volunteers in March. Plant propagation for the wetland is underway and some further enhancements to the hydrology of the area will be included in the 2020 plan.

In August 2019, a series of monitoring sites was set up on Mana Island/Te Mana a Kupe to monitor the accumulation rates of **beach litter**. Sites are located on the eastern, western and southern coasts of the island. The sites will be surveyed every three or four months over the next couple of years by FOMI volunteers. This project is part of a national survey organised by the *Sustainable Coastlines* organisation.

Relationships

The key relationship - with the Department of Conservation - is in very good shape. We have regular meetings with senior DOC staff to review progress. Day to day co-ordination is through the very responsive and helpful DOC staff on the island and in the Wellington office. DOC is also the main channel of communication and coordination with Ngati Toa on matters relating to the island.

We are, of course, very grateful to OMV New Zealand for their ongoing major sponsorship of the wetland, fernbird and white faced storm petrel projects. A number of other organisations and individuals have contributed sponsorship/support in some way through the year and we are very thankful for those contributions.

Future Success

I noted in my 2018 report that when I first accepted the nomination for this role I did it on the assumption that the excellent Executive team at FOMI was likely to remain in place – knowing that without committed and active people in such roles community organisations can easily become ineffective and fade away.

I have not been disappointed. Every member of this great team, along of course with all of the other enthusiastic members and volunteers, has done a wonderful job over the last year – I'm proud to present this report after my second year as President in the knowledge that this commitment remains intact for 2020.

John McKoy

President, Friends of Mana Island

March 14, 2020.