

FOMI WORK PARTY REPORT

Trip leaders: Annemieke Hamilton and Linda Kerkmeester

Friday 15 November:

With an amusing start to the checking that all participants were accounted for (seeing that we had two Steves, two Richards, and two Phoebes with almost identical surnames), we set off for Mana Island accompanied by rangers for the trip Geof de Lisle and Dallas Bishop via the GoMana boat. While there has been no island ranger currently on the island, and a few issues with the DOC boat, cover rangers have been assigned sporadically. Jane Haxton, previous interim ranger has been confirmed as the next Mana Island ranger, and we look forward to seeing her on the next FOMI trip when she starts her new role in early December.

After the usual biosecurity, health and safety and introductions – with 4 newbies - a plan was made for dinner and assigning tasks for the evening and Saturday. This trip, in addition to name duplications, we had 4 bacon & egg pies and 4 pasta dishes turn up, so we elected to only have 2 each evening along with a nice variety of other offerings.

By 9:30pm Annemieke, Richard L and both Phoebes got up to the seabirds and undertook some diving petrel burrow checks at the Petrel Station. Then they moved to South Point and checked on the Fluttering shearwaters. The rain absolutely pelted down by the end, and they returned to the Lockwood before midnight (albeit somewhat soggy).

Meanwhile, the remaining party headed out for some night-spotting of lizards and possible Kiwi. We were lucky to have Trent on hand – extraordinary lizard spotter – to point out numerous raukawa and a couple of goldstripe gecko on our walk up the House Valley track and back past the woolshed where a family of 3 Little Blue penguins were spotted.



Little Blue Penguins under Woolshed



Goldstripe Gecko on flax

Steve R unveiled a macrocarpa cutting taken from the island some years back, which had been made into a monument piece recounting the history of Kākāpō on the island, and as a memorial to the Kākāpō who died on the island. This a beautiful piece with an incredible story, and well worth reading the detailed documentation which comes with it!



The macrocarpa Kākāpō memorial

Saturday 16 November:

The day started with a particularly strong wind. On the walk up a Kereru was spotted at the Tirohanga junction, just past the “seat with a view” – kereru are intermittent visitors to the island. Annemieke and David Cornick worked on installing the second seabird sound system. Fortunately, David had taken a large selection of tools from the workshop, and every one of them ended up being used at some point of the installation.



The smallest of the Diving Petrel chicks.

Meanwhile at the Fluttering shearwater site – with specific direction from Annemieke - Richard M (Rick), Steve S, Richard L, the Phoebes and Mark worked on burrow maintenance (clearing the entry tunnels and around the seabird box lids without lifting the lids, mainly hand-mowing all the long, long grass).



Left: Where are the Seabird boxes?!



Right: Team making quick work of chopping the grass to make the boxes and tunnel entrances visible again.

The reward for finishing off the 101 burrows at South Point, was the further 202 White-Faced Storm Petrel and the Fairy Prion boxes. The team did an awesome job and smashed through what is a rather back-breaking task. After finishing up, the majority of the group headed back down to the Lockwood, with Richard L, Phoebe McL and Phoebe McC staying for the bird monitoring. After the speaker system, Annemieke had moved onto banding the Diving Petrel chicks. In total 9 further chicks were banded, with ones banded by Colin a couple of weeks early, and further chicks to be banded on the next December trip. The group then went to South Point and checked on some of the Fluttering Shearwater nests to read a couple of bands of incubating adults.

Meanwhile, back on the flat, other team members Linda, John, Mark, Tim, Steve R, and Trent set to removing bindweed from trees in the wetland. After some lunch they headed up the north Tirohanga Track to remove yellow tubes from around trees. More time was spent searching for than actual removing. Tim was the winner of the day finding 90% of the approximately 60 tubes removed (with others help).

With tube-finding skills exhausted, John and Steve went for a circumnavigation of the island while Linda and Tim visited the Tauhinu and Forest Valleys where they spotted and removed two large clusters of purple ragwort – duly entered into the notebook newly installed in the Lockwood, specifically for recording weeds seen and controlled.

Following the day's activities, another excellent island pot-luck dinner was shared.

After dinner Annemieke Phoebe McC and Phoebe McL trucked up the hill again to undertake some Fluttering Shearwater monitoring. Of particular excitement was coming across an unbanded adult fluttering shearwater - exciting as the Fluttering Shearwater colony is well monitored and tracked, meaning that this bird could potentially be an island fledged chick which was missed one year (most likely be due to an unknown burrow, as chick banding is carefully scheduled to ensure that the chicks will be banded before fledging), or it is an immigrant from another nearby Fluttering Shearwater population.

Most of the other team members settled in for an early night, seemingly exhausted by the days activities.



Pile of tubes removed (mostly by Tim) with help from John, Trent, Steve S and Linda

Sunday 17 November:

Annemieke, the Phoebes and Richard L all headed to the Petrel Station, where the Fairy Prions and northern Fluttering Shearwater nests were checked. Particularly special shout-out to Richard who carted the 20-something kg battery required for the second sound system all the way up the hill! After finishing the seabird checks at the Petrel Station, Annemieke worked some more on the second sound speaker system, ensuring that the components on at least one of the systems was functional.

Annemieke and the Phoebes then headed to South Point and finished off the burrow checks, before heading back to the Lockwood.

Other team members John, Mark and Steve S were led by David to do some drain maintenance, clearing out the culverts on the Tirohanga south and Central tracks. The remainder of the team - Tim, Trent, Rick and Steve R - led by Linda, followed the seabird team up to the Fairy Prion colony to find some young Tauhinu plants to transplant around the artificial burrows.

Tauhinu scrub is the preferred habitat for seabird colonies. The young birds come out at night to 'test' their wings before heading out to sea. The scrub provides safe cover without the danger of being picked off by gulls or falcons or being blown away by the wind on this exposed bluff.

After a good morning's work, we all headed back to camp to clean up the leftovers and the Lockwood before departure. Big shout out to Steve R and John who pulled out the fridge and to clean the kitchen floor and cupboards which had been home to generations of gecko complete with guano and skin detritus!



A Fluttering Shearwater chick.



Richard L getting packed up by Tim to carry the 20kg battery up to the top of the island



Seabird Sound system 2

Friends of Mana island Work Party report: 15-17 November 2024

We headed down to the boulder bank for pickup half an hour ahead of departure. Almost immediately after taking the group photo, the GoMana boat arrived. Fortunately, the ride back was significantly calmer on the water than the bumpy trip over on the Friday. Another excellent and rewarding time was had by all!



Tauhinu transplanting around artificial burrows at the Fairy Prion site
Big thanks once again to all our wonderful volunteers!



L to R (top): Richard Littauer, David Cornick, Richard (Rick) McKenzie, Mark Chivers, Steve Sutton, Steve Rowell, Tim Borrer, Annemieke Hamilton, Dallas Bishop, Geof de Lisle,

L to R (bottom): Trent Bell, John Meeuwsen, Phoebe McClean, Phoebe McLean

(photo by Linda Kerkmeester)