



Friends of Mana Island

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR 2025

FOMI AGM, 16 April 2025

In preparing my first President's report, I thought an apt theme for this past year would be a "changing of the guard". Like ducks on a pond, on the surface it may look slow, steady and graceful, but under the surface there's a lot going on by some of our very active and wonderful volunteers keeping the ship afloat, so to speak.

This year your hard working executive and certain skilled volunteers, have been working in the background to keep FOMI on track. In line with the Mana Island Restoration Plan of 2010 most of the planting projects and translocations of birds, lizards and certain insects have largely been achieved. Our focus now is on maintaining and monitoring – with seabirds taking up much of that space. As a result, it's encouraging to know that our seabird translocation projects are looked upon both in NZ and internationally as a success story on how to repopulate lost colonies. Our solid work and methods seem to be paying off. You'll be hearing more about that later.

Projects our volunteers have been involved with this last year include:

- We have run 6 weekend work party trips to the island with 88 volunteers participating – trips were co-led by exec members who came to appreciate how much Dale Shirtliff has been doing these past many years in organising the tasks to be done, the dates with the skipper for the boat, Hannah our Volunteer Officer and the DoC Island Rangers. And then there's the volunteers to get organised and the weather which doesn't seem to get the memo, so postponements add a whole other level of drama to the mix.
- We have navigated the change in rangers where, for most of last year, there were temporary rangers assigned while a new one was appointed. We were relieved when Jane Haxton – one of the temporary rangers – started her permanent role in early December.
- We stopped running guided trips to the island when Go Mana started their charter service in June 2023 which freed up some of our time to run the work parties, with Philippa Doig so ably stepping into the breach left by Dale's reluctant absence due to declining health. Through Laurie Smith we have managed to keep an ear to the ground as he assisted with guiding for Go Mana – in doing so he advocates for FOMI membership to a captive audience on the boat's return trip! He must be doing a good job as we have had several new members signing up that way – and subsequently applying to volunteer on work trips.

- We commissioned two reports – one being a survey of seabirds (by Joanna Sim and Miro, her trained bird-survey dog). The survey showed that there were some clusters of birds that had previously not been found for banding. (You can read the full report on our FOMI website.)
- The other significant piece of work was the Mana Seabird Operations Manual by Helen Gummer in which she collated the extensive knowledge of Mana’s seabird team (including herself, Colin Miskelly, Graeme Taylor and Annemieke Hamilton) with respect to monitoring, banding, burrow maintenance and more. This manual will serve as a critical document for FOMI as Helen heads off to the UK soon for a year or two. We are lucky to have had Helen to work on the seabirds and that she has agreed to giving a talk this evening before she leaves to give us an update on how our seabirds are faring.
- We purchased and installed a defibrillator in the Lockwood available for anyone to use in an emergency. This was made possible by the generous bequest of Cathye Haddock’s estate. Cathye tragically died in the boating accident off the Kaikoura Coast in September 2022 while on a seabird photography trip. I wish to acknowledge Cathye and her sage advice - she was my mentor in matters relating to iwi and was an active and valued volunteer.
- Also, with Cathye’s bequest we were able to recently to purchase a power tool which has made the task of yellow tube removal easier. These were used around new plants and are now in desperate need of removal. Any volunteer who has helped with this task will know it’s a tough job. There are still many more to go and ultimately transport off the island. FOMI has been helping with this on return boat trips. Some of these have gone to other conservation groups for reuse or cut up and removed to landfill if damaged.
- We continue to monitor the flax weevil situation with Colin Miskelly and Will Brocklesby leading the charge on this - as heard at the last AGM. The work continues in finding a solution and managing the effects of these critters as they work their way around the island with hopeful signs that flax will recover though this may take some time.

Upcoming Projects

So that’s a summary of what we have accomplished this past year (and some). In terms of projects coming up, we have:

- had a request from the seabird crew to replace the aptly named ‘Petrel Station’ from its rudimentary storage beginnings to a more solid and enclosed shelter that the crew can use for banding work and possibly overnight if too late or cold to return to the Lockwood after a late-night of monitoring.
- We have also had a request from Sustainable Coastlines if we could resurrect the Litter Intelligence survey which we had been involved with a couple of years back.

Volunteer Contributions

Lastly, I come to the point where I wish 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, working party teams, communications and building relationships.

- To Philippa Doig – thanks for picking up the mantel left by Dale in keeping the working parties running and for keeping our records and minutes up to date. We understand that taking on the work parties' role means that you will step down from the Secretary role in order to focus on these. We will be looking for someone with good minute-taking skills in the first instance – please come and speak to us if you think you can help.
- To Philippa Sargent – for your wonderful newsletters and so ably keeping up our social media presence. Also for organising our lovely new banners for use at events – designed by Anne Johnson, graphic designer - and for keeping me on track!
- To Nick Ryan – you have been a God send in replacing the very able Dick Fernyhough as Treasurer this past year. You have set us on a new trajectory into the digital world in getting our financial reporting simplified. You're helping with rewriting our Constitution (no mean feat) in the new format required by the Charities Commission, due next year. (You can expect to hear more on that for voting on next year).
- To Laurie – you have helped keep the ship afloat with your awesome practical skills on our work parties, getting tools sorted, talking to new potential volunteers. Sadly you have decided to step down this year and we will sorely miss you. We are very grateful that our newest volunteer, Colin Munn has stepped into this breach and we look forward to more from him in future.
- Last but not least, Dale Shirtliff – we so appreciate all the work he has done these past 13 years, taking on single-handedly the organisation of volunteers and work parties. Only now he has stepped aside are we realising how much he actually did – more on this later.

Then there are those who work in the background and support our exec :

- This includes our Volunteer Officer, Hannah Kyle Parker, for her efforts in organising volunteers for the Working Parties, and Jim Cox, our Membership Secretary who sends out all our emails and manages our Inbox.
- We are most thankful also to Glen Cooper – for keeping the Charmaine Karol well and truly afloat – ably transporting our volunteers to the island, without which FOMI could not continue to function. We have yet to hear whether the new DoC boat will be available for some of these trips and when.

Our relationship - with the Department of Conservation and Ngāti Toa is a work in progress.

We have quarterly meetings with senior DOC staff and Ngāti Toa to review our aspirations for the island to co-ordinate our efforts. I'd like to think that the Restoration Plan would be

followed up with a Kaitiaki Plan with Ngāti Toa firmly at the helm, supported by FOMI and with DoD expertise.

For FOMI to remain relevant I feel we need to more actively acknowledge Ngāti Toa as tangata whenua and find a meaningful way to work together to promote the wairua of Mana Island as a living treasure – which I hope you all agree.

When I first accepted the nomination for Presidency I did it on the assumption that the excellent Executive team at FOMI was likely be there to support me in the role. With some of our key members having to reluctantly pull out, we will be actively seeking some ‘new blood’ to keep the FOMI ship afloat with the inevitable ‘changing of the guard’. So, if you have a skill that you can offer and have some time to help, we would really like to hear from you.

Linda Kerkmeester

President, Friends of Mana Island

April 16, 2025

