



Friends of Mana Island

Work Party Report August 15-17 2025

Trip co-leaders: Philippa Doig and Linda Kerkmeester

Participants: Zuleika Chang, Peter Simpson, Adrian Juli, Karen Wood, David Mobbs, Phoebe McLean, Howard Woledge, Rachel Smith, Fiona Lambdin, Colin Miskelly, Kate Irving, Skye Chambers, Karen Nicoll, Allison Clark

This was a very strong and willing work party. There was a lot of energy and it was particularly good to see several younger participants with 3 first-timers to the island. We also had a full complement of 16 volunteers which allowed us to achieve a lot.

Friday night.

We settled into the Lockwood and had a delicious dinner. Some of the volunteers headed up the hill with Colin to weevil MIQ.

Weevil MIQ

From Colin Miskelly:

Colin, David, Fiona, Kate, Phoebe, Skye and Zuleika headed up to Weevil MIQ (near the northern macrocarpas) on Friday night and searched for an hour both inside the enclosure and in surrounding flaxes. They found 227 flax weevils (84 inside Weevil MIQ and 143 outside). It is 6 months since the last tagged weevil was seen, but we will keep searching for another 6 months before terminating the project.

Kiwi walk

Karen N, Adrian, Peter, Linda, Ally, Philippa and Karen W set off up the steep no access track, hoping for a kiwi sighting. We separated into two groups with one heading on up the hill and the other returning and looping through the House Valley Track. There were kiwi sightings, by Karen N near the Lockwood and a very brief sighting by the group who headed up the hill.

Saturday - day

Seabird monitoring

From Colin Miskelly:

Colin spent both days relocating and re-tagging 30 natural diving petrel, fluttering shearwater and suspected seabird burrows (which could be either species), and trimming the routes used to get to them, in preparation for the 2025-26 breeding season. Diving petrels are the first of the petrel species on Mana Island to breed each year, with most of them laying in September, while the fluttering shearwaters and fairy prions lay in October and early November.

Weeding

From Colin Miskelly:

While searching for seabird burrows, Colin hand-pulled 88 *Senecio glastifolius* (pink ragwort) and dug out one karo on the coastal slopes about halfway between Shearwater Point and South Point.

Cooks Scurvy Grass and White-Faced Storm Petrel burrows

Linda, Karen W, Kate and Skye climbed the hill to maintain and monitor the Cooks Scurvy Grass site. They removed the covers and took photos of each plot – most showing good germination.



Cooks Scurvy grass germinating in trial plots

They then moved to the White-Faced Storm Petrel artificial burrow site and placed a small handful of dry leaves in each burrow. Jane had saved some grass for this purpose, but it proved to be damp, so the team gathered dry mahoe leaves on their way up to site. In nearly all burrows they found a special surprise of either geckos or skinks – sometimes both, including at least two with a pair of giant weta.



Giant weta in WFSP burrow

North Coast Monitoring line

Jane led a group (David, Phoebe, Fiona) to gather up the monitoring tunnels so that they can be relocated in a more useful place. They also picked up beach rubbish.

Track Clearing



David and others clearing the track on Saturday

Jane used a scrub cutter to widen the Tirohanga track close to the trig. It needed to be at least a metre wider, so Jane cut and David, Phoebe, Fiona (later joined by Philippa, Ally and Zuleika) gathered up the rubbish and settled it into the vegetation on the side of the track.

Some of the stumps left by the scrub cutter were in the way of the mower so these were cut down by hand. This group left the track much wider and, hopefully, easier to mow.

Karen N worked on the Tirohanga track from the Woolshed to the takahe pen, a huge undertaking on her own.

Yellow Pipe removal

Philippa, Ally, Rachel, Howard and Zuleika removed 8 sacks of pipes from the same area as previous work parties on this task. They discovered many weta and geckos hiding in the pipes. This task involves releasing the well-grown trees from their throttling plastic planting pipes. Ally and Philippa then searched out a new entrance off the track for the next group which was used on Sunday morning. Having the two multitools, one recently purchased by FOMI and the other lent by DOC, makes a huge difference to this task and allows us to quickly cut the non-reusable pipes into halves for easier packing into fadges for removal from the island.

Light welling of significant trees

Peter and Adrian worked on locating and monitoring trees to be light-welled in House Valley, Aston Valley and the wetland loop. These trees have been monitored for 10 years. Even with GPS locations, these trees are not always easy to find and require a lot of difficult scrambling through thick bush (they even found a tamarillo tree at one point!). They found about 90 trees (titoki, kohekohe, kahikatea and matai, amongst others). The bush is growing well, and these trees do not need to be monitored further so the identifying tapes were removed. Peter and Adrian saw robins and were followed by one pair but the birds were too illusive to identify any bands.

Pruning of Bell's Peach Trees

In the late afternoon, Linda, Peter, Adrian and Zuleika pruned the peach trees, in particular the largest tree that was leaning over and had likely never been pruned.

Saturday Night

Seabird monitoring (night) *From Colin Miskelly*

Colin, Ally, Fiona, Kate and Phoebe headed up to the Petrel Station on Saturday night, with Ally and Kate staying long enough to help check the 101 FP artificial burrows and to see at least one of each of the three target species. Colin, Fiona and Phoebe then went on a mission to check the burrows found by Miro the seabird dog last December. These are known or suspected fluttering shearwater natural burrows that are near the edge on the steep coastal slopes between Shearwater Point (Petrel Station) and South Point. Combining both artificial and natural burrows, 19 petrels of three species were handled: 13 fluttering shearwaters, five diving petrels and one fairy prion. Three of these were previously unbanded (one fluttering shearwater and two diving petrels) and were given new bands. Four birds were locally-reared chicks that were handled for the first time as adults: a 6.5 year-old diving petrel, and fluttering shearwaters aged 3.5, 7.5 and 9.5 years old. The three oldest birds were in burrows found by Miro in December, and it is likely that these birds have been using these burrows for several years (diving petrels typically start breeding at 2 years old, and fluttering shearwaters from about 4 years old).

Kiwi walk – sightings

Determined to see a Kiwi, Skye challenged Linda to a kiwi-sighting mission – “no going back till we’ve seen one”. So along with Karen W and David they walked the whole perimeter of the wetland, then were treated to a 5-minute long sighting of a kiwi on the path just near the entrance to the wetland walk when nearly back at the Lockwood. Skye felt pleased that she could return to work on Monday saying she had seen a kiwi – a big deal seeing she hails from Aberdeen, Scotland. Mission accomplished.



Sunday

Cooks Scurvy Grass and tauhinu transplanting

Linda, Karen W and Zuleika removed 50% of the protective pipes from the Cooks Scurvy Grass which were deemed advanced enough to survive without this protection, allowing them to harden off. Zuleika then headed off to find the yellow pipe removal crew while Linda and Karen transplanted more tauhinu plants at the Fairy Prion site.

Deep clean of the Lockwood

A team of Karen N, Ally, Fiona, Phoebe and Kate made a wonderful job of deep cleaning the Lockwood. Fridges were pulled out, top shelves wiped, corners explored and windows washed. There was a stepladder needed for the high stuff like cleaning the top of the shower dome. The Lockwood now looks and feels fresh and clean. Huge thanks to this team who might not have expected that spring cleaning was part of the deal when they signed up for a conservation weekend.

More yellow pipe removal

Philippa, Skye, David, Howard and Rachel, later joined by Zuleika, removed a lot of yellow pipes (about 9 sacks) from a different area of bush. David was visited by a takahe while digging and sawing. Howard did a lot of cutting at the track, and the noise of the multitool incidentally made it easier for the rest of the party to find their way out of the bush to where they had left their packs.

Lightwelling

Peter and Adrian completed the monitoring of significant trees and persisted until they had found every last tree (a few had died).

We all met at the Lockwood about 1pm for lunch together and after a few final exploring walks we boarded the Charmaine Karol a little early for a smooth trip back to Mana Marina. We had excellent weather on both Saturday and Sunday and really achieved a lot.



Skye and a rescued tree



Rubbish taken off the island

3 fadges of yellow pipes that cannot be reused or recycled were taken to Porirua tip by Philippa and Mike Doig.



TEAM PHOTO

From left to right (standing): Colin Miskelly, Zuleika Chang, Adrian Jull, Skye Chalmers, David Mobbs, Ally Clark, Karen Wood, Rachel Smith, Howard Woledge, Linda Kerkmeester, Peter Simpson, Karen Nicoll

Front Row : Kate Irving, Pheobe McLean, Fiona Lambdin, Philippa Doig

(photo by Jane Haxton)

FOMI would like to thank Jane for unfailing help and support on the island, Glen Cooper for transport and especially every volunteer who gave up their weekend for conservation work on Mana Island.

August 18, 2025