

FOMI Work Party Report 4-6 July 2025



Friends of Mana Island

Trip co-leaders: Philippa Doig and Linda Kerkmeester

Participants: Colin Miskelly, Tim Thorpe, Stephen Marsland, Monika Nowicki, Suliana Teesdale, Robin Chesterfield, Emma Fromings, Allison Clark and Dominic Ward.

When we gathered at the carpark it was teeming with rain as it had been for most of the day. It was very disappointing to FOMI (the boat costs us a lot) that five selected volunteers pulled out of the trip in the final 24 hours, when it was too late to gather replacements. The forecast for the weekend was not too bad and in fact turned out to be dry for work on Saturday and Sunday. We achieved much less work with 11 volunteers (who I hasten to add, were very hardworking) than we would have done with our allowed group of 16.

Friday evening

We arrived at the Lockwood for a talk by Jane Haxton, Mana Island DOC Ranger. Once we had dealt with the important Health and Safety advice, we sorted out who was cooking for Friday dinner, lit the oven and settled in. The weather meant that there was no expedition to the top of the island but a lengthy outing was promised by Colin for Saturday evening.

Saturday morning

Seabird Work



Sully checking a burrow

Led by Stephen and Monika, a team including Suli and Dom headed to the Fluttering Shearwater site to clear and clean the burrows. They were later joined by Linda and Ally and moved on to maintain the burrows at the Fairy Prion site. This is essential work to prepare for the expected return of mating pairs of seabirds, looking for a burrow in which to breed.

Cooks Scurvy Grass and Tauhinu transplanting

Linda with Suli and Ally inspected the Cooks

Scurvy Grass plots at the Fluttering Shearwater site. All of the plots showed signs of seed germination from the February trip except one plot in full shade. The mesh covers were able to be prised off without the need to unscrew the tubes from the stakes – to enable weeding of each plot. This needed to be carefully done with tweezers and good plant identification (and glasses!). By way of



Seabird team checking Shearwater burrow sites

experiment, one plot (11) with good growth had the cover left off to see how it would fare without this protection. The plots will need to be checked on the next trip for weeds and possible removal of covers in some instances if growth has reached the top of the pipe covers. It would also be useful to keep a record of growth of each plot, at least initially so they can be monitored on future trips.



Cuttings were also checked from the last trip. Only 3 had survived. In the process of removing some of the native spinach off the parent plant, some CSG came off so these were made into cuttings to add to the first plot.

Linda went on to the Fairy Prion site to transplant some Tauhinu plants around the open burrows, adding to those planted last trip. This will provide cover for the fledgling birds on this exposed site. Transplants from last trip were doing well.

Pitfall trap removal

Colin and Robin set off to remove 50% of the pitfall traps in the weevil MIQ area. Robin then joined the yellow pipe removal team and Colin cleaned pipes for other projects.

Yellow pipe removal (Emma, Tim and Philippa, later joined by Robin)



Robin enjoying removing yellow pipes

This team started by spending an hour sorting and cutting yellow pipes in the shed adjoining the Lockwood. Two multi-tool cutters were used to good effect and we worked our way through a full fadge of mixed pipes, sorting them into two categories: either re-usable or damaged pipes. The damaged pipes are only fit to be taken to landfill. We then climbed the island and moved into the same area we have worked in for several work parties. The yellow pipes on trees were often obstinate and the environment difficult but we released about 150-200 trees from



Emma and Robin with sacks of yellow pipes

their pipes, leaving the pipes at the side of the track for Jane to collect. Tim cut many of them so that they would fit more easily into a fadge for removal from the island. We returned to the Lockwood via the lighthouse site as neither Tim nor Emma had been on the island before.

Saturday evening

After dinner Colin set off for the weevil MIQ with Suli and Ally.

As a tagged weevil has been sighted in 2025, the site will be monitored for another year to complete the research. This group then moved to the diving petrel site to monitor the artificial burrows. Volunteers were surprised at the way Colin was able to call to birds in their burrows and elicit responses.

Stephen and Monika went up to the Fluttering Shearwater colony on Saturday night with Tim, Robin, and Dom. They weren't expecting many birds, but one of the founder birds was at home.

Sunday

We started a bit later than usual because of the teams who had arrived back in the Lockwood late the night before.

Five-Minute Bird Count

Linda, Monika, Colin and Dom did a 5-minute bird count at the 20 stations around the island, in pairs, starting from opposite directions. Colin enters the data in the eBird database so we can track the trends in island bird populations over time. In future, any 5-minute bird counters will want to register with eBird to enter their own data so it doesn't fall to Colin who clearly already has quite a lot on his plate!

White-Faced Storm Petrel burrows



Giant Cook Strait Weta

Stephen, Philippa, Emma and Robin climbed to the WFSP burrow site and started opening (cautiously, in case there was a bird inside!) the burrows. Our job was to locate 100 plus burrows, open them and remove debris, clear the entrance tunnels and tidy the entrance to make it attractive to a prospective inhabitant. We found cave weta, giant Cook Strait weta, and many skinks and geckos who thought the dry burrows were a good spot to hang out.

Clearing Takahe pen fences

Armed with saws, loppers, grubbers and secateurs, Suli, Ally and Tim headed to the takahe capture pen near marker peg 15 on the Tirohanga track and made a fantastic job of clearing around the outside of the fence. Then they moved to the takahe capture pen on Central Track and did the same work, joined by Emma, Philippa and Robin, once the WFSP burrows had been cleared.

We all gathered back at the Lockwood for lunch at about 1pm and cleaned the Lockwood in record time. Everyone had time to relax or explore, before we needed to be on the beach at 3.15pm for pick up by the Charmaine Karol boat.

Removal of re-usable yellow pipes

When we left the island, we took off three fadges of pipes that will be reused in planting projects. Jason Christensen is planning to plant 17,000 native trees on his farm and took two fadges, while Pene Burton-Bell of Forest and Bird Kapiti-Mana arrived to claim one fadge for planting on the Kapiti Coast

All in all, given the small numbers on the workparty, we achieved a lot and hopefully these volunteers will return for more work on the island.

Our thanks to Jane for hosting us and keeping us busy with new tasks and to Glen Cooper of GoMana for transport, especially when we asked him to take awkward fadges on the return trip.



L to R: Colin Miskelly, Dominic Ward, Allison Clark, Linda Kerkmeester, Tim Thorpe, Emma Fromings, Philippa Doig, Robin Chesterfield, Suliana Teesdale, Stephen Marsland, Monika Nowicki.

(Photo by Angus Hulme-Moir.)