



Friends of Mana Island

Work party report August 7-9, 2026

Leaders: Colin Munn, Peter Simpson and Philippa Doig

Participants: Colin Miskelly, Archer Lamason, Alfie Benbow, David Cornick, Peter Hunt, Paige Amos, Marion Daste, Benjamin Wright, Clemence Williams, Michael Damen, Maxine Wawatai, Bronwyn McDonald and Steve Sutton.



Giant Cook Strait weta. Photo Marion

It was great to have 16 volunteers working on a weekend when the forecast was a bit dubious. On the Thursday before Jim Cox sent out a request to all FOMI members to fill two vacant spaces and we completed our group. It is amazing how much work can be done by 16 willing volunteers in a day and a half. There was a sudden wind and heavy rainstorm on Sunday morning and we elected to call the boat early (2pm) but in the event the weather cleared and we could have stayed with the original pick up time of 4pm.

Friday night

Burrow-nesting seabirds

Detection of high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in New Zealand has meant changes to protocols when visiting the seabird colonies at the Petrel Station and South Point. These will likely change further if or when the virus becomes established in the Wellington region, and especially if it is detected or suspected on Mana Island. The first is limiting team sizes to a maximum of three people at a time at each site, with priority given to people in the process of seeking seabird banding operator permits, followed by Birds New Zealand members. DOC have installed hand-washing facilities at both sites, with a requirement to wash hands after each bird or pair of birds is handled (i.e. if a pair are occupying the same burrow), or use alcohol wipes at burrows distant from the hand-washing stations. The number of people actually handling birds is also being restricted, so that we don't need to use as much fresh water (which has to be delivered or carried to the sites) or wet wipes. The protocols were manageable but required a lot of water even with relatively few birds being handled, and so we will look at using basins at each site in future.

Colin Miskelly led teams up to the Petrel Station both nights (Alfie and Archer on Friday, Clem and Maxine on Saturday). A total of 29 birds were handled over the two nights (14 diving petrels, 13 fairy prions and two fluttering shearwaters), with one new diving petrel requiring banding. Most of the birds



Handwashing facilities at South Point
Photo Philippa

handled were known breeding adults that were back in the same burrow and with the same mate as last year. The most interesting find was a 4.5-year-old fairy prion caught back at the colony for the first time as an adult.

Night walks

Several groups set off to see what they could find under cover of darkness. Rowi kiwi proved elusive but all enjoyed the walks. Little blue penguins nesting in the roots of a fallen tree beside the track between the ranger's house and the woolshed were sighted as on previous work parties and a penguin was again found in the woolshed, separated from his friends or family under the floorboards.

Saturday August 8.

Old Light House Site

Alfie, Michael and Colin Munn spent Saturday morning at the historic Lighthouse Site. The Mana Island Lighthouse was originally constructed in 1865 to light the western margins of Cook Strait. It was a brick structure and was later relocated to Cape Egmont in 1881. The lighthouse was deactivated in 1877 and today a pyramidal marker stands on its remaining brick foundation.

Otis had previously sprayed the area and the task involved clearing the vegetation and carefully scraping the material to expose the historic bricks. Care was taken to minimise damaging the bricks which were very brittle. The team worked well and had the job completed by lunch time, despite the drizzly weather. [Colin Munn]



Alfie & Michael start work.
Photo Colin Munn



Work nearly complete.
Photo Colin Munn



Photo Alfie Benbow

Track Clearing

Steve Sutton, Archer Lamason, Clemence Williams and Peter Simpson tackled the clearing of the Meteorological track. We then moved onto the "MIQ" track and were joined by the team who had cleared the lighthouse brick base (Mike Damon, Alfie Benbow, and Colin Munn). Most of this track was cleared except for some patches of Muehlenbeckia sp. particularly at the northern end before it joins the Tirohanga track going to the lighthouse site. [Peter Simpson]



Clem at work. Photo Peter Simpson

Clearing of rubbish near the site of the homestead at marker peg 25



Coal Range Photo David

David, Peter H and Philippa picked up all sorts of rubbish: plastic scraps, old planter bags, corrugated iron and bits of shade cloth, much of which was well buried and took some work to free. The most embedded rubbish was waratahs which were set deeply in the ground and even with the waratah removal tool, took a great deal of work to remove. Apparently, an area of weeds had been fenced off and sprayed and the waratahs and shade cloth erected to keep takahe out of the sprayed area. The small rubbish was bagged up and taken to the boat shed. Two sacks were removed on Sunday and taken to Porirua tip. The big pieces of roofing iron and the waratahs were taken to the boat shed rubbish heap. We found a collapsing coal range which we left in place, an interesting (and historic) find!

Demolition site

Colin Miskelly, Bronwyn and Paige continued the work on clearing the demolition site. Again, tree stumps and waratahs were obstinate and their removal required huge efforts.



Working on a waratah. Photo Philippa



One waratah out Photo Philippa



The demolition site Photo Bronwyn



Huge changes to the demolition site Photo Colin Miskelly

Cooks Scurvy Grass: monitoring and weeding



New CSG cuttings Photo Philippa

Ben, Marion and Maxine did the difficult job of finding and weeding tiny CSG plants near South Point. A few more cuttings were taken and are grouped near the other seedlings and cuttings. The team used the paper monitoring sheet until it became damp and unusable and then recorded what they found on Marion's phone. In the course of getting to South Point they discovered yellow pipes on trees on the downhill side of the Southern Loop track and we took a team up after lunch to remove some of these.

Yellow pipe removal

In the afternoon Philippa, Bronwyn, Maxine, Ben Paige and Marion climbed to the Southern Loop Track and removed a lot of yellow pipes (tree rescue).

Saturday afternoon and evening

Before dinner Archer, Alfie, Ben and Marion walked to the Hole in the rock while Clem, Paige and Maxine enjoyed some quiet time on the beach

Other groups explored the nighttime island and some tired volunteers rested!



Photo Bronwyn

Sunday August 9

Seabird work

Colin returned to the colony in wet and windy conditions on Sunday morning to trim vegetation along the shortcut used to get to the Petrel Station, and also along routes used to access different clusters of burrows.

Track Clearing



Photo Peter Simpson



Photo Peter Simpson



Archer track clearing. Photo Peter Simpson

Alfie, Archer, Mike D & Peter had a go at the bottom of the zig zag track (Tirohanga track) from the woolshed to the start of the climb up the Tirohanga track. Again, the large tangles of *Muehlenbeckia* sp. were left as this is a huge task for hand tools and really requires mechanical motorised tools. A lot of regrowth on the sides of the track was removed. Weather was a bit wet and later work stopped to seek shelter.

It is apparent that the *Muehlenbeckia* sp. were expanding fairly well onto the open track space. Such growth is very, very slow and hard to remove as it is a very big tangle of vines and

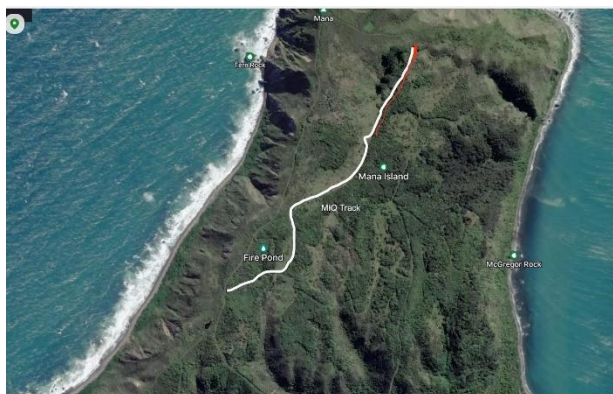
branches. Mechanical assistance with a scrub cutter would make the task very much more manageable. Even the small electric pruner saws would help or an electric hedge trimmer would be good.

The white line is the Met track that was cleared. The red line (on the MIQ track) is the *muelhenbackia* sp. that requires mechanical clearing either with a mini chainsaw or a scrub cutter.



Meteorological track cleared. Photo Peter Simpson

MIQ track (White line is the track cleared on Saturday). The red line at the top is the section of the MIQ track that needs scrub cutter work to clear the Muehlenbeckia sp. [Peter Simpson]



MIQ track cleared. Photo Peter Simpson

Another group tackled the Hole in the Rock Track: Steve, Bronwyn, Maxine, Philippa and Paige. As Peter Simpson has noted some of the tangled vegetation was really difficult to cut back and we further discovered that if nearly everyone is doing track clearing FOMI doesn't have enough loppers and hand saws.

Weed plants



Tasmanian ngaio left, hybrid right NZ ngaio right. Photo and ID Ben



NZ ngaio left Tasmanian right. Photo and ID Ben

Ben and Marion searched out some Tasmanian Ngaio trees and cut as much as they could.

Yellow pipe removal

Yellow pipes were gathered from the field were gathered up and packed for removal from the island. One fadge of good pipes was taken to the Kapiti Forest and Bird group by David while a second fadge of rubbish was taken to the tip by Philippa. [Colin Munn] This work was completed by David, Colin Munn and Clem.

Maxine and Mike did great work tidying and cleaning the Lockwood kitchen and all volunteers helped with the Lockwood clean up. The bunkrooms and kitchen were super tidy!



Clem & David sorting the pipes in the Boat Shed. Photo Colin Munn

Thanks to Otis (relief DOC ranger) for his cheerful and co-operative support and to GoMana for the transport, especially when our plans changed. Thanks to all the volunteers – without whom FOMI could not support the conservation work on Mana Island in the way it does.



Standing: Peter Hunt, Colin Munn, Peter Simpson, Ben Wright, Maxine Wawatai. David Cornick, Marion Daste, Archer Lamason, Alfie Benbow, Colin Miskelly, Steve Sutton, Bronwyn McDonald, Michael Damen. In front: Paige Amos, Clemence Williams. Photo Philippa Doig

