



FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INCORPORATED

PO BOX 54 101, MANA

Newsletter Number 20

June 2004

Hi All

I will keep this report short as there have been so many things going on that I am sure the newsletter will be full to overflowing with far more interesting information than I can provide.

The AGM was well attended and the business side of the meeting went very smoothly with no blood letting at all. We did have two retirees from the Committee, Sue Chesterfield and Grant Timlin, my personal thanks to both for the input and contribution they have made, and in fact will continue to have, as Sue continues as Planting Co-ordinator, and Grant has become almost a permanent part timer on the Island.

In their place we are pleased to welcome Vicky Froude and Dave Adams onto the Committee and I am sure we will find some really useful work for them both.

The guest speaker, Carl Hayson, painted us a very graphic picture of what the Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi have achieved in their very active and impressive life, albeit 10 years older than ours. It did, I think, expand our vision of what could be, and that will be our driver for the balance of this year, apart of course from the planting program and Kakariki and Weevil release, of which you will read more elsewhere.

Thank you to all you volunteers who are queuing up for a day's planting in the next few months and those who are assisting in the Parakeet monitoring program.

I look forward to meeting with you all soon.

Cheers

Brian



One of the Kakariki released in Bush Valley 12 May 2004

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES 2004

The planting season has started. Book now for your place on the boat!

Sailings are every Saturday and every Sunday until 30 July

Phone Brian on 472 4827

There are also some places left for overnights. Seven people each weekend to do some Yellow Crowned Parakeet monitoring -

June	12/13	26/27
July	10/11	24/25

August check for information

For more information, email: contactus@manaisland.org.nz

Revegetation of Mana Island enters New Phase

After almost 20 years of effort by thousands of volunteers, this year sees the beginning of the next stage of planting on Mana Island.

While most of the plantings to date have been of pioneer species such as ngaio, tree daisies and manuka, this year will focus more on canopy trees such as kahikatea, kohekohe, milk tree, wharangi and kaikomako. These will be interplanted amongst the existing forest cover where they can benefit from the shelter provided by the already established more hardy species. The objective is to end up with a typical Wellington coastal forest that will be self-sustaining and a safe haven for even more of our special birds and invertebrates.

Finding volunteers for the planting programme is still our largest ongoing commitment. This year, for example, some 15,000 trees will be planted with FOMI accepting the responsibility for organising 20 trips of volunteers over the period from 22 May to 31 July.



Jason and Tama with the birds at the release site

Don't forget to book!

Planting trips are every Saturday and every Sunday until 30 July

WEEDING ON MANA ISLAND

A disappointedly small but enthusiastic bunch of Friends gathered outside the Mana Cruising Club on the morning of 13 March. The occasion was the annual FOMI weed control expedition to Mana Island.

If left unchecked, weeds have the potential to undo many of the results of the thousands of hours of volunteer time and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent in restoring the ecological values of the island; especially the planting programme. With this programme winding down over the next few years, weeding, while not the most glamorous activity, will definitely be the most important.

To their credit, the Department, have recognised this and committed significant resources to weed control; particularly of the more aggressive species such as boxthorn and karo.

Anyway, we had a great day. Up until lunchtime we weeded out tree lucerne; planted as "bird tucker" but now starting to spread amongst the nearby plantings. In the afternoon we clambered over, under and around the windfalls amongst the macrocarpas on the plateau, pulling out karo.

What I found heartening was the extent of the natural revegetation taking place under the canopy of the plantings. In a few years time, parts of the forest will almost impenetrable. That's why we have to get on top of the weeds now and not allow them to out-compete the endemic flora and dominate the island's ecosystems.

So, folks, next time you have the opportunity to join a weeding trip to Mana Island, then take advantage of it. Besides having an enjoyable day out on our favourite island, with good company, you will be doing something really important for its future.

Colin Ryder

News from the Island

In February, stormy conditions ensured that all hands were on deck. Jason and Yennie were out in waders unblocking drains and culverts in order to ease flooding pressure on the wetland ponds and the Nursery. They also checked on wildlife around the Island.

Jason and Nio spent two days cutting, clearing and chipping windfalls on the tracks. Like most places, the storm force winds were very strong - peaking at 69 knots on the worst day. Damage wreaked at the top of the Island was minimal but down in the valleys plantings were smashed around. The macrocarpa stands were the worst hit.

Most structures withstood the stormy conditions; just a few roofing nails were needed for minor repairs. The Island fared well compared to the rest of the country.

In March Jason had a well-earned summer holiday (all 5 weeks of it), tramping in the South Island and visiting friends as well. Staff from the Kapiti Area filled in during his absence and Wayne and Grant operated the Mana Ranger.

An additional staff member is due to start soon. Tony Henry will be the assisting Jason as Ranger and Acting Field Centre Supervisor.

The Tararua Tramping Club, Wellington City Council Rangers and Global Volunteers have all helped staff with the re-vegetation surveys. Plants were counted inside a 100m x 100m grid all over the Island. In order to see which native plants have survived and which species should be planted in other areas. It also gives a general overview on how the planting has progressed and helps with future planning.

FOMI has also been busy with general weeding, nursery jobs, tube pulling and seed collecting. Some trees have fruited a lot earlier than usual this year.

Over 16 members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand, along with Island staff, friends and DoC staff conducted the bird census. Lots of new robins and sooty shearwaters were banded over the two glorious days.

Most of the Takahe are fine. Sadly one of the chicks died but the remaining four are all doing well. They will be caught soon and banded soon.

Two brown teal chicks have been seen swimming on the ponds in the wetland and the older birds have done what brown teals do to pass the time - chasing the Takahe out of the ponds.

Jason



Flax weevils have a distribution on rodent-free islands between the Poor Knights Islands and Fiordland. The only mainland locality where they are still known to be present is above the bushline in the Tararua Ranges. There is little doubt that flax weevils formerly occurred in suitable habitats throughout New Zealand however no coastal populations remain in the southern North Island. There is ample suitable habitat on Mana Island and continued plantings of flax species will ensure that flax weevils can spread throughout the Island.

Source: Mana Island Ecological Restoration Plan

2004 AGM Presidents Report - Brian Paget

I thought I would briefly cover some of the achievements for the past year, which is since the last AGM a year ago, not the Financial Year which ends on December 31st.

Casting one's mind back is difficult for me, particularly when I can barely remember what I did yesterday.

There have been a number of stand-out achievements and I will touch on them in no particular order:

PLANTING: The major focus again has been planting, and this past year has been no exception. A total of 26,340 trees were planted with the Friends responsible for 14,650 of them at a transport cost of \$11,840, so you can see that labour alone has a cost of about \$1 a tree, and that ignores the nursery costs of production.

The season was particularly windy but we still managed to get about 50% of the trips away, but from a volunteer point of view it is particularly frustrating to have a trip cancelled and then not to be able to rebook because of the forward bookings.

The target for the coming year has been substantially reduced, to 15,000, and will be targeted to provide more infill-planting.

SPONSORSHIP: Sponsorship is very important to us, of course, because subscriptions only cover our costs, boat charges recover less than half of the cost, and some of the restoration projects have a substantial cost attached.

In the current year we have secured funding for the Yellow Crowned Parakeet transfer from the Mana Community Trust, and for tree planting from Hill Young Cooper Ltd, who are in the business of providing Environmental Consultancy.

AWARDS: We picked up an Environmental Award from the Porirua City which was good for publicity and raising the profile.

FAIRY PRION RELEASE: This major project came to an end this year with the release of another 100 birds and a massive amount of publicity arranged by DoC. This technique is a world leader, and the Department should be very proud of their effort, as should Colin Ryder and his team of baby sitters. Colin is, of course, very keen to get on to the next project, the Fluttering Shearwater release.

WEBSITE: We have been working diligently to build up our web site and keep it up to date. For those of you who haven't seen it I suggest you do, www.manaisland.org.nz. I am surprised by the amount of interest which comes through it, including boat bookings for the coming season starting in May.

We are now publishing the Newsletter on it so you can see the pictures in full colour.

HISTORICAL COMMITTEE: The historical committee has been active this year and made many useful connections which will progress as the years pass by. A tape recorder, for use in the oral history area was donated by the Kapi Mana Rotary Club. We met with a Sydney- sider late last year who has a wealth of knowledge on the early settlers to this region and Johnny Knocks in particular.

VOLUNTEERS: I would personally like to thank all those who volunteer their time, and in many cases pay for the privilege, to provide the much needed grunt to keep the momentum going in order to meet the Conservation Plan. One connection we did make which is proving invaluable in plotting and monitoring the success of the planting programme was with the Global Volunteer Network, who now on a monthly basis, provide volunteer input. DoC have recorded some 675 volunteer days for 2003. I make that the equivalent of three full-time staff.

PUBLICITY: Apart from our phantom publicity officer (who often makes press releases without the Presidents knowledge), and DoC's planned releases, we have a reasonably high profile, to the extent that invitations to speak to various organisations is becoming demanding, and the Porirua City Mayor is now inviting us to consult on the way forward for tourism in the City.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION: DoC have had some unwelcome publicity lately, and I would just like to say that I have found our relationship with them and their staff to be particularly co-operative and rewarding. My personal thanks go to the Staff on the Island and to Ian Cooksley, their Manager and to those in the Conservancy Office who make all these things possible.

Kate and I recently had the privilege of taking my tinny out to the Island on a day which almost matched the Fairy Prion release day, to talk to the baby sitters and then have breakfast on the beach in the company of a family of Takahe. Where else in the world can you do that?

THE COMMITTEE: It has been my pleasure to spend the last year as President, and that is primarily so because of the dedicated and enthusiastic team who make up your Committee. As with most things in life, some

feel the need to move on, and Sue and Grant have chosen to stand down this year. My special thanks go to Sue for the effort she has put in as well as managing the boat bookings, a substantial task on it's own, which she has agreed to continue.

AUCKLAND'S 'MANA ISLAND' - TIRI TIRI MATANGI: Carl Hayson, (the immediate past president of the Supporters of Tiri Tiri Matangi) gave an illuminating and enthralling address at the Friends' AGM on 24 March.

Tiri (as the island is commonly called) has many parallels to our favourite island, Mana. It is about the same size, close to a large metropolitan area, and its restoration has depended, to a significant degree, on a partnership between the Department of Conservation and the community.

The restoration of Tiri is somewhat more advanced than that of Mana, with the reforestation programme being finished about 5 years ago, and the Supporters set up 10 years earlier than the FOMI. The Supporters have been very active on the island and have funded the reintroductions of several species and a successful kiore eradication. They now intend to bring bats back to the island. (The Navy blew up their previous abode on Tiri). In addition, the Supporters are funding infrastructural improvements on the island (a visitors' centre and bunkhouse are now planned), and major research, interpretation and education programmes.

How can they do all this? Well, they spend about \$240,000 annually on the island – a figure that makes our Treasurer's mouth water. Besides the normal sources of funds (members' subscriptions, grants, sponsorship and the like), they raise approximately \$90,000 per year through guiding some of the 30,000 visitors and sales through their shop.

I was also impressed with the professional approach that they took to their involvement with the island – it reminded me, to some extent, of that of the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary. The Supporters are essentially run as a business with all the "profits" being invested in the island.

What then are the differences between the two islands?

- 1 Tiri provides an island visitation and volunteer focus for a population of one million whereas Wellington, about one third of the size, has its ecological attractions spread amongst Kapiti, Mana, Matui/Somes and, increasingly, the Karori Wildlife Sanctuary.
- 2 Tiri has a suite of bird species which are essentially forest dwelling whereas there will be a wider range of habitats on Mana, possibly supporting a wider range of species. In the distant future, Mana could well be an island whose ecological processes are dependent, to a large degree, on seabirds.
- 3 The Supporters have a far larger role in funding the restoration, resourcing and management of Tiri, than what the Friends have with Mana. While the Friends have a very positive working relationship with DOC, it is clear that the nature of these types of partnership evolve over time and both parties need to ensure that the relationship continues to work giving changes in circumstances.
- 4 DOC have, rightly, in my opinion, decided that certain species should not be transferred to Mana in the foreseeable future because they might compromise the introduction of other species or might not be able to maintain sustainable populations on their own. (Takahe would be the obvious exception). On the other hand, the spotless crane (already resident on Tiri) and the saddleback, for example, may impact on future transfers of some invertebrates, such as the giant weta. Other species can only be sustained on Tiri because of significant human intervention (eg feeding of stitchbirds and growing wattles for the kokako).

Overall, the address reinforced the need for the Friends to manage their activities on a systematic and business basis and to anticipate how it can best make a positive contribution towards the restoration of Mana Island. We have already begun working on the historical aspects of the island and started talking about what, if anything, we may need to do to help DOC cater for the expected upsurge in visitor numbers. While we may never have the resources of the Supporters, the Friends will continue to pull its weight in its partnership with DOC.

Finally, the Committee would like to thank the Supporters for their advice and encouragement when the Friends was established – our constitution, for example, is modelled on that of the Supporters.

The great Kakariki and Weevil Hunt - *by Brian Paget.*



Photos by Dave Hansford, Origin Natural History

I was privileged to be included in the team which set out from Mana Cruising Club on Sunday 9 May on Marinowai. We left around 0730 (note the nautical terminology) with 12 on board including Jason (DoC & FOMI), Kelvin (FOMI), Lyn, Ian, Clint, Mark, Kerry, Rob (all from DoC), Tama (FOMI & Ngati Toa), Dave (freelance journo and photographer) and of course the inimitable Captain Les. If Lyn, our Kakariki expert, had arrived on time she may have had time to take preventative measures against what turned out to be a rather sloppy corkscrew ride across Cook Strait. Poor Lyn, she did not enjoy the crossing to Chetwode Islands. We arrived at the Islands, off the Northern entrance to Pelorus Sound, at around 1100, in a nor-westerly which diminished as we progressed, and anchored in calm water off the beach.

Lunch brought the arrival of the Picton team of two, Bill from Picton and Clare the Vet from Massey. All hands to unload and set up the temporary aviary ashore, and the first of the mist nets. Once done the overnighers scrambled around to find enough flat land to pitch their tents. Kelvin did a sterling job of locating the short drop and digging the necessary hole, just shows that FOMI can not only raise the money, we also deal with the basics.

Success by dusk with a total of 4 birds caught, weighed & measured, tagged and ringed. Lyn

explains that the sexing is a complex measurement system, length of beak and width provide a reasonably accurate distribution for male and female birds, the bigger the beak ratio, the more likely the male.

The weather and the meal treated us well so we were able to remain at anchor overnight.

Monday dawned fine and the mist nets were re-set and the patient crew extracted 18 parakeets during the day as well as the by-catch of a large number of Bellbirds and South Island Robins which abounded under the canopy.

The progress was so good that it was decided to try and advance the release date by a day to minimise the stress on the birds. This decision applied some pressure to the collection of the Flax Weevils from Maude Island, so an early meal was ordered from the local Italian eatery, superb it was too, and the shore team were put ashore, and off Les trundled into the night and into a wettish southerly.

The Maude Island team were there to greet the interlopers and arrange for the teams of collectors to disperse and collect these nocturnal invertebrates. The last of the collectors got back to base at 2 in the morning, whilst those few who remained on board had a quiet (relatively) night. The day dawned a little grey and damp, and a final count of weevils amounts to half of our allocated quota. A quiet

walk around part of the island to the gun emplacement and then back to the boat with the weevils tucked up in a very large chilly bin with some flax leaves.

Back to the birds, whose collection rate had diminished, but now totalled 26 with 14 males, and no fatalities. The base camp was cleared of unessential bits and pieces, and after a meal the shore party were despatched for the last time.

An early morning start for those 11 who were on the boat in the hope of beating the easterly weather change forecast, which we achieved arriving back at Mana at 1130, unloading and then picking up the visitors for the release.

Those left behind packaged the Kakariki into duplex condo's, complete with carpet and

blinds, and shipped them over to Bulwar where the helicopter picked them up, complete with Tama for the journey to Mana Island where they were welcomed, blessed and released.

Those who attended the release will have experienced that magic moment when the Yellow Crowned Parakeets flew from their boxes into the canopy in Bush Valley, stayed a while chattering amongst themselves and then departed to different parts of the Island.

A wonderful experience, well organised and professionally executed.

Thanks to the Mana Community Grants Foundation for making this possible, to DoC for their expertise and management, and to FOMI for the voluntary effort.



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Blue slips were sent with the last newsletter. Thank you to all who have sent their subscriptions in for 2004. BUT we would like to stay in contact with you ALL, so please pay if you have not yet done so. Thanks Jan Barnes

In the Cook Strait ecological district, Red crowned parakeets are abundant on Kapiti Island and the yellow crowned are abundant on the Chetwode Islands and Titi Island in outer Pelorus Sound.

Who's Who

We welcomed two new faces on to the committee at the AGM, Vicky Froude and Dave Adams. The Committee for 2004 is –

Brian Paget (President)
Doreen Douglas (Vice President/Newsletter)
Kelvin Hunt (Secretary)
Jan Barnes (Treasurer)
Colin Ryder (Publicity/Sponsorship)

Jason Christensen (Member/Island Ranger)
Vicky Froude
Dave Adams
Tama Coker (Iwi Representative)
Ian Cooksley (DoC)

TALL STORIES, SMALL FISH AND, BY THE WAY,

SOME YELLOW CROWNED PARAKEETS - Colin Ryder

The yellow-crowned parakeet expedition has already passed into FOMI legend. You have probably read elsewhere about the achievements of the trip: about how an eclectic bunch of DoC staff and assorted others captured 26 parakeets and 80 flax weevils which were all successfully transferred to Mana Island. However, when I went over to the Island for the release I mostly heard about the more qualitative aspects of the trip: who ate the most (one participant was awestruck by the prowess of the DoC staff), who snored the loudest (I am sworn to secrecy under threat of physical violence) and who caught the largest fish (opinions varied but I was not impressed even as the claims became more and more exaggerated).

Enough of that. As with most adventures of this type, fact will be, and probably already has been, metamorphosed into fiction. We need to remember, though, that the trip was so successful, largely because of the professionalism and hard work of the capture team and some really good planning by DoC, that they finished a day early. This enabled the release to be brought forward to reduce the stress on the birds.

The release was an amazing and uplifting experience. This was my first bird release and I will always remember the excitement (and relief) when we liberated these attractive parakeets into Bush Valley. Fortunately for us, several of the birds stayed in the immediate vicinity, squawking excitedly, so we were able to enjoy their company, and that of the resident robins, for a little longer. The flax weevil release was a bit more low-key. Just after we got back to the Lockwood it started pouring with rain and it was left to a hardy trio to take these insects to their new home.

Several of us stayed on the Island overnight and the next morning, trudged back up the hill to the parakeet release site. We heard and saw several of the birds on the way and saw more, some at close quarters, when we arrived. Since then, parakeets have been seen elsewhere on the Island so they have begun

exploring their new home. All they have to do now is breed. If they find Mana hospitable, they should breed prolifically and get up to relatively large numbers very quickly.

This transfer would not have happened without the support of a large number of organisations and individuals. Particular thanks must go to:

The Mana Community Trust (funding - the total project cost over \$700 per bird, not including the Department's own costs, in-kind contributions and the value of volunteers' time. If these are included, the overall project cost would be about \$2,000 per bird)

An anonymous donor (funding)
Plimmerton School (nest box construction)
UCol Conservation Corps (nest box construction)
Carpet Court 2000 (carpet squares for the transfer boxes)
Lochmara Lodge (boat travel)
Aquaheat Industries Ltd (nest box materials)
Bright Industries Ltd (nest box materials)
Bulwar Lodge (use of helicopter pad)

And last, but not least, our volunteers (nest box installation and cleaning out, bird monitoring)

FOMI, above all, appreciates the agreement of Ngati Kuia, to allow their taonga to come to Mana Island where they will be under the guardianship of Ngati Toa.

As mentioned earlier, the birds have been seen from one end of the Island to the other, although as Jason said, "It's like looking for a needle in a haystack." The birds are very cryptic in their natural surroundings. I can remember walking past a flock of them in a tree on Kapiti without seeing them. (Mind you, that wouldn't surprise my wife). We are still looking for volunteers to help monitor them over the next 12 months. If you are interested email me (rydercj@xtra.co.nz) or ring me on 4784 391.

Finally, I would like to apologise to Jason for helping to make such a dent in his bar stocks.