



# FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND INCORPORATED

PO BOX 54 101, MANA

Newsletter Number 27

February 2006

Hi Folks

We are now well into the year of 2006 and it would seem that summer has arrived, or did I miss it? Happy New Year to you all.

The year certainly got off to a busy start for FOMI with the Fluttering Shearwater release off to an inauspicious start, weatherwise that is. We had to abandon all the arrangements for the Press and our local MP and Minister, Winnie Laban, and re-arrange the helicopter so that the volunteers and Helen Gummer (DoC) could get to the Island in time for the first feeding requirements for the 40 chicks flown in from Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds.

We have just had a debrief meeting with DoC, and learned a few things which made this release different from the previous experience with the Fairy Prions. We will be better prepared as a result, and the next planned release in 2007 should be a doddle, except for the fact we will have twice as many birds to feed, they eat twice as much as originally thought and their temporary homes need major re-location and renovation.

At least that will provide plenty of volunteer opportunities during the year for the 100+ burrows required, and over an extended feeding period next January. Plan your holiday (albeit working) now.

We are also coming up to our AGM which is set down for Thursday 23 March 2006. Hugh Gardiner, the Ranger on Mana, has had a year to settle in, and has agreed to come along and disclose all.

We are also looking for new blood on the Committee to cover for some of the existing aged members. Please come along and make your contribution to what is a vibrant and immensely satisfying organisation.

Cheers

Brian

## ***Wanted!***

### **New blood on the Committee**

If you have an interest in being on the FOMI Committee, or know someone who would like to have an input, please contact a committee member or email

[Brian@caduceus.co.nz](mailto:Brian@caduceus.co.nz)

### *Friends of Mana Island Inc*

## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

Thursday 23 March 2006

Mana Cruising Club  
[Ngatitoo Domain, Pascoe Avenue](#)  
Mana

7.30pm

Guest Speaker: Hugh Gardiner  
[Field Centre Supervisor, Mana Island](#)

['An Island Hopper's Voyage To Mana Island'](#)

# **LOTS OF SPEARGRASS AND A FEW WEEVILS**

*By Colin Ryder*

Some of us have had close encounters of the worst kind with speargrass, *Aciphylla squarrosa*, on Mana Island. (Mine was at about minus 1.5 cm). Yet the combination of this prickly member of the carrot family and Mana Island may prove to be the salvation of perhaps Wellington's rarest and most endangered creature; the Wellington speargrass weevil.

This weevil is host specific on speargrass growing on the Wellington south coast. This population is the only example of the species in the North Island and is the only one found in the coastal lowlands. As such, it has high conservation importance

The Department of Conservation considers that this population is in imminent danger of extinction because of predation by rodents and large scale habitat modification by goats, fire and natural succession. Management *in situ* will depend on land owner support, pest and weed control and eventual recovery of the habitat. However, this outcome can only be achieved, if at all, in the long term because of the range and scale of the changes required.

Urgent short term action is therefore necessary and transfer to a new safe site is considered the most feasible and effective option of securing the population.

While Matiu/Somes Island was first considered the most promising initial site, only Mana Island has been found to currently have areas of the host plants large and dense enough likely to support weevils on a sustained basis along with the absence of mammalian predators and competitors.

The project involves:

- Teams of DOC and volunteers searching for, and collecting, speargrass weevils on the Wellington south coast;
- Holding collected weevils in a temporary enclosure on Mana Island until there is sufficient to begin a new secure self-sustaining population on the island (estimated to be at least three animals of each gender);
- Augmenting the new site on the island with plantings of cultivated speargrass; and
- Transferring the weevils to the new site.

It is expected the Mana Island population will increase in numbers and eventually there will be a source of animals for transfer back to the original habitat, or other appropriate sites, once habitat values are restored.

This is a modest but important project which is likely to generate considerable media and public interest. It will only proceed, however, because the Friends of Mana Island has committed both over \$2,000 in funding and volunteer support.

DOC is in the final throes of planning the search. Collecting will begin, hopefully, within the next week or so. As the weevils only show themselves when it is warm, volunteers need to be able to help at relatively short notice. A reasonable standard of fitness is desirable because some of the terrain on the South Coast can be somewhat rugged.

Want to help? Free? Then contact Colin Ryder on 478 4391 or [rydercj@xtra.co.nz](mailto:rydercj@xtra.co.nz) and he will send you more information as it becomes available.

Also, we would welcome any donations from our generous members towards this project. Because of the urgency, we don't have the time to seek funding for most of the costs from our usual sources.

# FLUTTERING SHEARWATER TRANSLOCATION

*Sue Galbraith Community Relations Officer/Public Awareness, Department of Conservation,*

Extra supplies of sardine smoothies and a good dollop of human devotion have paid off for the latest seabird transfer to Mana Island.

Fluttering shearwater chicks handraised by volunteers on the Island over the last month have fattened up nicely and flown out to sea. They will hopefully return "home" to Mana Island to breed in the next five or six years.

Forty of the seabirds were captured as nearly fully grown chicks from Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds in January and flown by helicopter to Mana Island where they were placed into artificial burrows and fed tinned sardines blended with oil and water until they were ready to fledge. It is part of a plan by the Department of Conservation and Friends of Mana Island (FOMI) to restore the Island's ecology.



DOC contractor Helen Gummer said one of the chicks died and another 10 unexpectedly left the Island within days of the transfer, which may compromise their chances of survival. The remainder were all in tip top condition at the time of fledging, thanks to the tender loving care of a team of nine volunteers who stayed on the island and worked full time to feed the chicks and monitor their progress.



*Volunteer Sue Freitag*

"We've never tried fluttering shearwater on the sardine diet before and they ate a lot more than we bargained on," said Ms Gummer.

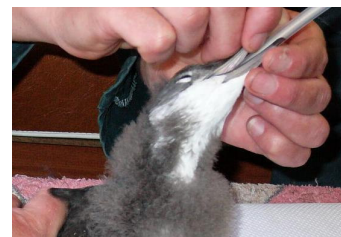
"We had to order in extra supplies and by the time they fledged, they were in excellent condition. We now feel confident that we can tackle larger numbers of the birds in subsequent years."

Up to 200 more birds will be transferred over the following two to three years.

Fluttering shearwaters are the third seabird species being tricked by DOC and FOMI into believing Mana Island is "home". Diving petrels transferred to the Island during 1997-99 have begun breeding there, and fairy prions transferred during 2002-2004 are starting to return. They also originated from colonies in the Marlborough Sounds.



A sound system on the island that plays seabird calls has attracted a pair of fairy prions which have produced the first fairy prion chick born on Mana Island for several centuries. It fledged around the same time as the fluttering shearwater chicks.



This is the second ever transfer of fluttering shearwaters to an offshore island. A colony was also successfully re-established on Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds in the 1990s.

The project is being funded by FOMI through grants and donations, with support from Te Atiawa and Ngati Toa.

## A BIRD'S VIEW

Hello, everybody, my name is Freddy and I'm a fluttering shearwater. I've just spent the day fluttering (funny that) over the tempestuous waters of Cook Strait feeding on fish and the like. I'm a bit tired, but while I am resting on the water, I'll tell you a story of home invasions, kidnapping and high adventure. I'm using Colin Ryder as my translator as my language is a mystery to your unlearned species. Colin understands me because he's really a bit of a bird himself. He has told me about why and how my adventures took place so I can tell you the whole story.



Anyway, here I am safe and comfy in my burrow on Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds. It's early January and, for some reason nobody understands, most of my cousins have already left. (We're all related down here; our colony was established by Founder Flutterer countless generations ago). I'm dreaming about my next feed of regurgitated fish from Mum or Dad, when this long, supple human arm snakes down the burrow and pulls me out into the broad daylight. Oh, the indignity of it!! I am weighed, my wing-length measured, and coloured bands put around a leg. I even had a photo taken with this DOC scientist called Lynn, who I think might have been important (I'm the photogenic one, but at least she had nice soft hands). I was then put back in my burrow, where I spend the next few hours brooding.



Next day, I was pulled out again. This time, I exacted some retribution by biting a finger and drawing blood. Much to my surprise, I was put in a partitioned cat-box (oh, the irony of it) with a very cute chick called Flossie. Forty of us were then taken across to this place called Mana Island by a very noisy helicopter. It was a bumpy ride - Colin tells me that it was so windy that the organisers had to cancel the welcome, which was a bit of a shame because I think we deserved it after all the trauma we had been through.

We were then taken out of the helicopter, carted up the hill to the artificial colony, fed some water down our gullets through a bloody big syringe and put into these funny little burrows which were a bit tight. Several of my cousins went walkabout on the first night - some of them were just big enough to fly off. I hope they made it okay. The boss, Helen, stopped even more of us from going for a wander by barricading us in our burrows until she thought we were big and fat enough to survive several days exploring the Island before we took off. We were only taken out of our new homes to be weighed, measured and fed "sardine smoothies" by teams of volunteers on the Island for a week at a time.



I was one of the last to leave; fat, fit and happy. My poor cousin, Foolish, got a bit anxious and unfortunately died in the tunnel to the burrow. Colin assures me that Helen and DOC will be redesigning the burrows next year because your species really knows very little about us and this transfer was the learning one - which is why only 40 birds were involved.

I got through the first dangerous few days after fledging quite well and am looking forward to returning to Mana Island in about six years time - I quite liked it there. Hopefully, I will catch up with Flossie and we can excavate a burrow so we can start breeding a year or so later. Wish me luck.

Colin tells me that the planning for the future transfers of up to 200 more chicks over the next two or three years has already started. Several things will be changed to improve the chances of success and lots more volunteers and funding will be needed. Can you help? Mana Island will be such a good home for us Flutterers but DOC, Colin and his friends will need your support.

See you in 2011 or 2012.

## ***FLUTTERING SHEARWATER FACTS***

The fluttering shearwater is a gull-sized brown and white seabird that is common around New Zealand coastal waters and often in Wellington harbour. Its main breeding areas are on islands off the coast of Northland, in the Bay of Plenty, and in the outer Marlborough Sounds. Their bones, along with those of diving petrels and fairy prions, have been found in middens on Mana Island.



Burrowing seabirds are "keystone" species for island ecosystems. Their burrows create safe, sheltered and humid homes for lizards, tuatara and insects. Because they feed at sea and nest in dense colonies, they create highly fertile ecosystems by delivering nutrients in the form of droppings, spilt regurgitations, addled eggs and corpses.

## ***ANOTHER FAMOUS FIRST FOR MANA ISLAND***

Sorry, folks, none of the concrete gannets have flown away yet!

However, we can report that the first fairy prion chick born on Mana Island for several centuries has successfully fledged.

The initial fluttering shearwater team (Barry, Andy, Sue and Helen) found the chick in a natural burrow under a flax bush near the artificial diving petrel/fairy prion colony on 18 January. The chick fledged on 24 January.

One of the parents was the unbanded bird who arrived back with a banded returnee last year. It is therefore almost certain that this would be the first time that a prion, let alone a fairy prion, has returned to the island to which it was transferred and successfully raised a chick. And who knows, there may have been more out there.

Makes all that planning, fundraising and hard work worthwhile, doesn't it?

## ***TRIVIA***

### ***Why are dock leaves so effective at relieving nettle stings?***

Being stung by a nettle is painful because the sting contains an acid. Rubbing the sting with a dock leaf can relieve the pain because dock leaves contain an alkali that will neutralise the acid and therefore reduce the sting. Bees and ants also have acidic stings, so dock leaves should help but other alkalis such as soap or bicarbonate of soda are usually better.

A dock leaf is useless against wasp stings, which contain an alkali. This is unfortunate because wasps are nasty little critters whose sole aim in life is to ruin picnics and barbecues. If you want to neutralise a wasp sting you should use an acid such as vinegar. The only problem is you'll smell of pickles for the rest of the day.

# NOTICE BOARD

## ***Volunteer Opportunity***

### **Tree Planting**

The 2006 Planting Programme will commence

27/28 May

and go through to

5/6 August

Contact Kelvin Hunt →

## ***Volunteer Opportunity***

### **Weeding Day**

**Saturday, 8th April 2006**

(Cancellation day, Sunday 9th)

ALL SEATS MUST BE BOOKED

Contact Kelvin at

kelvin.hunt@police.govt.nz

or

kindregards@paradise.net.nz

Tel 238 3194 (wk) or 235 6261 (hm)

Visit our website:  
[www.manaisland.org.nz](http://www.manaisland.org.nz)

***Don't Forget!***

***AGM***

Thursday 23 March 2006

Friends of Mana Island Inc

### ***T Shirts***

We are able to offer T shirts to our members and interested parties

Sizes Small to XXL

Only \$20 each plus freight

To place an order send an email to  
[tshirts@manaisland.org.nz](mailto:tshirts@manaisland.org.nz)

Supply your name, physical address (for delivery)  
and mailing address if different  
and we will invoice you



Alternatively send your order with your remittance to  
PO Box 54 101, Mana,  
and add \$6.50 for freight

### ***Subs***

It's that time again!

Subs for 2006 are now due.

A renewal slip is enclosed with this  
Newsletter.

Please send your subscription to

FOMI  
PO BOX 54 101,  
MANA

and make cheques payable to 'Friends  
of Mana Island'.

Thank you for your continued support.

### ***Your Committee***

Brian Paget (President), Doreen Douglas (Vice President/Newsletter), Darlene Adams (Secretary),  
Jan Barnes (Treasurer), Kelvin Hunt (Volunteer Coordinator), Colin Ryder (Publicity/Sponsorship), Hugh  
Gardiner (Mana Island Field Centre Supervisor), Dave Adams, Aka Arthur (Kamatua), Tama Coker (Iwi  
Representative), Jason Christensen (DoC), Ian Cooksley (DoC)