



FRIENDS OF MANA ISLAND Inc

PLANNING UNDER WAY FOR FLUTTERING SHEARWATER TRANSFER

Planning and fundraising is under way for the most expensive project in the Friends of Mana Island's short but illustrious history. We intend to raise just under \$65,000 over the next three years so that we work with the Department of Conservation to re-establish a breeding colony of fluttering shearwaters on Mana Island by translocation of 240 chicks from Long Island in the Marlborough Sounds.

This project will build on the experience and expertise developed through running the successful translocations of diving petrel and fairy prion to Mana Island. This will be a leading edge project which is already attracting international attention with overseas biologists keen to participate in the project so they can learn the techniques needed to help protect some of their own "at risk" species.

In the first year of the 3 or 4-year translocation project, 40 chicks will be transferred to Mana Island in January 2006. The chicks will be placed into artificial burrows, and hand-fed daily on a diet based on sardines by volunteers under the supervision of an experienced contractor. This diet was used for 85% of the fairy prion chicks transferred in January 2002-04 with excellent results, with all the chicks eventually fledging. Depending on the outcome of the first transfer, we intend increasing the number of chicks transferred in subsequent years, up to a total of about 240 chicks.

The fluttering shearwater colony will be sited some distance from the nascent colonies of diving petrels and fairy prions because there are concerns that if the three species shared the same area the larger fluttering shearwaters would out-compete the other species for the use of the artificial burrows and jeopardise their breeding prospects.

Accordingly, we will also install, before the end of this year, a solar-powered sound system that broadcasts calls of fluttering shearwaters, during the hours of darkness, at the proposed colony site, to give the impression of an active

colony being present. Experience with the other species has shown that this will be essential to help attract transferred chicks back to Mana Island, and as well as immigrants from other colonies.

Because the proposed site will be on an exposed cliff edge, distant from the facilities on the island, a second-hand caravan has been purchased, transport to the island by helicopter to be fitted out as a mobile field station. This will provide volunteers with a relatively comfortable work space in a very exposed location with often trying conditions. This facility will also be used for future projects on the island.

The fluttering shearwater is a gull-sized brown and white seabird that is common around New Zealand coastal waters. Its main breeding areas are on islands off the coast of Northland, in the Bay of Plenty, and in the outer Marlborough Sounds.

This will be an exciting and important project for the Friends. Thanks to the generosity of the Mana Community Trust, the Kapiti branch of Forest and Bird and several members we are already well on the way with both the mobile field station and the sound system already funded. However, the friends are still seeking in the order of \$50,000 (about \$US35,000) for the transfers themselves. Any help would be welcomed.