



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

OSNZ — Birds New Zealand

birdsNZ.org.nz and birdsNZ.org.nz/society-publications/notornis/

September 2025

Kia ora koutou,

I hope that you have all been enjoying the warmer days, perfect for getting out and twitching! At our last monthly meeting, Ian mentioned that we have been fortunate to have a few keen birders out beach patrolling and finding interesting species here in the

Wellington region. A timely reminder to keep eyes peeled, as a BirdsNZ member in Auckland recently found a Barn Owl! During spring there is also the chance to watch out for local nesting attempts. In particular Alejandro is interested to hear about any New Zealand Falcon nests in the Wellington Region.

Over the next few months we can continue to support the Bittern Muster and get involved in the upcoming 5 Minute Bird Counts in Tawa. There is also rifleman post-release monitoring coming up at the Maungakotukutuku Road reserve at Paraparaumu. For those interested I recommend coming along to the fieldtrip there on Sunday the 12th October 2025. We will also hear more about the reserve at the October monthly meeting.

Keep up the awesome birding.

Nāku noa, nā

Annemieke Hamilton

Greetings

Coming from an era of slide rules, mechanical calculators and real telephones I find the bombardment of modern technology at times challenging and occasionally most annoying. Having just switched to Windows 11 there is a new force trying to write our Wellington Newsletter, namely Copilot. Some may argue that Copilot should become the new editor of the Newsletter. Fortunately for my peace of mind I have been able to disable Copilot. However, I have left in the Newsletter one example of Copilot's work, namely the decline in the number of pateke chicks on Jason's Pond, Mana Island.

Geoff de Lisle

Wellington Birds New Zealand Monthly Meetings

Meetings

Meetings are held on the first Monday of the month from 7.30pm. They are hybrid meetings either "in person" at the Te Papa Collections Building, 169 Tory Street or on Zoom.

October Meeting. Our next meeting will be on Monday the 6th of October during which Jim O'Malley will present a talk about "**Kapiti Ecological Restoration Project (KERP) & North Island Rifleman**". The Kapiti Ecological Restoration Project (KERP) aims to restore native bird populations through effective predator suppression and allow further ornithological opportunities such as reintroducing species that were once present. The North Island rifleman is ideal for a translocation project into our predator-managed habitat. Riflemen will be carefully captured at the Wainuiomata Water Catchment Area that will be transported, and released using improved low-stress methods, with nest boxes and intensive monitoring supporting settlement. We see this as a citizen science project that all are welcome to be part of.

As usual, this will be a hybrid meeting, you can join the meeting on **Monday the 6th of October** from 7:30 pm in two ways: In person at the Te Papa Collections Building, 169 Tory Street and Online via the Zoom Meeting via the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86364235955?pwd=btzmdwpyO7VRS36CFCzUwiWbklAs.1>

The meeting presentation will start at **7.45pm**.

Field trips: The Kapiti Ecological Restoration Project field trip, 12 October 2025 9.45am, 20 people max, no required cost. A look at the Kapiti Ecological Restoration Project discussed by Jim at the October meeting. The location where a rifleman translocation will occur in a couple of months and where post-translocation monitoring is available for BirdsNZ to be involved with.

If you are interested, please fill out the expression of interest form: [EOI: The Kapiti Ecological Restoration Project fieldtrip \(Sunday 12 October\)](#)

Opportunity for Level 2 & 3 Passerine Banders and Mistnetters: Interested to support the above mentioned rifleman translocation? It will occur in late February. With 40 to 50 birds moved from the Wainuiomata Water Catchment area and looking for persons with Level 2 or 3 mist netting/banding to help the 2 to 3 teams we want to use. Please reach out to the Wellington email and Annemieke will forward your interest onto Jim.

Recent Meetings

July 7th, Chris Bell, "Non-native stoats in the Orkney Islands of Scotland". Chris Bell had the role of Biosecurity Manager for five years with the Orkney Native Wildlife Project, from its beginning in 2019 through to 2024. He summarised the project which is described in more detail at the following link <https://www.orkneynativewildlife.org.uk/project/eradication>

Chris highlighted the huge challenges to eradicate stoats on the Orkneys by comparing them to the programme to eliminate stoats on Waiheke Island, another urbanised island with stoats. To date, only 258 stoats have been caught as part of the stoat programme on Waiheke. This compares to over 6000 stoats which have been removed from the Orkneys. Both programmes are using similar techniques including the use of DOC200 traps, the use of stoat detector dogs and recognising the importance of the support of the general public including their reporting of stoat sightings.

<https://www.tekorowaiowaiheke.org/> <https://www.tekorowaiowaiheke.org/stoats>

August 4th, Katie Gray, Department of Conservation. "Embarking together on the banded dotterel flyways study". Katie Gray gave an introduction to the banded dotterel flyways project, a collaboration between DOC and the Department of Ornithology at the Max Planck Institute in Seewiesen, Germany. Banded dotterels/Pohowera (*Anarhynchus bicinctus*) exhibit a wide range of seasonal migration patterns, from staying on their breeding ground throughout the winter, to migrating across the Tasman Sea to Australia or New Caledonia. Widespread colour banding and resighting work in the 1980s by the Banded Dotterel Study Group (BDSG) of the OSNZ (now Birds NZ) and the Victoria Wader Study Group (VWSG) revealed varying patterns of movement by different breeding populations around New Zealand. This ground-breaking work still forms the basis of the understanding of migration in banded dotterels. However, fifty years on, conditions faced by the species have changed in ways that may impact the cost-benefit ratio of staying put versus migrating. The current project is extending the early research and investigating the current migration patterns of the species using electronic trackers and colour banding. The Banded Dotterel Flyways Project began colour banding in the 2020 breeding season and is now calling for public engagement in expanding resighting efforts. Kaite's presentation introduced the project, shared resighting data collected so far, touched on the project's value in the context of the conservation of one of New Zealand's highly mobile terrestrial species. http://ornithology.bi.mpg.de/CONTENT/projects/Banded_Dotterel/

Report Sightings of banded/flagged banded dotterels

A number of different groups are marking banded dotterels, including the Max Planck Institute study, Kaikoura Banded dotterel study and the MIRO project. The MIRO project is documenting the breeding success and post-breeding dispersal of banded dotterels breeding on Eastbourne beach, the beaches in front of the Parangarahu (Pencarrow) Lakes, Baring Head and Wellington Airport. MIRO-banded birds have a white flag on their right leg with a unique 3 letter identifier (picture) and a metal band on the left leg. Max Planck-banded birds may be colour banded or have a 2-letter white flag.

Note: flags / bands can be difficult to see, especially if only using binoculars. A camera with a good zoom lens is very useful for recording bands/flags. If you see a banded/flagged bird please report it to the DOC banding Office <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/reporting-a-bird-band/> or b.dot.resighting@doc.govt.nz

Pauatahanui Inlet banded dotterels

In the Wellington Region a great place to see banded dotterels during the winter is Ration Point at Pauatahanui on an incoming high tide. At least 30 birds overwinter at Pauatahanui and this last winter included a flagged bird (PHE) from the MIRO project and an orange colour band from the Max Planck study. PHE is now back on Eastbourne beach sitting on 3 eggs. The orange banded bird was marked as a young chick (hence only one colour band) at Kaitorete Spit near Lake Ellesmere (Orange is the colour is used for this site, each adult has O on the top on the left tarsus). Chicks that are too small to carry a full combo are given one band of the colour of their region. The hope is that it will be recaptured at a later date and then given a full combo.



In-coming tide, Ration Point, Pauatahanui 12th May 2025.



The above marked birds were part of the flock observed at Ration Point on the 12th of May.

September 1st, Jim O'Malley "The importance of Bittern monitoring". Bitterns are an incredibly cryptic, but an awesome native species. Jim outlined some of the learnings of bitterns, and how you can help join 'The Great Matuku Muster' to record bitterns during their breeding season when males are booming.

[The Great Matuku-Hurepo Muster](#) is a nationwide synchronised count of male Australasian bittern booming. Individuals are encouraged to join local or regional groups to listen and record bittern booming at a wetland near them.

The muster uses [DOC methodology for active listening \(referenced as triangulation section 5.3\)](#)

This year's Muster dates are 5,6,7 Sep | 3,4,5 Oct, | 7,8,9 Nov 2025.

Groups are encouraged to carry out 3 nights of monitoring if they can over 1, 2 or 3 months

Each group is encouraged to coordinate the dates of their counts with other groups in their region.

[For more details and key information for 2025 click here.](#)

REGISTER YOUR GROUP HERE FOR 2025 lovebittern@gmail.com

https://www.wetlandtrust.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/SUMICH_Bittern-1.pdf

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Bittern-Conservation-New-Zealand-100056994204383/>

<https://www.lovebittern.com/>

<https://www.lovebittern.com/thegreatmatukumuster>

Regional Representative: Annemieke Hamilton, birds.wellington@birdsNZ.org.nz

Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge peter.hodge@gmail.com

Matiu / Somes Island survey: Shane Cotter, heather.shane@xtra.co.nz

Newsletter: Geoff de Lisle, osnzwelly@gmail.com

WhatsApp group

There is a Wellington WhatsApp group and you are invited to join to discuss and report bird sightings with fellow BirdsNZ members:

https://chat.whatsapp.com/EXcnZGIDz9L7MSGp2pz0Rd?mode=ems_copy_t

Pūkaha National Wildlife Centre

March 3

While out monitoring our kākā, Rangers spotted a bird with an unknown band combination. After some research and a chat to our friends over at [Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne Ecosanctuary](#), our closest monitored kākā population, we discovered that this kākā was raised there in 2017 before being released at [Cape Sanctuary](#) in April of 2017. What makes this even more exciting is this female has been using one of our monitored nest boxes, fledgling 4 offspring this season which are now being sighted at the 3pm Kākā Talk.

📷 : Maddie Fraser

📷 <https://www.facebook.com/PukahaNZ/>

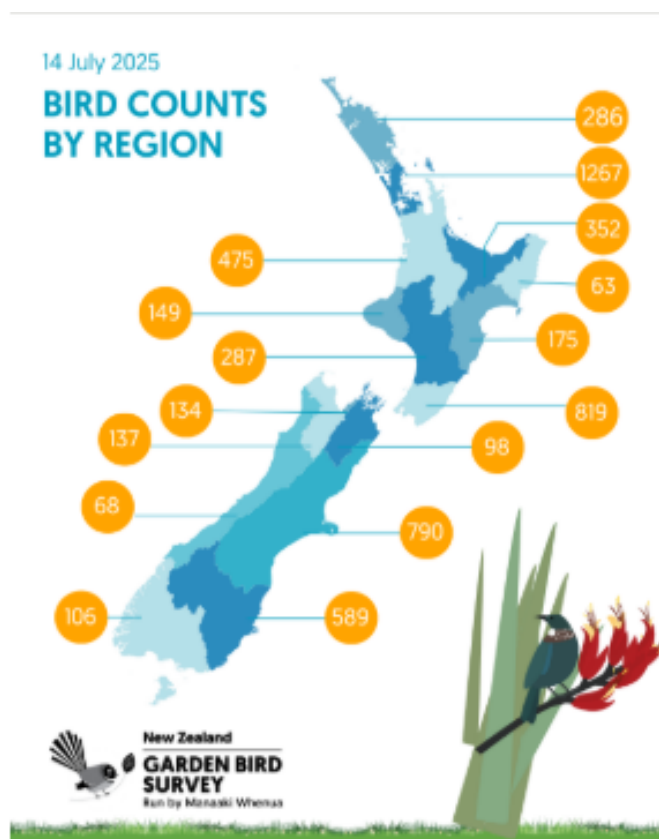
Te Papa to begin building \$121 million Biodiversity Research Centre in Upper Hutt

Thu 14 Aug 2025

[Click here to access images and building animation for download](#)



- Te Papa is set to proceed with the construction of a purpose-built Biodiversity Research Centre in Trentham, securing the future of some of New Zealand's most significant natural history collections.
- Directly funded by government, the facility is a \$155 million investment in New Zealand's scientific future.
- Replacing an ageing and earthquake-prone storage building in Wellington, it ensures the survival of the world's largest collection of New Zealand and Southern Ocean fishes, alongside other globally significant specimens.
- Opening in 2028, the world-class facility will replace the museum's current storage site in Wellington, which is earthquake-prone and no longer fit for purpose.
- "The Te Papa Biodiversity Research Centre is critical for New Zealand's scientific future," says Te Papa Board Chair Chris Swasbrook. <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/about/press-and-media/press-releases/2025-media-releases/te-papa-to-begin-building-121-million-biodiversity-research-centre-in-upper-hutt>



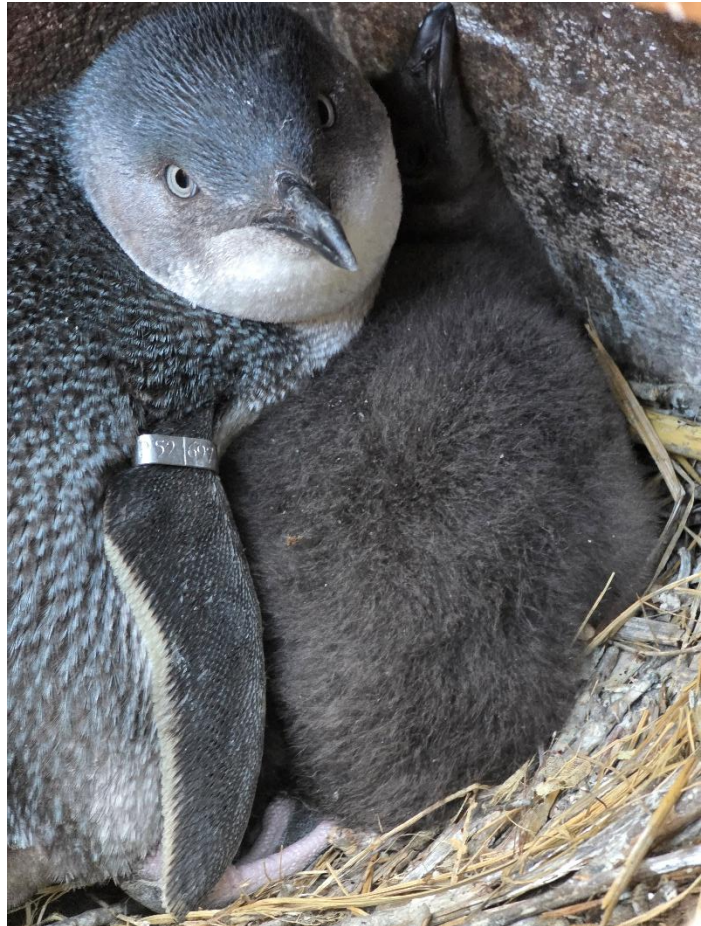
Note, a full detailed summary of the 2025 Garden Bird survey is still to be published.

Matiu / Somes Island little penguin/Kororā

Matiu / Somes Island is the largest of the three islands in Wellington Harbour with an area of 24 hectares. The island is home to approximately 250 pairs of little penguins. The overwhelming major of the birds use the network of over 250 nest boxes for breeding with only small numbers of pairs using natural nests. Breeding success is measured by fortnightly visits to check the contents of 277 nest boxes – adults, eggs and chicks. All adults and chicks about to fledge are marked with a flipper band with unique identifier. The following is a summary of the current breeding season as of the 13th of September which will be completed in January, 2026.

- The first eggs (2) for the current breeding season were observed on 26th July, 2025
- Currently 294 adult birds have been identified this breeding season. With the exception of 25 adults the remaining birds were already banded.
- The origin of the unbanded adults is unknown. Possibilities include birds produced in the area of Matiu / Somes Island that is not monitored or they could be birds produced outside the island. These birds have now been banded.
- All adults before they are banded are checked for marks including PIT tags which have been used on birds on the shores of Wellington Harbour where Places for Penguins are monitoring them. Currently no birds marked with PIT tags have been identified on Matiu / Somes Island.
- The first chicks (2) were observed on 30th August, 2025.
- By the 13th of September, the last survey 145 eggs had been produced this season.
- By 13th of September, there were 6 chicks (3 boxes each with 2 chicks).

Picture: Adult little penguin with flipper band and the first two penguin chicks of the season, 13th August. Photo, Garth Norman.



Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop, Matiu / Somes Island Little Penguin Study.

Spring is here, the shining cuckoos have returned.

An “anonymous eBirder noted a shining cuckoo at Zealandia on the 13th of September while Elly Smith recorded on eBird a shining cuckoo at Majoribanks Street, Wellington on the 22nd of September. Michael Szabo reported three shining cuckoo calling at Otari-Wilton Bush on the 18th of September (BirdingNZ.net) and Colin Miskelly noted two calling at Zealandia on the 20th of September (BirdingNZ.net). Note, please register your shining cuckoo records in eBird.

Ferret caught at Whareroa Farm - Whareroa Guardian Trust

August 20 at 6:54

Shane, leader of the Animal Pest Team, reports that sadly, another ferret has been caught at Whareroa Farm (on August 19, 2025). The ferret, a male, was caught in a leg hold trap and dispatched on the lower East Ridge Track, just above The Dell. The photo of it is somewhat bloody, so if you want to see that, you can click on this link to our webpages <https://tinyurl.com/56yaerc>

It's been taken to Raumati Beach vet Sue Blaikie. She's weighed it, it was 1.46kg, but its stomach content analysis has not been done yet, she will do that later in the week. It had been licking the bright orange lure that was been used for possums. (A female possum and joey had been caught at the same tree yesterday.)

The first ferret - and, until today, only Whareroa ferret - was caught several years ago at the farm manager's house which had been unoccupied for several weeks and the lawn had been invaded by rabbits. A ferret was caught when a new tenant arrived and set DoC 200 traps around the house. It's highly likely that the rabbits attracted the ferret as rabbits are ferrets' preferred prey.

Another ferret was found nearby several years ago. It'd been run over and Shane Williamson retrieved it from the middle of the elevated bit of SH1 directly over the railway lines at Mackays Crossing. Until today, these were, as far as is known, the only ferrets caught on or near Whareroa.

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=whareroa%20guardians%20community%20trust>

Zealandia weasel incursion—an important update - from Wero the Mustelid Dog and his Handler, Brad

ZEALANDIA Ecosanctuary / Thursday, 14 August 2025

Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne is confident that it is again weasel-free after a thorough two-day search of key sections of the valley by mustelid dog Wero and his handler Brad Windust. This followed hundreds of hours spent by staff and volunteers implementing the weasel incursion response triggered by the trapping of five weasels in early June, following fence damage during the May storm. <https://www.visitzealandia.com/Whats-On>

One giant leap for kiwi pukupuku

ZEALANDIA Ecosanctuary / Friday, 13 June 2025

15 kiwi pukupuku little spotted kiwi were recently translocated from Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne in Wellington to Cape Sanctuary in Hawke's Bay: the first time kiwi have been moved out of Zealandia to help grow populations elsewhere. This historic milestone has freed up a handful of established burrows just in time for the breeding season!

Kiwi are territorial birds and may maintain several different burrows across a single territory. While they'll sleep anywhere quiet and sheltered during the day, they need a secure burrow to lay eggs and raise chicks between July and January. Zealandia spans 225 hectares and is home to approximately 200 kiwi pukupuku. Of course, they can dig one up by themselves in one of the slopes or under a tree, but this year, there are a few pre-loved and furnished burrows on the market for them! This population started with just 40 birds, translocated from Kāpiti Island. It's now strong enough to support kiwi conservation nationwide, and we're hopeful it will welcome even more chicks this season within the safety of our 8.6km introduced predator-proof fence. <https://www.facebook.com/Zealandia/>

Bird Snippets

[Fantails and silveryeyes mobbing a ship rat](#)

Colin Miskelly » Sat Jul 19, 2025

My Tararua wanderings took me along the ridge north of Te Au track (Hemi Matenga reserve, behind Waikanae) today. This route is shown on the 2024 Tararua Park map, but it is not on the online topo map (Te Au Track is shown). DOC maintain a bait station line along the ridge, targeting possums and rats. Despite this, there are still enough rats remaining for the following observation.

About 3 pm I encountered a small mixed-species bird flock in the canopy, and started squeaking at them to bring them closer, to determine species and numbers. I was standing next to a soft tree fern (*Alsophila smithii*, synonym *Cyathea smithii*). My squeaking and/or close presence disturbed a large ship rat that climbed out through the skirt of dead frond shafts, up to the crown, then up a live frond into the mahoe canopy. Two fantails and four silveryeyes clustered around it - though not calling any more noticeably than before - and moved with the rat as it climbed nimbly for several metres through the canopy and out of sight. BirdingNZ.net

[Kereru - Matiu / Somes Island](#)

Geoff de Lisle, 16th August.

Unusual for this location. Heard again on the 30th of August.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S267694743>

[Eurasian Coots – Waimeha Lagoon](#)

Alan Tennyson, 17th August, 2025

Eight coots including a pair building a nest.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S267765300>

There are a number of eBird checklists where coots have been recorded on the Kapiti Coast, including the Waimanu Lagoon.

Note, coots used to breed on the Whitby Lakes but have not reported on eBird at this location since 2017.



[Little black shags, East Harbour / Days Bay](#)

Annemieke Hamilton, 30th August, 2025

Large flock of 39.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S270269332>

Note, little black shags are winter visitors to Wellington Harbour.

[Reef heron – recent sightings](#)

Archer Lamason, 7th [September](#), Red Rocks walkway, 4 reef heron

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S272686016>

Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle, 10th September, Old Wharf, Mana Island. 2 reef heron.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S275344869>

[Bar-tailed Godwit, Pauatahanui](#)

M. Kelly, 13th September, Ration Point, Pauatahanui, 4 godwits

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S273036320>

Hamish Johnston, 19th September, 5 godwits Pauatahanui,

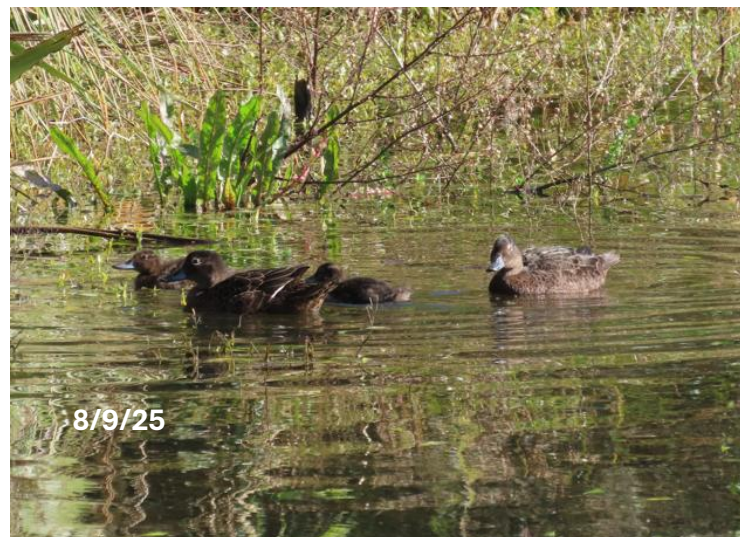
<https://ebird.org/checklist/S274341972>

Mana Island Pateke / Brown Teal

The Waikoko wetland on Mana Island was recreated at the site in March–April 1998 by Ducks Unlimited volunteers Jim Campbell and Gary Thompson. The system of ponds and weirs was designed by DOC landscape architect Robin Gay (1939–2008) and was intended to create habitat for a range of wetland plants and animals, including brown teal (pateke, *Anas chlorotis*). A total of 16 captive reared birds were released on Mana Island in 2000–01. Over the years the ponds have silted up with a greater tendency to dry up over summer. Jason's Pond was dry over summer where the family (1 male and 2 female adults) was observed this winter/spring.

5/7/25	5 chicks
17/7/25	3 chicks
9/8/25	2 chicks
8/9/25	2 chicks

"Despite fluctuations in sightings and breeding reports, the continued presence of these birds attests to their resilience and adaptability. Shifts in local habitats, seasonal changes, and evolving patterns in recorded observations all contribute to their persistent visibility, even as some locations see declines or absences. The patterns revealed by recent checklists suggest that, rather than disappearing, these species are navigating and responding to the changing landscape in their own subtle ways." Copilot.



Friends of Mana Island NEWS

Friends of Mana Island

Check out FOMI's latest newsletter. Lots of interesting items including - three winter work party trips, awaiting the arrival of gorgeous green geckos, N.I. robin survey, our logo designer mystery
All in here! <https://mailchi.mp/d8d36c5.../fomi-newsletter-september-2025>