



and Bird's Wellington regional branches.

Of the 150 project applications received nationwide, 19 were chosen, one being the Wellington proposal. With project co-ordinator Chris Ferkins at the helm, 15 keen young people were chosen for the 13 projects – among them weed control at McKays Crossing, on Somes Island and in Taupo Swamp as well as track work on Kapiti and Somes Islands.

However, the Mana Island mice eradication project was the largest and most important.

Through the Conservation Corps application a grant was received, part of which financed the whole of the mice eradication. To date \$57,000 in direct costs has been spent on the mice eradication project, considerably more than expected.

Once the Corps scheme was accepted, DoC's Don Merton was approached to devise the programme. Because it was an ambitious project never tried before on such a large scale, spacing and poison had to be tested for optimum kill. Most of the hard work was

done by the 15 members of the Wellington Conservation Corps, with volunteers helping on two days and four DoC people involved for a month.

Management of the Corps on Mana was handled by DoC Mana Island Manager Trevor Hook and his associate Phil Todd. These two put in many hours of hard work to see the project to a successful conclusion.

The final ammunition against the mice came in the form of a donation by Shell Chemicals of a tonne of "Storm" bait (an

## Mana Revegetation: Community Co-operation

The introduction of stock to Mana in 1834 had a severe impact on the island's plant life. When the last cattle were removed in May 1986, about 80 percent of the island was in short-cropped pastures with native coastal vegetation clinging to the cliffs and shore. Once the stock were removed, the mice population exploded, giving the native vegetation little chance to recover.

For the last three years there has been an enthusiastic revegetation programme occurring, supported by many individuals and organisations. Wellington Forest and Bird has financed the building of a shade house on Mana Island so that seedlings from plant stock growing in the local area could be raised on the island. The native plant seed stock has been gathered for the last four years by Tim Porteous of the QEII National Trust in his spare time.

He collects seeds from areas within 7 km of the island, with most of his collecting done from native plants in the Plimmerton area.

This is to ensure that only local genetic stock is used. The assistance of Gary Simpson of the Porirua City Parks Department has been invaluable to the project, with the seeds being germinated in Porirua City's nursery and then transported back to Mana Island. Once there, Trevor Hook and the Mana Forest and Bird branch work together on the planting programme.

For the Mana branch, the revegetation project on Mana Island has become a long term commitment with groups of 6 people going out 2-3 times in the summer to help repot and propagate. Work parties involving other Forest and Bird branches and community groups plant the seedlings out during autumn and

winter. Last year over 40,000 trees were planted in gullies around the homestead with a healthy strike rate of 80 percent. It is hoped that these plants will provide seed stock for natural regeneration.

Plant trials are now occurring on the slopes and former pastureland although it is hampered by the rank grass smothering seedlings, necessitating occasional release work. Flax, taupata, manuka, akeake, ngaio and kanuka are some of the species planted.

The vision inspiring these dedicated people is of a pest-free Mana Island springing back to life as native shrublands and ultimately forests return. One day, perhaps, an island which was once the playground of millions of mice will resound to the calls of some of New Zealand's precious endangered birds.