

anti-coagulant); the remainder was supplied at low cost. At a cost of \$10,000 per tonne, and with 5 tonnes needed, this assistance was invaluable. The large oval pellets had a bitter additive making them unpalatable to insects and birds, but, curiously, not to mice. They were also dyed blue, a colour that does not attract birds.

## Programme Underway

Winter, when the mice were hungriest and numbers were at a relative low, was the optimum time for bait laying. The island was closed for four months while the eradication programme was carried out, in the following steps:

- April 1989: 5,500 bait stations laid. The bait stations consisted of plastic tubes with a tray inside for the poison. These were laid in a 25 metre-grid pattern over the island.
- July 26th 1989: In one day, all 5,500 bait stations were laid with bait, with the exercise repeated on 11 August. A one day operation was crucial to the programme's success as it meant that there was no area where the mice population could avoid the bait. About 60 volunteers from the Conservation Corps, Mana College, Ornithological Society, Mana Forest and Bird and DoC clambered over the whole island in the difficult and energy sapping task of baiting the stations.
- 15th August 1989: A further 2 tonnes of a different poison (Talon 50WB – ICI) was spread by a top dresser. This was an added precaution in case any of the mice were bait shy.

Since then the 5,500 bait stations have been regularly checked by Conservation Corp workers for any mice, with only one found since August – a one-year-old female which fortunately had not bred.

For the Conservation Corps, Mana Island looks like being a successful project. Although the Corps was sadly disbanded at the end of January because of a lack of funding, two of the members are now working



Mana College pupil Malcolm Priest was just one of scores of volunteers who helped in the Mana mice eradication programme. Here he places poison bait in one of the bait stations.

Photo: Chris Ferkins

fulltime on Mana for DoC monitoring the traplines and checking the bait stations.

Don Merton, of black robin and kakapo fame, is optimistic about Mana's future as an island sanctuary.

"If it is a success – and it will be a year to 18 months before we can get too jubilant –

the programme offers one of the few options for rehabilitation of those native animals that are sensitive and have no future on the mainland. It's very exciting. It looked like degradation of our incredibly invaluable island resource was unstoppable, but now we have the ability to do something about it," he says.

The future for Mana as a sanctuary is looking good. As yet no plans have been made regarding the endangered native animals which might be relocated on the island. This will have to wait until the island is officially endorsed as being mouse-free.

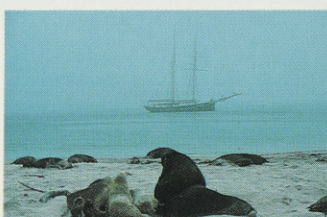
In the meantime, the tree planting continues and conservationists wait anxiously for the all clear on a new island sanctuary. 🌿

Reference: *NZ Journal of Ecology* Vol. 10 1987 pg 57-68. Conservation Opportunities on a Highly Modified Island – Mana Island – Wellington, N.Z. S Timmins, I Atkinson, C Ogle.

Forest and Bird wishes to record its appreciation to the hardworking young New Zealanders who pitched in to help protect our unique wildlife. We wish them every success in the future. Many thanks to the following who were most closely involved with the project: Catherine Coles, Andrew Drumm, Peter Griffen, Bernard Kellett, Calum MacMillan, Keri Martell, Jonah Tu'uga.



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