

# **West Coast Blue Penguin Trust Annual Report, 2008**

## **Introduction**

As this is our first annual report since the Trust was formed in 2006 and the West Coast Blue Penguin project began in 2004 it summarises our activities from 2004 to 2008. In 2004 a working party consisting of local authorities, Department of Conservation, community groups and individuals was set up to raise money to initiate research on the Blue Penguins, *Korora*, on the West Coast. It had been noted anecdotally that these penguins seemed to be in decline and recent increases in coastal development was thought to be putting them more at risk. Local authorities maintained that proper data was needed to incorporate the conservation of Blue Penguins into their planning processes.

The working party started a survey of penguins along the coastline from Karamea to Haast. Trapping workshops were held and Lincoln University students were funded to study breeding times and success rates in the Buller region. A twice yearly survey was initiated to get a snapshot of numbers of Penguins coming ashore at the end of July and the end of November. This working party evolved into the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust in 2006.

## **Research and management**

It is essential that management undertaken to protect penguins is based on good research. As the breeding and foraging strategies of blue penguins vary from place to place and that the factors causing penguin numbers to decline will be different from one region to another, research is essential to quantify the threats and develop appropriate management strategies. Our research has been, and will continue to be done in conjunction with Lincoln University. To date the Trust has supported one masters thesis, an honours dissertation and two student summer scholarships. A second masters student began fieldwork in July 2008.

One refereed journal paper has been published and we have had a visible presence with poster or oral presentations at two international conferences and two national conferences, with two presentations at some of these conferences.

Our most significant research product to date will be launched at the Trust's annual meeting on 7 August. This report will present all the information currently available on the distribution and abundance of penguins on the West Coast. It will be freely distributed to regional and district authorities, Department of Conservation and other interest groups. It is a work in progress and will be updated annually or as new information comes to light.

## **Research and management publications and presentations 2006-2008.**

### **Refereed Journal Articles.**

Heber, S., Wilson, K-J. & Molles, L. 2008. Breeding biology and breeding success of the blue penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* 35; 63-71.

### **Theses and Dissertations**

Heber, S. 2007. The breeding biology of the blue penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island – steps towards conservation of a declining population. M.Sc thesis, Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany.

\* Blyth, R.M. 2007. Seabird conservation in New Zealand: a review of the threats faced by New Zealand seabirds. B.Sc. (Hons) dissertation, Lincoln University, New Zealand.

### **Conference presentations**

Wilson, K-J., Blyth, R., Heber, S. & Chambers, H. Conservation of the Blue Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) on the West Coast, South Island, New Zealand. Oamaru Penguin Symposium, Oamaru, 26-27 June 2008.

Reedy, J., Gibson, R. & Barber, R. The West Coast Blue Penguin Trust: a powerful example of community conservation. Oamaru Penguin Symposium, Oamaru, 26-27 June 2008.

Blyth, R., Wilson, K-J., Heber, S., Chambers, H. & Cotton, J. Conservation of the blue penguin *Eudyptula minor* on the West Coast, South Island, New Zealand. Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Scientific Day, Kaikoura, 31 May 2008.

\* Blyth, R. & Wilson, K-J. 2007. The current status of New Zealand seabirds: what do we know? 4<sup>th</sup> Australasian Ornithological Conference, Perth, 2-5 December 2007.

Wilson, K-J. 2007. Threats to the Blue Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*) on the West Coast, South Island, New Zealand. Little Penguin Workshop, 6<sup>th</sup> International Penguin Conference, Hobart, Australia, 3-7 September 2007.

### **Conference poster**

Wilson, K-J., Heber, S, Blyth, R., Molles, L., Chambers, H., & Cotton, J. 2007. Conservation of the blue penguin, *Eudyptula minor* on the West Coast, South Island, New Zealand. 4<sup>th</sup> Australasian Ornithological Conference, Perth, 2-5 December 2007.

Wilson, K-J., Heber, S, Blyth, R., Molles, L., Chambers, H., & Cotton, J. 2007. Conservation of the blue penguin, *Eudyptula minor* on the West Coast, South Island, New Zealand. 6<sup>th</sup> International Penguin Conference, Hobart, Australia, 3-7 September 2007.

### **Unpublished Reports**

\* Wilson, K-J. 2008. Establishment of petrel colonies and other ideas on restoration options for Long Point and Cosgrove Stream, Catlins. Report prepared for the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, Dunedin.

Blyth, R., Mazzagetti, D., Sutton, P., Wilson, K-J., Molles, L., Chambers, H. & Cotton, J. 2006. Timing of the breeding season and survey of the blue penguin

(*Eudyptula minor*) between the Taramakau and Mokihinui Rivers, West Coast, South Island New Zealand. Lincoln University Wildlife Management Report No. 36. 37 pages.

\* Publications and presentations that were not directly relevant to research or management on West Coast blue penguins but that either arose from work with the Trust or incorporated results from work by the Trust.

## **Predator control**

The Trust's ranger carries out predator control at several penguin colonies near Charleston and Tauranga Bay. This trapping has a two-fold purpose, firstly to protect penguin colonies as predators are assumed to play a major role in their decline. Secondly it has a research focus, the aim of this is to quantify the impact predators have on penguins and to develop cost effective strategies that maximise protection of penguins while minimising the monetary and labour costs. In addition one of the other tasks of the Trust Ranger is to provide training, traps and support for community groups that wish to undertake predator control for the protection of penguins. In June 2008 our ranger ran a trapping workshop that was attended by residents from Nine Mile Bay (Grey District), Pahutane and Punakaiki. All three of these community groups have now established trap lines in their local patches.

Two other previously established community based predator control programmes are run by Trust volunteers at Camerons and Okarito. The Trust provides materials and other support for these groups.

The Holcim Cement Company has provided money for 4 nest-boxes at Cape Foulwind and six at Charleston.

The Trust will endeavour to provide support for other community groups that wish to help protect penguins. However, at present the financial and labour resources available to the Trust are close to fully committed.

## **Blue penguin *Korora* and Predator Road-shows**

The Trust in association with the New Zealand Landcare Trust has run two Penguin-Predator Road-shows, one in 2006, the other in 2007. During each a full day of talks and workshops on penguin biology and predator trapping have been presented and each year these have been repeated at three different locations on the West Coast. The objectives of the road-shows have been to increase public awareness of penguins and predators and provide practical advice to people wanting to help protect penguins.

## **Work with local authorities**

The trust in association with local authorities continues to address the problem of dog kills, promoting bye-laws that might protect penguins, other sea birds and mammals. Sub divisions are monitored closely and conversations carried out with the authorities if penguins are threatened by building, road or stream work.

## **Road Kill**

This is thought to be another cause of mortality and road kill data is being collected.

### **Blue Penguin *Korora* Education and awareness raising delivered by DOC educators in conjunction with the Trust.**

#### **Background**

The purpose of this programme is to provide young people on the West Coast with experiences, knowledge and understanding about conservation values and issues relating to blue penguins. Through this it is hoped that they will be able to make informed decisions based on caring and responsible attitudes as they interact with the environment throughout their lives.

Most schools on the West Coast have been visited. All of those visited are enthusiastic about strengthening their partnership with the Trust and the Department. To date the focus has been on providing in-class activities and field trips to interested schools on blue penguins, coastal restoration and predators.

We also provide opportunities for local schools to initiate and participate in protecting blue penguins and their habitat. Schools are eager to have practical involvement in conservation. The education ranger role is seen as a link in providing opportunities for hands-on conservation activities as this is a great way to foster a sense of responsibility for the environment and for students to learn about concepts such as interdependence and biodiversity.

Through awareness raising in schools, many people in the community can be reached. This is based in the notion that children will often discuss what they have learned at school at home. The learning experiences offered to schools are set in a local context. The more relevant this learning is to children and their families, the greater the impact of the awareness raising. Opportunities to raise awareness about blue penguins during events such as Seaweek, Conservation Week and A&P shows are also taken.

#### **Schedule of blue penguin *Korora* awareness programmes, presentations and events July 2005-July 2008**

July 05

- Participate in an overnight "Blue Penguin Camp" (penguin census/information) with Barrytown School

Aug 05

- Prepare and deliver a blue penguin resource to all South School and Granity School classes during Conservation Week.

Sept 05

- Display and present blue penguin information and posters completed by students during Library Week 5-9 Sept

Oct 05

- Deliver blue penguin presentations to St. Canices School

Nov 05

- Deliver blue penguin presentation to Inangahua School

- Assist Barrytown School with construction and placement of nesting boxes and stoat tunnels.
- Jan 06
- Prepare WCBPT displays for Buller A&P show
- Feb 06
- Deliver Cape Foulwind talk and blue penguin activity to South School.
- March 06
- Deliver blue penguin presentation to North School
- July 06
- Carry out blue penguin survey with Barrytown School students.
- Aug. 06
- West Coast Conservation Awards. Barrytown School receives an award for their contribution towards blue penguin conservation. Student representatives and the principal attend the award ceremony.
  - Deliver blue penguin talk to Westmount School
- Sept 06
- Give blue penguin presentation to home education students
  - Present penguin talk to Potokohua House group.
- October 06
- Liaise with Buller District Council Animal Control Officer to raise awareness about dogs and wildlife
- March 07
- Attend Buller Principals Association Meeting and give presentation on conservation Ed. opportunities focussing on coastal awareness and blue penguins
  - Conservation Corps. beach clean up and coastal birds awareness
  - Create *Korora* themed Seaweek display at Buller District Library and Paparoa National Park Visitor Centre
- May 07
- Coastal awareness, penguin study and pingao planting day at Tauranga Bay with St Canices School.
- September 07
- Assist South School with birds of Kawatiri studies
- Feb 08
- Deliver St Canices School *Korora* presentation
- March 08
- **Seaweek:** Our coast - blue penguins and seals presentation delivered to St Canices School
  - Penguinville: Granity School penguin day
- April 08
- Deliver *Korora* Awareness to Karamea Area School

## **Thanks to our sponsors**

We are very grateful for the ongoing support we have received from our sponsors – without their help and support we would have achieved so much less.

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This annual report has been compiled on behalf of the Trust by Helen Chambers, Kerry-Jayne Wilson and Jess Reedy.