

West Coast community blue penguin winter survey- Summary of results 23rd – 29th July 2009



Photo by Reuben Lane

Little blue penguin (Korora - *Eudyptula minor*) presence on the West coast was counted recently through the annual survey organised by the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust. In its fourth year formally running, 36 Coasters and one whole school (Ross) got involved. This is a summary of survey results and a big thank you to all who contributed.

Although an informal approach to surveying, this annual event is designed to help build a better picture of the scattered penguin population along this significant stretch of coastline, and to show trends over time in particular areas. Results from this community survey will add to distribution surveys carried out by the Trust along the coast, and most importantly they encourage an awareness and enjoyment of these little treasures in our backyard.

For those of you not lucky enough to see penguin prints, or the birds themselves, please be assured that your contribution is valuable in helping increase our understanding of blue penguin distribution of the coast.

Summary of Results....from North to South

The following results are covered from North to South, and where multiple surveys were done along the same lengths of coastline, the highest number of prints or birds are listed here.

Little Wanganui – Tauranga Bay

The northern most stretch of beach covered this year was part of Little Wanganui beach where 4 blue penguin prints were counted. Dog prints also noted.

6 prints were seen along 1.5km of Ngakawau beach from the bridge south, however (surprisingly) no prints were seen along 1km of Hector beach. An evening survey was done to 2km north of Hector along which 1 bird was heard. Generally, locals think there has been a decline in penguins over the last few years along the Granity, Hector and Ngakawau coastline.

Between the Waimangaroa and south to the Waieatea River mouth, only 1 print was recorded. Locals say there used to be a colony in this area, but with an increasing number of dogs around it has become harder for the penguins to survive here.

Quite a number of people were out and about in the Westport area. No tracks or sign of penguins were seen along North Beach along a stretch where they used to be 2 years ago. Carters Beach, Tip head had 7 prints, while mid-Carters beach had 5 prints. West Tip head revealed 8 tracks, and from Thomas Ck - East there were 3. From Bradshaws Road – 2km west, 6 prints were recorded.

Along Gibsons Beach, Cape Foulwind 5 tracks were recorded, however another surveyor found no sign of penguins between the lighthouse and 1km beyond. There were many dog and weka tracks recorded for this section of the Cape.

Further south in Tauranga Bay only 1 print was seen.

Okari Beach – Punakaiki Lagoon

Along Okari beach 4 prints were counted. Road works have caused damage to a few penguin nests in this area, the Trust has been in touch with the Buller District Council about this. If you are also concerned about this damage, please give BDC a call about it. During an evening survey of 9 mile beach, Okari lagoon, 6 blue penguins were near Bayhouse Restaurant. It was noted that there is considerable destruction of dunes by 4wheel drives, and sign of many dog prints along this beach.

Moving south to Joyce and Constance Bay, 5 tracks were seen. The Nile River mouth had 4 tracks during a morning survey, and 6 heard during the evening

Woodpecker Bay (south of Fox River mouth) revealed 7 prints, a figure that is significantly down from previous years.

Along the entire stretch of Pahautane Beach there were 21 tracks, slightly up from last year but still half the number that was counted 2 years ago.

Punakaiki Lagoon, on the 'houses side', 3 prints were counted.

Nine Mile– Ross Beach

13 prints were counted along the entire length of 9-mile beach, with the majority being close to the car parking area.

Between Paroa and Kororo Place 39 prints were counted, and between the Taramakau River mouth and Paroa Hotel a grand total of 101 prints!

On Awatuna beach, north of Hokitika, 35 tracks were recorded. This is great news, as there seems to be a sizable colony in this area. Unfortunately, there was a recent penguin death on the SH6 here.

Between Hokitika (north beach) and Hou Hou Creek 21 tracks were counted, a slight increase from last year.

Ross beach was surveyed by the Ross school students. Between the car park and Totara Lagoon mouth there were no tracks, and the kids noted lots of dog prints, a great threat and deterrent to these birds on this beach.

Between Ross beach car park - 1.5 km south, no tracks were counted. A few weeks prior to this there were 3 prints along this section.

South Westland

Between the Poerua River mouth and Saltwater Lagoon outlet, 7 tracks were counted by a very adventurous surveyor!

Between Waitahi Bluff and the Waitangitona River mouth 24 tracks were counted.

Our Southern-most survey was carried out between Flower Pot rock and 3km north of the Makaawhio River (Jacobs). There were no blue penguin tracks. The surveyor walks this stretch regularly and has never seen blue penguin, however there is an important Tawaki colony (Fiordland Crested penguin) south of Bruce Bay.

Thanks again for your valuable contribution, and please get in touch if you would like to discuss any penguin matters.

Thanks, Karen

33 Fraser St

Ross

Westland

karenkaha@hotmail.com