

# West Coast Blue Penguin Trust



April 2011 Newsletter

[www.bluepenguin.org.nz](http://www.bluepenguin.org.nz)

## Penguin Trust hits the road

Anything you ever wanted to know about blue penguins, other seabirds, and predator trapping will be revealed when the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust embarks on an information roadshow later this month.

The roadshow will travel to Haast, Franz Josef Glacier, Hokitika and Hector from the 30th of April to the 4th of May. Members of the Trust will also visit local schools to talk to children about blue penguins.

Trust Chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson will pass on her vast knowledge from 40 years of researching penguins and other seabirds.

"I will be giving talks on the seabirds of the West Coast talking in detail about blue penguins, Fiordland crested penguins and Westland petrels. I will talk about their biology and conservation in particular the threats they face and how we can help with their conservation," she says.

Ranger Reuben Lane (as seen in the latest Forest and Bird magazine) has been monitoring long term population and breeding trends and the impact of predators on blue penguin colonies at Charleston for the last three years.

He'll reveal his findings and also pass on his predator trapping secrets including what colour possums are most attracted to and how pre-feeding can trap 70% more predators.

The roadshow is in Hokitika's REAP Hall on 30 April from 1pm to 5pm. It then travels to Franz Josef on Sunday 1 May at the DOC office between 1pm and 4pm. On Monday the roadshow heads to Haast's DOC office between 3pm and 7pm. It ends in Hector on Wednesday 4 May between 10am and 1pm, and 3pm to 6pm.



## New Trustee

The Trust is delighted to announce Ian Davidson-Watts has joined as a Trustee.

Ian and his family are relative newcomers to the Coast moving here two years ago so he could take up the position of Grey District Council's Environmental Services Manager.

After six years in the British Army Air Corps Ian retrained, studying for a PhD in animal ecology. He worked as a conservation officer for England's nature conservation agency, English Nature. Then came a stint heading up the ecology team for the Ministry of Defence in the UK and Cyprus.

Ian would admit his first love is bats but he says he's fascinated by New Zealand's biodiversity and jumped at the chance to be involved with the Blue Penguin Trust.

His experience with local governance and ecology will be fantastic assets.



*Ian with daughter Amy*



Trust members check out the site

# HOKITIKA BEACH RESTORATION PROJECT



The West Coast Blue Penguin Trust and Hokitika Scouts hope to begin restoring penguin nesting habitat on Hokitika Beach this month.

The project aims to restore penguin habitat on a 150 metre section of beach-front legal road north of the Revell Street carpark. It has the support of the Westland District Council.

In 2010 the West Coast Blue

Penguin Trust carried out its annual census. The Hokitika Scouts found a blue penguin colony at the north end of Hokitika beach.

The planting will take place between two areas where penguins are already nesting in limited patches of coastal scrub including blackberry and gorse.

“The blackberry and gorse seems to be giving them some protection from dogs so we

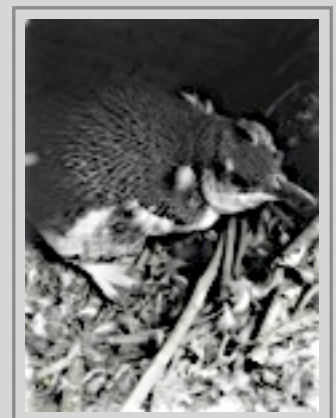
won't remove that,” says West Coast Blue Penguin Trust's Karen Mayhew.

“What we will do is enhance the area by planting flax, various Coprosma, mahoe and cabbage trees – it will improve the area for both humans and penguins,” she says.

The Hokitika Scouts will help with planting and locals are asked to contact the Trust if they would like to be involved.

## A day in the life ..... the moult

What a stressful month! After 3 weeks of being hunkered down in that stinky burrow moulting my feathers, it is a joy to be back in the deep blue sea. What a bedraggled and befuddled state I was in. The worst part about the moult was that I couldn't eat the whole time...oh, and I almost got eaten by a dog that found my burrow, but managed to peck its nose. Now, I am enjoying the only ME time I get in the year, a couple of months chasing little fish and squid, dodging seals and sharks, and sometimes just floating, floating, floating .... on the deep blue sea.





Trustee Rebecca Gibson and DOCs Inger Perkins put up a “Don't let your dog go wild” sign at Hokitika Beach. The trust has produced the signs to remind dog owners to keep an eye on their pets while walking the beach. They are being put up all along the Coast.



Holcim's Ben Murray (left) and Greg Slaughter (right) inspect penguin burrows in January with Trust Chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson. Without support from sponsors like Holcim the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust would not survive.

## In brief.....

### Census

This years census will be held over four days from the 13th to the 16th of August. If you can help this year please contact [info@bluepenguin.org.nz](mailto:info@bluepenguin.org.nz)

### Daylight savings ending spells danger for penguins

A reminder for those travelling on the Coast Road to look out for blue penguins from June. Now its getting dark earlier there will be a lot more traffic at times when penguins are crossing the road to get to burrows.

### Penguin donation boxes

Reuben has used his artistic skills to made donation boxes. If you know an organisation or business that would be happy to have a donation box please contact the Trust. For pictures see page 4.

### Penguin chocolates

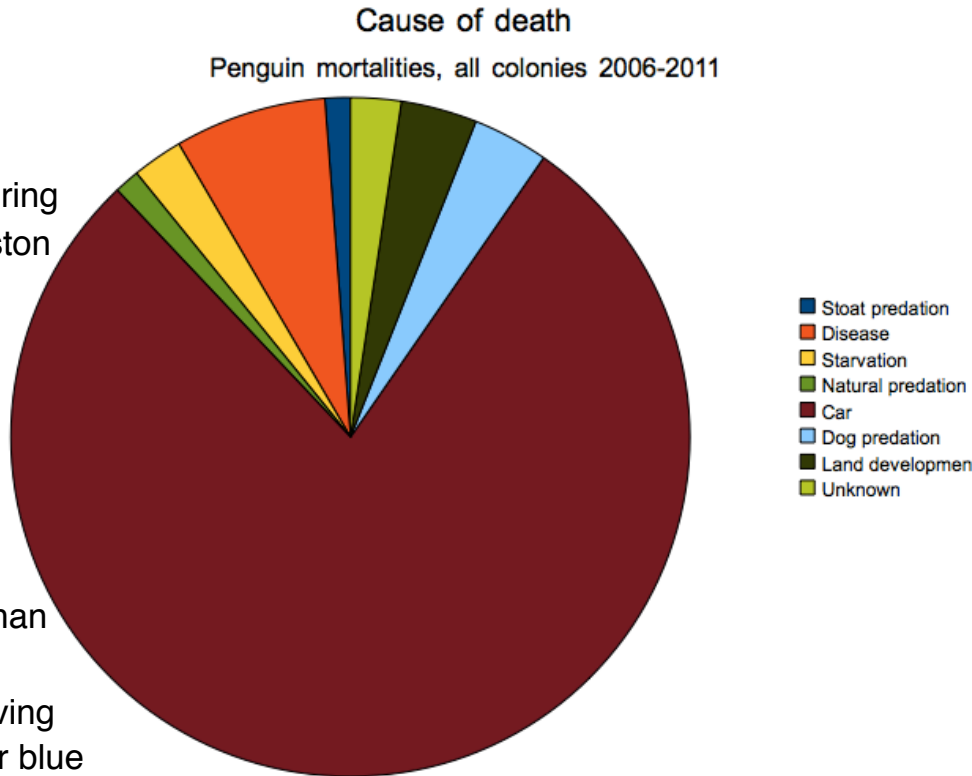
We're also now selling penguin chocolates as a fund raiser. They retail at \$2.50 and for every one sold the Trust gets \$1. If you'd like to stock these chocolates contact [info@bluepenguin.org.nz](mailto:info@bluepenguin.org.nz)

### AGM

The next Trust Advisory meeting and AGM will be held at DOC Hokitika on Friday 27 May. All are welcome.

# Research turns up surprises

The Trust has been intensively monitoring seven penguin colonies in the Charleston and Punakaiki areas. In conjunction with DOC a mortality data base was also set up to record penguin deaths. When this data is collated for the Charleston and Punakaiki colonies (graph right) disease (orange), starvation (yellow), and natural predation (light green) make up less than 1/8th of observed mortality. All other factors are directly human related proving cars are the biggest cause of death for blue penguins especially in the Nile, Whitehorse, Pahautane and Punakaiki areas. Ranger Reuben Lane was surprised to find unlike on the East Coast stoats and weasels are not having a major impact on penguins in this area. His research will be presented at the upcoming Roadshows and will become part of a scientific paper by the Trust.



## Life cycle of a penguin donation box



### CONDOLANCES

The Trust has sadly lost two supporters in the last few months. A moments silence was observed at the March meeting to honour the lives of Trustee

Susan Miller's husband Alec Miller and founding Trustee Helen Chamber's husband Trevor Trought. Both men have made significant contributions to both the korara and other conservation efforts on the West Coast.

Thanks to all our sponsors below and the Punakaiki Resort, Hokitika's Shinging Star, Birds Ferry Lodge and Breakers for their support.

This newsletter is distributed four times a year - have a happy Easter

