

Penguin and Sooty Shearwater viewing at Cape Foulwind



The Trust is about to embark on a project which will see the public being able to view Blue Penguins and Sooty Shearwaters at Cape Foulwind in a few years.

There are already a small number of penguins and sooty shearwaters, also known as titi or mutton birds, nesting near the flyover section of the Cape Foulwind walkway. The plan is to increase these populations so the public can view both species returning to their nests after dusk. It will take four to five years for public viewing to begin.

Solid Energy has kindly agreed to sponsor at least the first two years of the project. It has the support of DOC and the Buller Council.

In August Kerry-Jayne Wilson and Ranger Reuben Lane will begin installing nesting boxes below the walkway and creating tracks from penguin landing sites to the nest boxes. A sound system playing penguin calls will be installed and should encourage young prospecting birds to take up residence.

The sound system will also broadcast Shearwater calls to attract more birds to join the small colony already nesting above the walkway. Predator control will be undertaken to help the birds breed successfully.

“Working with wild animals success is never guaranteed however as both of the target species already breed at Cape Foulwind and the methods used have worked elsewhere the chance of success is high,” says Kerry Jayne.

The sooty shearwater is almost extinct on the mainland of New Zealand. In the hours following dusk visitors would be able to see them circle over the colony before crashing to the ground close to their nests.

“It’s an amazing sight seeing them and then hearing the thud as they crash down to land. The beauty of this site is the public can’t access the actual nest sites but they can view both birds.” says Kerry Jayne.

Calling all census volunteers

The annual blue penguin census will take place this year between the 13th and 16th of August.

These dates have been picked because low tides will range from 4.20am to 6.10am meaning volunteers don’t have to get up too early to look for signs of blue penguins on the beach. Breeding will be in full swing at this time.

Volunteers are asked to walk sections of the beach early in the morning to count penguin prints. While not scientific it provides valuable information about trends in penguin numbers. At last years census the Scouts found evidence of penguins north of Hokitika, which has resulted in a habitat restoration project.

This year census volunteers will also be asked to record the number of banded dotterels and variable (black) oystercatchers they see. Ornithologists believe dotterels are declining in numbers and oystercatchers are increasing and want information on these changes.

If you want to help with this years census please email Robyn at info@bluepenguin.org.nz





Spotlight on - *Kerry-Jayne Wilson*

As a seven year old Kerry-Jayne vividly remembers a family holiday at a farm on Otago Peninsula. Disobeying her parents she wandered alone in the dunes only to come face to face with an enormous bird.

“I can still see that five foot tall penguin, well that’s how tall I thought it was. I just stood there entranced by it and had to find out what it was,” she says.

That meeting with the hoiho or yellow eyed penguin sparked a life long love affair with sea-birds. But it was the two seasons she spent as an undergraduate with John Warham, an authority on penguins and petrels, that cemented her special interest in those birds.

Since then Kerry-Jayne has travelled the globe studying birdlife in places as diverse as Antarctica, Mongolia, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Cook Islands. She has written two books, about 60 scientific papers, and many

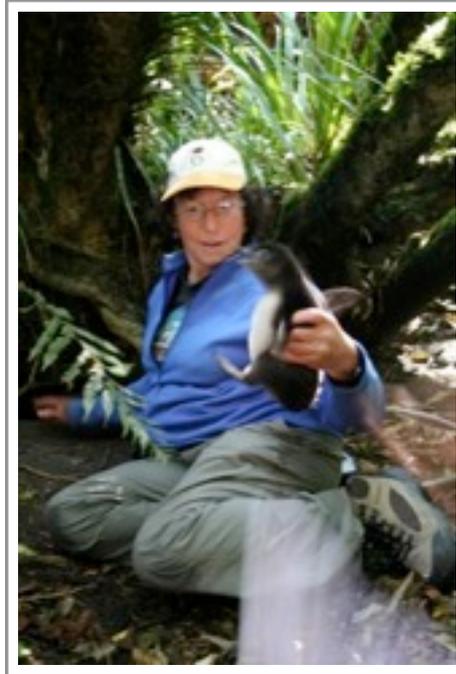
reports and articles.

As luck would have it she was holidaying on the West Coast when the Trust was formed and was called in to give some biology advice.

“At that time the Trust was really just about saving a penguin colony near the Nile River, it’s come a million miles from that,” she says.

In 2009 she retired after 23 years as a lecturer in ecology at Lincoln University. She now lives near Charleston where she works as a natural history writer and seabird ecologist.

Since then Kerry-Jayne has become Chair of the Trust and brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the organisation. She’s helped raise the profile of blue penguins on the Coast, identify the threats to their survival and is in the process of trying to deal to those threats. She is behind a plan to expand the trust’s work to include other seabirds.



Rebecca is filmed by cameraman Dave Kwant for the Business awards

Business awards

The Trust is delighted to be a finalist in the West Coast Leading Light Business Excellence Awards.

It has made the top three in the Community / Charity Organisation category.

“It’s a wonderful achievement for the Trust and shows we are seen as a serious and effective conservation body on the Coast,” says Trustee Rebecca Gibson.

Winners will be announced on July 8.



Karen Mayhew and scouts at a planting day at Hokitika Beach. 60 flax and cabbage trees were planted in April as part of the penguin habitat restoration project. A big thanks to the West Coast Community Trust which has just granted the project \$800 towards more vegetation and the Honda Tree Fund which has granted \$300. Another planting day will be arranged soon.



Roadshow a success

Ranger Reuban Lane and Trustee Jill Cotton are pictured with children from Haast School. Trustees and staff hit the road in late May and June on a blue penguin road show. There were great turn outs in Hector and Hokitika but slightly disappointing numbers in Franz and Haast. Interest has been expressed about running a penguin and trapping workshop in Greymouth later in the year.

In brief.....

Thanks

Thanks to the Grey District Council which has allocated \$1,000 in this years annual plan to the Trust to monitor penguin colonies at Cobden and along the cycle trail. It is hoped the funding will continue over the next two years.

New brochure

The Trust now has a new brochure. If you would like copies please contact

info@bluepenguin.org.nz



Cycle Trail

Trust member Bill Johnson has worked with DOC and the Grey DC to ensure as little disruption as possible was made to the blue penguins while the cycle trail was built.

Student ranger

Helene Roehl will be joining the Trust in July for an internship. Helene is a 4th semester student studying conservation at Georg-August University in Germany. As part of her studies she will be completing three months practical experience with the Trust taking part in penguin monitoring.

Meeting

The next meeting of the advisory board is Friday 12 August in Hokitika. All are welcome.

Dissappointing start to breeding season

Only weeks into the breeding season and already three blue penguins have been reported dead.

One was found dead at Karoro Domain and another at 9 Mile north of Greymouth. Both had been killed by dogs. Another was killed by a vehicle on the Coast Road.

The deaths are a timely reminder to keep dogs under control and to slow down on roads near the coast where penguin road signs are showing.

The Trust has been talking to Opus and the NZTA about erecting a road-side fence along a small section of the Coast Road to protect the penguins.

“In the last five years we have had at least 90 blue penguins killed by vehicles on a 9k section of the Coast Road from Meybille Bay just north of Punakaiki to McCarthy’s Creek,” says Ranger Reuben Lane.

In June Trust co-ordinator Robyn Janes was invited to talk to tanker drivers at Westland Milk Products about penguins on the road and how to keep them safe.

Traffic is the greatest threat to penguins on the West Coast, followed by dogs.



Robyn talking to drivers at Westland Milk Products



A penguin at the Nile River - photo Reuben Lane

A day in the life breeding Our freedom will be coming to an end soon, and its back to the grind of raising a family. No more frolicking in the water for us, we must think about securing a burrow and having twins, again....and again! We have our sights set on the same burrow as the last 7 years, it's pretty safe and snug and has a wonderful flax-framed view of the sea. A few more weeks on holiday then we'll settle in. Let's just hope another pair of penguins hasn't got there first.



Photo Reuben Lane

Thanks to sponsors below and Punakaiki Resort, Hokitika’s Shinging Star, Birds Ferry Lodge, The National Kiwi Centre, Breakers West Coast Community Trust and Honda Tree Fund for their support.

