

## Census shows dogs didn't kill entire penguin colony

The annual census has found signs that a small number of blue penguins survived June's dog attack at Siberia Bay near Cape Foulwind.

The Trust was devastated after dogs killed 15 penguins in the bay and had thought the colony had been annihilated but census surveyors found four sets of prints in the bay.

"This is remarkable and given that a recent survey by our ranger found similar results it does seem to indicate a small number of birds survived in Siberia Bay. However it will take a decade to build the numbers back up to where they were," says Trust co-ordinator Inger Perkins.

This year over 60 volunteers took part in the annual census counting penguin prints between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of August. As part of the census Trust Ranger Reuben Lane also found a substantial new penguin colony near the Perfect Strangers Beach, north of Punakaiki.

"The bay is a very well protected fortress, ringed by cliffs and Nikau palms and it was exciting to find a significant number of penguins making the area home," he says.

In total, some 550 sets of penguin prints were counted this year, compared to around 510 last year. The largest colonies are around Carters Beach, Charleston, Punakaiki, Paroa and Okarito.

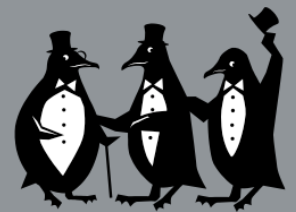
"The census provides a hugely valuable picture of the probable presence or absence of little blue penguins on the West Coast. It also affords a simple and enjoyable opportunity for interested people to get to know their beach and we thank all the volunteers who took the time to take part," says Inger.

The Trust builds on its knowledge through the census as well as a mortality database and ongoing nest monitoring. It is hoped that a foraging study will be implemented soon to further our understanding of the habits of the penguins and of the threats to their survival.



*Dr Peter Rain at Perfect Strangers beach during census*

## Trust wins awards



It has been a great few months with the Trust winning two awards for its work and chairwoman Kerry-Jayne Wilson being honoured for her contribution in the field of ornithology.

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*Inger receives the Green Ribbon environment award at Parliament*

## Trust wins award

*Continued from front page*

In June the Trust was named the winner of the Protecting our Oceans category at the Green Ribbon environmental awards held at Parliament.

The awards recognise the outstanding contributions made by individuals, organisations, businesses and communities to protecting and enhancing New Zealand's environment.

West Coast Blue Penguin Trust coordinator Inger Perkins was at Parliament to collect the award and says it was a great honour for the Trust.

"There were so many amazing environmental projects recognised, to be named a winner was outstanding, it makes me so proud to see the hard work of the trust acknowledged in this way."



Just a few weeks earlier we also won the Community / Charity section of the West Coast Leading Light Business Excellence awards where the Trust was recognised for the environmental work it does on the West Coast.

To top off what was already a great year Kerry-Jayne Wilson was presented with the Robert Falla Memorial award by the Ornithological Society. The award acknowledged her work with Lincoln University and the Ornithological Society, vast contributions to ornithological research, Kereru protection and her work with the WCBPT.

In presenting her the award, the Society said Kerry-Jayne possesses the instinct and ability of the natural historian, all too rare in the scientific community now, to interpret her knowledge and discoveries for specialist and lay audiences alike, in terms and language accessible to all". We are certainly lucky to have her as chair of the Trust – congratulations Kerry-Jayne.



*Aaron Goel, Freya Crai and Maddison Scott find blue penguin footprints on Hokitika beach*

## Kaniere school loves penguins

Five and six year olds from Hokitika's Kaniere School have embraced blue penguins and plan to educate locals about how to protect them. The junior students have been studying blue penguins all term and in September performed environmental musical Eddie the Penguin Saves the World at the Regent Theatre. Recently students visited Hokitika beach with Trust coordinator Inger Perkins to look for penguin prints. They found quite a few and have been inspired to now produce fliers and signs educating locals about threats to the birds and what they can do to help. Well done Kaniere School.



**The West Coast Blue Penguin Trust would not be able to run its education programme visiting schools like Kaniere without the generous support of DOC's biodiversity fund**

# Cape Foulwind update

Despite a set-back due to the nearby penguin massacre, three pairs of penguins appear to be breeding at the site of the Trust's Cape Foulwind project.

Ultimately it is hoped to build up numbers of Sooty Shearwaters and Blue Penguins at the site so the public will be able to view the birds returning to their nests at dusk.

A sound-system has been broadcasting calls to attract the birds to the colony and indications at the beginning of the season showed a lot of the burrows had been visited.

Siberia Bay, where dogs killed 15 penguins, is only a kilometre away from the project site and it had been

hoped that young birds from that colony might be attracted to Cape Foulwind. However with only a few birds left this is likely to take a lot longer.

"All the birds in the project site were unharmed but this is a real set-back and while it's still too early to draw conclusions we would have hoped to have a few more occupied burrows with the sound system up and running. However it is good to have the three breeding pairs," says Trust Ranger Reuben Lane.

Reuben says one pair is nesting in a Sooty burrow which is interesting as it's a fair hike above the walking track and shows how far they are prepared to go for a suitable burrow.



*Reuben at the Cape Foulwind site*



**Thanks to Solid Energy for its sponsorship of the Cape Foulwind project**

## In brief.....

### Penguins on Facebook

The Trust now has a facebook page - look for West Coast Blue Penguin Trust and "like us"

### Next Meeting

The next meeting of the supporters group is 10am Friday 12 October at the Grey District Council. All are welcome.

### First chicks

The first chicks of this season were spotted at the Nile in mid-September by ranger Reuben Lane. "They looked like fuzzy little walnuts, only a couple of days old and chirping away," he says.

### Biodiversity funding

A big thanks to DOC's biodiversity fund for committing just under \$120,000 to the Trust over the next two years. The funding will be used for advocacy, burrow monitoring, habitat protection and a community outreach programme.

### Dog control

The Trust is looking into possible dog control measures at vulnerable locations - any ideas please contact Inger on [info@bluepenguin.org.nz](mailto:info@bluepenguin.org.nz)

### Westland Petrels

Check out this story on the Westland Petrel which Trust media co-ordinator Robyn Janes filmed for TVNZ's Close Up in September

<http://tvnz.co.nz/close-up/tuesday-september-25-5103011/video?vid=5103164>

### Penguin mating on film

If you fancy watching a penguin courting ritual then take a look at this youtube video. The pictures were captured by one of the many cameras Reuben has placed around monitored colonies to check for dog activity. You can view it on <http://www.youtube.com/user/WCBluePenguinTrust?feature=guide>

## Scouts recognised for help with penguin habitat restoration

Congratulations to the Hokitika Scouts who were recognised for their work with the Trust at the West Coast Conservation Awards. Since 2010 the Scouts have been helping with the annual census and also helping restore penguin habitat as part of a beach restoration project.

An area of beach north of Hokitika town had a gap in dune vegetation so was chosen to restore. The scouts, led by Kim Macpherson, planted flax last year, and this year, on a cold Sunday morning in June, a community planting activity got underway.

The West Coast Branch of Forest & Bird had provided funding for more plants and WestRoads provided surplus flax plants. Scouts, parents, supporters of the Trust and Forest & Bird members joined forces to prepare the flax and to plant well over 100 flax plants plus cabbage trees and broadleaf.

The chosen area now has a good covering of native plants, which, if the majority survive, will provide the basis for healthy penguin habitat within a few years.



## Thermal imager helps locate penguins

The Trust has purchased a thermal imager, with help from the Grey District Council and Holcim, to help observe penguin populations.

Trustee Ian Davidson-Watts says he has recently used the imager at Cobden, Karoro, South Beach and Camerons, as a pilot to test the equipment.

“The imager lets you observe penguins without being noticed by them, its main advantage is that you can see them moving through the undergrowth way more easily than other normal night vision devices,” he says.

Ian has successfully tested the kit at Karoro and Camerons identifying regular penguin activity and hopes to undertake surveys of Paroa, Blaketown and Cobden before the season finishes.



*A penguin seen through the thermal imager*

Annual sponsorship from Holcim allows the Trust to continue its work with penguins and other seabirds - Cheers Holcim



# Plan to extend penguin fencing along SH6

Lessons learnt after erecting a penguin proof fence south of Punakaiki will help with plans to fence further areas of SH6.

In March the Trust erected the 100-metre long mesh fence with help from Conservation Volunteers and the New Zealand Transport Authority. The area marks the start of a nine-kilometre stretch between Punakaiki and Fox River which has seen 115 blue penguins killed by vehicles in the last six years.

Trust ranger Reuben Lane says the trial fence seems to have helped reduce the number of penguin deaths in the area although there has been an unconfirmed report of one dead penguin.

“This is the first penguin proof fence that has been erected so there were teething problems. Vegetation and sagging created a couple of gaps under the fence that penguins were seen getting under but we have now fixed those. The fence isn’t as long as needed though to completely stop penguins getting on the road,” he says.

The Trust is now in discussion with NZTA about fencing the deadliest stretch of road from Meyville Bay to the north of Limestone Creek. “Already this season four blue penguins have been killed on this stretch of road. We hope to fence 2.3km to stop the penguins crossing the road in this area,” says Reuben.



Reuben checks out the fence south of Punakaiki

## *Penguin deaths touch hearts*

The story of how dogs massacred the penguin colony at Siberia Bay near Cape Foulwind touched the hearts of many with the news even appearing in the Sydney Morning Herald. While it was a tragic event, it did raise awareness of the dangers if dogs are allowed to roam free near penguin colonies.

## A day in the life ..... courting

Over the last few months I’ve been watching all sorts of carry-on from my burrow. The neighbours have been courting and it’s a noisy affair. The males get all excited, standing tall, showing off and kissing and slapping the females. It was hard to get any rest for a while there but things are a lot quieter now as they sit on the eggs waiting for the chicks to hatch.



Thanks to the major sponsors below and Forest & Bird, Kea Tours, Hokitika’s Shining Star, Birds Ferry Lodge, Rimu Lodge and Breakers for their support.

