

West Coast Blue Penguin Trust

December 2010 Newsletter

www.bluepenguin.org.nz



Census results



Thanks to the 34 hardy volunteers that hit the beaches at dusk and dawn to complete the annual census in July and August. 2010 census results are now available on our website www.bluepenguin.org.nz/research/

Monitoring updates



Anna Columbus from DOC is monitoring the blue penguin colony at Okarito. She says chicks have mostly fledged now. She has had no dead chicks but has monitored two burrows where late eggs were laid but abandoned after a week or two.

Trust Ranger Reuben Lane has recorded the first case of replacement clutching on the West Coast. For more information go to page

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Photo by Doug Baker

Blue penguin colony protected

In a win for the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust a blue penguin colony located at the birth place of the Trust is to be protected.

The area known as The Knoll, north of Charleston, is the home of a large colony of blue penguins which are currently being monitored by Trust ranger Reuben Lane.

It is one of ten parcels of land previously administered by Land Information New Zealand. They are to become scenic reserve, administered by DOC under the reserves act as part of the Conservation Estate.

Founding trustee Helen Chambers lived near the Knoll until recently and began noticing dead penguins on the beach about a decade ago. (continued page 2)



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Ranger Reuben Lane monitoring penguins in the protected area



Photo by Ieuan Davies
Chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson talking to Hari Hari Scouts at the Wanganui River mouth

Penguin colony protected (continued)

With a group of concerned locals, including current trustee Jill Cotton, Helen formed a working group that went on to become The West Coast Blue Penguin Trust.

“It has been a long process, I first went to DOC in 2002 to see if we could protect this area for the penguins, I am thrilled it has finally happened”, says Helen.

“It means the land can’t be built on, that was always the fear we had”.

Helen says she would like to see this initiative replicated at other penguin colonies along the Coast.

Also included are three old township sites at Constant Bay, a 600 metre long strip of vegetation by SH6 north of Charleston, and 2 lots between the foreshore and Beach Road.

Department of Conservation Acting Concessions Manager Fiona Pollard says the land was identified in 2003 as an area DOC wanted to protect.

“It is important for the penguin habitat, and as a vegetation buffer zone between the foreshore and SH6. “It will now remain a scenic corridor which won’t be built out by houses or baches”, she says.

It will be formally gazetted in 2011.

A day in the life the chicks

It’s pretty scary out at sea by myself, but neat to be getting better at chasing fish and little squid. Me and my sister said goodbye to each other, leaving our burrow that was home for 9 weeks. I cried but pretended it was salt water in my eyes! I spend my days feeding and having fun flying in the water, but avoiding seals and sharks and fishing nets is tricky. It’s a dangerous world on land these days too, I have to watch out for furry things with 4 legs and big teeth. I hope to bump into mum or dad one of these days, they are probably getting ready to moult, it would be funny seeing them with no feathers!





4 day old penguins at Camerons Photo Doug Baker

Replacement clutching

Reuben Lane has reported five cases of replacement clutching as part of his blue penguin monitoring. This is the first time this has been seen on the West Coast. Replacement clutching is where a second clutch is laid after chicks from the first clutch fledge.

Sadly preliminary monitoring results from Charleston and Punakaiki show productivity seems to be down on previous breeding seasons. Reuben reports a lot of failures at the egg stage and more burrows have only raised one chick. He believes five weeks of rain in September and October are one reason for this, during this time many burrows were flooded.

Confirmed monitoring results from our four regions will be available in the next newsletter.

New co-ordinator

Robyn Janes has taken over from Karen Mayhew who has resigned to become a full time Mum. Robyn comes from a journalism background most recently working for TVNZ's Close Up programme. Email her at info@bluepenguin.org.nz



In brief.....

Website upgrade

Huge thanks to Leon Dalziel from West Coast website design company baby-e. Leon donated his time to upgrade the Trust's website. Check it out www.bluepenguin.org.nz



Fencing at sewage ponds

During the census the Hokitika Scouts noticed that cattle had been roaming the dunes near the sewage ponds. The Trust began talks with Westland District Council and they have now fenced this area to protect the penguin burrows. Thanks WDC for acting so quickly.

Distribution document

Thanks also to the Grey District Council and chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson for updating the penguin colony distribution document for councils to use in resource management applications.

Next meeting

The next Trust Advisory meeting will be held on the 25th of March in Hokitika.

New web addresses

Trust chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson
Kerry-jayne@bluepenguin.org.nz

Missing banner

If anyone has knowledge of where the Trust's canvas banner is can they please let a Trust member know.

Congratulations to West Coast Scouts



Jim Mora and the TVNZ6 crew filming on Hokitika beach

In October the Scouts took out the 2010 Trustpower Supreme community award for Westland. It was a fitting acknowledgement of the volunteer work the scouts undertake. As part of their prize the Scouts will feature in TVNZ6's programme Volunteer Power, which salutes the work of volunteers around the country. In November Jim Mora and his film crew came to Hokitika to film. As part of the story the Scouts re-inacted their work on the Blue Penguin Trust annual census, heading to the beach at dusk to count penguin prints. A big thanks and congratulations to Kim McPherson and her team for all their good work.

New penguin colony found

During the winter census ranger Reuben Lane noticed penguin activity north of Whitehorse Creek. Further investigation found a significant blue penguin colony which the Trust has started intensively monitoring. Chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson says with 30 – 40 active burrows this is one of the larger colonies on the West Coast. “It is a long way from the highway so we can use this remote colony as a baseline to

measure the impact road-kill and disturbance has on penguins at other colonies”, she says. A lot of rubbish was in the area so DOC, Conservation Corp volunteers, and international student volunteers did a clean up – 250kg's of rubbish was collected (pictured).



Photo by Suvi van Smit

Thanks to all our sponsors below and the Punakaiki Resort, Hokitika's Shining Star, Birds Ferry Lodge and Breakers for their support. Have a wonderful Christmas break.

This newsletter is distributed four times a year, for contributions please contact info@bluepenguin.org.nz

