



West Coast Penguin Trust Annual Report, 2020

The West Coast Penguin Trust has been very fortunate to have Kerry-Jayne Wilson MNZM at the helm since its inception in 2006. Kerry-Jayne stepped down from the chair role at our AGM last year but we are very pleased that she remains as a trustee and our guiding scientist.

Having been Trust Ranger for several years then returning as a trustee after a break, I was elected as Chair last year and am pleased to report on another successful year for the Trust.

A few highlights from last year are as follows and more details are below.

Our application to the Department of Conservation's (DOC) Community Fund was successful and gave us the certainty and encouragement for three years of operations with around 56% of our costs being met. Critically, this helped us to move from a casual part time ranger to a permanent ranger at an average of 20 hours per week. This is a huge step forward for the Trust, enabling us to put more effort into developing new projects, planning, implementing, and reviewing our projects for improved conservation outcomes. We are fortunate to have the very experienced Matt Charteris take up the permanent ranger role.

We started a long-term project to monitor the breeding success of tawaki or Fiordland crested penguins last year. Recently, we have been preparing for follow up work to really understand the threat that stoats present to this penguin so that conservation management can be improved across their range.

The New Zealand Penguin Initiative (NZPI) was launched and we are already working closely with them to ensure our work supports the priorities identified by NZPI Manager/Senior Scientist, Dr Thomas Mattern, and Kerry-Jayne Wilson in their comprehensive review of NZ penguin knowledge and research published last year.

With 14 years of blue penguin monitoring data collected, master's student Luisa Salis-Soglio has sorted and collated it all into a monster spreadsheet. She is working on analysing it now and we look forward to reports and the papers to be published in the coming year.

Our growing education programme, led by Lucy Waller, has certainly been a highlight. The Trust is working increasingly closely with 15 West Coast schools.

Of course fundraising remains an ongoing challenge, with a fair degree of nervousness as I write. Grant giving bodies have reported a lack of or significantly reduced income and therefore less or none to distribute. Some generous donors do not have their normal source of income and have had to pull back for now.

In addition to the excellent support from DOC last year, we have received project support as below:

- **Fiordland crested penguin projects** - continued support from the Wellington Zoo Trust who also care for sick and injured penguins so wonderfully.
- **Education programme** - helping schools to use and apply our “Blue Penguins and Other Seabirds” resource has again been supported by a generous grant from The Sargood Bequest. Grants from the Buller District Council, the West Coast Community Trust, and a donation from the ANZ Staff Foundation enabled this project to grow and extend all the way up to Karamea.
- **Essential blue penguin monitoring and maintenance of the penguin protection fence** - received generous sponsorship from an anonymous donor. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency are also supporting the maintenance of the fence.

We are enormously grateful to all those mentioned above for their generous support of our work.

Donations, both online and in donation boxes, remain essential to our work. We are hugely grateful to all those who continue to see the value in what we do and support our projects, and special mention is given below to donors. Regular donations are the lifeblood of a small organisation like ours and we are honoured to be the recipients of those donations. Big thanks also go out to those that have our donation boxes available for their customers and clients. With legislation changing, we have received our last donations from whitebaiters that chose the Trust for their donations and we thank them too.

Another highlight of the year was our August meeting at the Arahura marae. We were treated to a pōwhiri (formal welcome) and we shared kai with some of the Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae team during the day. Both iwi on Te Tai o Poutini (the West Coast), Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Waewae and Te Runanga o Makaawhio, have been very supportive of the Trust’s work. We would like to acknowledge and thank them for their ongoing backing of our projects to protect penguins - taonga species.

The Trustees for the 2019-20 year were Kerry-Jayne Wilson MNZM, Jill Cotton, Leon Dalziel, Robin Long, Marg Costello, Martin Abel and we were delighted to welcome Zoe Watson as a Trustee during the year. Zoe was already a great friend of the Trust having written our superb education resource and a key player in environmental education as EnviroSchools Coordinator for the region. Tim Shaw from DOC stepped down from his much-appreciated role as an advisory trustee as his role at DOC has become too far removed from our operations. We were thrilled that Dr Scott Freeman, former Trustee and DOC biodiversity manager in Buller, has taken his place.

Our activities for the year are reviewed project by project below.

1. Charleston blue penguin monitoring

Monitoring occurs fortnightly from mid-July until the last chick has fledged in or around December. This year, master’s student, Luisa von Salis-Soglio from Gottingen University in Germany, carried out the bulk of the monitoring from August and collated the monitoring data from previous years for analysis. Summary reports should be available later this year.

Monitoring of the 2019 breeding season was compromised to a degree due to the training of a new observer and issues with the burrowscope. However the monitoring results did show clearly that the 2019 season was poor in comparison to earlier years, with failed breeding attempts at both egg and chick stage. From 40 detected breeding attempts at two colonies, only 13 resulted in two chicks fledging, with a further 5 resulting in one chick fledging. So of 40 breeding attempts, all but 2 of which included two eggs, 22 nests failed entirely. We assume that this was due to poor foraging conditions resulting in pressure on adults to maintain condition for incubation and chick feeding.

We will be working closely with the NZPI in the coming breeding season to ensure that our data collection meets new standards that will ensure consistency around the country.

2. Other Buller blue penguin monitoring

In addition to fortnightly monitoring at the Nile River-mouth colonies above, we check five other blue penguin colonies in the Buller region once or twice each breeding season. Analysis of the annual monitoring of these colonies will be included in Luisa von Salis-Soglio's master's thesis and results will be reported as they become available, but results appear similar to our more closely monitored colonies at Charleston and noted above.

3. Cape Foulwind

The penguin and shearwater colonies adjacent to the Cape Foulwind Seal Colony Walkway have been a focus for the WCPT ever since the Trust was formed. Shearwater numbers have increased to the point that each evening from October to March visitors should see a few birds circling overhead before crashing into the flaxes where they breed. From just 2-3 eggs laid each year when management began, in the last four years eggs have been laid in 13-16 burrows annually.

Shearwaters are extremely vulnerable to predation by stoats. The Trust maintains trap-lines at the penguin and sooty shearwater colonies at Cape Foulwind and traps are checked fortnightly from late July to April by our Cape Foulwind Ranger, Gerald Freeman. These trap-lines are primarily to kill stoats to protect the shearwaters and to prevent stoats and rats from accessing predator-free Wall Island just offshore. While we have enabled shearwaters numbers to increase, few if any have successfully fledged chicks on the mainland, though they continue to breed successfully on adjacent Wall Island.

We continue to review the best way to support penguin and other seabird populations in this area.

4. Coast Road penguin fences

The three fences erected between 2012 and 2015 along those bits of the Coast Road where most penguin road-kills occurred continue to remain effective with no road-kills reported from those areas since the fences were built. The fence is saving 6-8 penguins a year and we have confirmed that the remaining birds have now shown a small increase in breeding attempts indicating the population is starting to recover. Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency are kindly providing \$5000/year for fence maintenance, which is being carried out through the West Coast Network Outcomes Contract Team, primarily Fulton Hogan and WestReef.

5. Blue penguin foraging study

After a break in tracking penguins in the 2018 season, we resumed last season with the support of the NZPI. Although only one of the six depth and GPS loggers was recovered, it provided some interesting information covering two foraging trips and we're looking forward to learning more during the 2020 breeding season. NZPI Senior Scientist, Dr Thomas Mattern, reported that, on the first trip, the penguin foraged mostly in the upper 10m of the water column with one dive to 36.2m perhaps trying to escape a predator or other threat.

As the breeding data showed, it was not a great season for blue penguin breeding at least in the Buller area. Nests failed during the chick stage and this impacted upon the foraging study in that four loggers were not retrieved due to nest failure. This is uneconomic and failed to provide foraging data. In future seasons loggers will only be deployed on established breeding pairs who are in good condition and if the season appears robust enough for good breeding success and hence a lower rate of GPS logger loss. The relationship with the NZPI and Richard Seed, Research & Conservation Coordinator, was developed and future pathways forged.

6. Education programme

Since taking on this project in 2016, Lucy Waller, Education Ranger, has made great strides, introducing more schools to our education resource, 'Blue Penguins and Other Seabirds,' and hundreds more children to penguins and the notion of valuing nature.

Our education programme has been designed to provide children with an understanding of and appreciation for the local penguins and other threatened seabirds, and to take action to help protect them. We have taken an enquiry and action-based approach to learning, building trust, supporting teachers, inspiring curiosity and making it relevant. Through motivating, lively and hands on topics, we enable children to develop an interest in penguins and other wildlife. The children are encouraged to find out about the issues, consider what they can do to help, and then to take action. Lucy aims to instil a love of nature at an age when it is most likely to lead to lifelong values, and to inspire curiosity, empathy and respect for nature, which extends into the community via the children.

Rather than providing one-off ad hoc visits or education sessions, we are keen to ensure that any school activity we lead or join (and invest time in) is part of a broader approach to learning about, valuing and respecting the local wildlife. We ideally aim to embark on a long-term collaboration between the school and the Trust, fitting our education resource book into the activities and independent learning of the class. This year Lucy has made new connections with various primary and secondary schools in the Westland, Grey and Buller districts, exploring ways to connect both in the classroom, in the field and spreading into the local communities as well. We worked with 18 schools up and down the West Coast this year and have developed strong and enduring relationships.

Over the last year, examples of the education work carried out by the Trust can be seen in community projects of nesting boxes built and installed (Grey Main Primary School alongside local businesses and families made 15 nest boxes), beach clean ups and restoration (Hokitika Primary School had a day at the beach planting and learning about the local penguins and their habitat), and learning how to spot and count penguin tracks (Westport South School as part of their school 'camp for community').

Collaborations with other organisations have been valuable, for example NZ Book Awards Week where schools (including Kaniere Primary, St Marys, Ross Primary, Kumara Primary) came together at Westland District Library to learn about NZ birds and their habitats in small workshops. Also Conservation Week, where we had a trip north up to Karamea Primary, Granity School and Barrytown to teach the students more about conservation and what they could do to help, as a school and as individuals.

We are enormously grateful to the ANZ Staff Foundation, the Sargood Bequest, the West Coast Community Trust, Buller District Council and DOC for their outstanding support for this programme.

7. Awareness and outreach

We know that everyone loves penguins! Although our focus is on penguin conservation, we know that penguins can encourage our community to value our local wildlife and nature. We aim to maintain awareness of penguins and the coastal environment, our work and our goals, not only through our work with schools but through our website, social media, local newspapers and getting out and talking to our communities at events, markets and giving our own talks. Sadly, a couple of events have been cancelled due to storms or the pandemic, but we will be taking up opportunities to get out and about again when we can. When we do attend markets, we offer a few items for sale for some low-key fundraising and we are increasingly ensuring that these items are sustainable and plastic free.

Thanks go again to James Kim and our Trustee Leon Dalziel for improving and then keeping our website and our IT capability up to scratch.

Working collaboratively with all three district councils and DOC staff, the Trust has agreed a new dog/wildlife advisory sign to go up at beach access points across the Coast. The new signs will be printed in time for the new breeding season and will be launched through social and traditional media.

A grant from the Bill Blackadder Trust has enabled us to have a new interpretation panel made and installed at Cobden, where storms washed one away. A second panel will replace one vandalised at the Cobden 'tiphead'.

We continue to maintain a watching brief for resource consent applications and management plans to ensure that penguin and seabird habitat is protected, and penguins and other seabirds are not adversely impacted by development. For example, last May, Trustee and Tawaki Ranger, Robin Long, joined representatives of the West Coast Regional Council and NIWA to introduce them to blue penguin and tawaki breeding locations and issues in South Westland as part of the review of the Regional Coastal Plan.

8. Tawaki pre-predator control project.

During the 2018-19 summer/autumn there was a mega-mast with both beech and podocarps producing copious seed across the South Island. DOC advice is that rat numbers will explode as an initial consequence, then they will reduce over winter (2019) and, during the second autumn/winter (2020), stoat numbers will peak. This August, we will be putting cameras out again in three colonies to test our provisional conclusions that, following mast events in nearby forests, stoats can kill all tawaki chicks in colonies where there is little or no stoat control.

The timing was not right for the extensive and expensive use of cameras at all three of our study sites in 2019 but we did introduce a monitoring system to assess breeding success with little or no disturbance to the penguins.

At Gorge River, weekly nest checks were carried out on 30 nests, 27 of which successfully raised chicks. Cameras deployed on ten of the monitored nests also showed that chicks were raised to fledging and that one nest even raised two chicks which is rare in crested penguins. Only two videos of stoats passing through the colony were recorded during the entire breeding season, which is the lowest number so far in the six years of camera monitoring at Gorge River.

In the Jackson Head colony, the NZ Penguin Initiative carried out daily nest checks during the ten-day period when the adults begin to leave chicks alone – when they are most vulnerable to predation. There was no evidence of predation and it appeared to be a successful breeding season overall.

At our third South Westland study colony, all 15 nests were monitored through weekly checks and at least 11 of these were successful. One of these also raised two chicks!

Overall, it appears to have been a good breeding season for South Westland tawaki and our thanks go particularly to Wellington Zoo Trust for their consistent support for this project and the Trust's work.

9. Tawaki surveys

During the 2019 breeding season, Trustee and Tawaki Ranger, Robin Long, spent several weeks surveying tawaki breeding colonies. Her repeat survey of the Gorge River colony found 372 nests, an increase of one nest since the most recent survey in 2016. This colony has appeared stable since she began surveying it in 2009.

The northern most tawaki breeding colony at Heretaniwha Point, Bruce Bay, was searched and the same number found as in the original survey, in 1992.

Robin, along with volunteer Simon Litchwark, spent a week surveying 40km of the northern coast of Stewart Island. Ground counts have not been carried out on Stewart Island before due to difficult

access cliffs and rocky coastline. One hundred and thirty-one nests were found and the vast majority of these were in sea caves in the cliffs rather than in the forest, as is the case in South Westland. This number shows that a reasonable population of tawaki breed around Stewart Island, and further surveys, including repeats in the future, should be used to determine the population size and trends in the area. In the 2020 breeding season, the pair hope to survey Port Pegasus or more of the northern coastline.

10. Seal Island shag monitoring.

Despite being the most common New Zealand breeding shag, there has been very little research on the endemic spotted shag. Trust chairperson Kerry-Jayne Wilson has monitored a breeding colony of spotted shags on Seal Island at approximately monthly intervals since 2011. The number of shags using this colony has declined since 2017. Once she has completed ten years of observations, Kerry-Jayne will write a paper on population changes and the breeding cycle of these shags.

11. Seal Island seabird survey and restoration project

Seal Island sits just offshore from Fox River and can be accessed by foot at very low tides or by kayak in calm weather. Previous visits by DOC and the WCPT found some nationally rare coastal plants on the island. There are two small sooty shearwater colonies and red-billed gulls and white-fronted terns also nest there. Tracking tunnels indicated that mice are the only introduced mammal present.

The trapline adjacent to Seal Island has continued to be checked and re-baited every 2-3 weeks. The 17 DOC traps caught 89 rats, 9 mice, 7 weasels and 6 stoats over the 2019-20 year. There were noticeably more rats caught in the spring this past year than in the previous two spring periods.

The Trust is liaising with DOC to find the most effective ways to protect seabird colonies on the island as well as the rare plants. Predator control efforts will soon be extended to self-resetting traps being deployed on the island to eliminate any stoats/rats that may make it out there.

12. Westland petrel survey

For this project we have previously worked in collaboration with Dr Sue Waugh from the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, who has led the Westland Petrel research for a number of years. In 2018, ex-tropical cyclone Gita caused further treefall in the Rowe Colony (50% of the colony had been lost due to a landslide two years earlier). The colony has now recovered somewhat with the birds digging new burrows where soil remains and WCPT are assisting DOC, the new project lead, to set up new monitored burrows at this colony and three others. In the 2019 Westland petrel breeding season, WCPT helped Dr Sue Waugh along with DOC staff to undertake the 10-yearly survey of almost all known colonies in the area.

15. Upskilling Trust staff and trustees

In August, a group of Trustees and staff attended the International Penguin Conference in Dunedin. This was the first time the conference had been held in New Zealand since the inaugural event in 1988. We were very fortunate to learn from the world's top penguin scientists and delve into the latest penguin research as well as extend our penguin networks here and overseas.

16. Trust board meetings

The Trustees meet four times each year and the past year was no exception. Most Trust business is conducted by email with Trustees and staff spread from Westport to Harihari. With our year wrapping up as we went into the Covid-19 lockdown, we also started using Zoom video conferencing to maintain our sense of team and mutual support. Our funding from the DOC Community Fund meets the

majority of the meeting and behind the scenes costs, the hardest area of expenditure for which to fundraise, and for which we are enormously grateful.

Thanks to our sponsors and supporters

We are very grateful for the ongoing support we have received from our sponsors, supporters, regular donors, and those who have provided in-kind support. Without their assistance, plus that of volunteers, we would not be able to carry on our operation – conservation projects that are critical to ensuring the survival of penguins in our region. Special mention goes to the Department of Conservation for grant support and support from staff that is critical to our operation. Huge thanks to the following and to others who wish to remain anonymous or we may have missed:

DOC Community Fund	Rohan Wanigasekera	Janet McCormick
Wellington Zoo Trust	Jo Hampson	Andrzej Suchanski
The Sargood Bequest	Anne Steffen + Hendrik Sonnenberger	Rossi Leber
Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency	Charlie McPherson	Sarah Jones
ANZ Staff Foundation	Baxter Junior	Rob Sheridan
West Coast Community Trust	Pam and Bob Clyne	Mimi Kent
Craig Potton Gallery	Lore Leseberg	Alison Donnelly
Peter Wall	Briar Charmley	Tracy Johnston-Coates
Kia Ora Vancouver	Gemma, Martin & Ashton Torr-Nunn	Tumbleweed Tees
Pancake Rocks Café	Nicky Armstrong and Peng	Birds Ferry Lodge
Buller Tramping Club	Phyllis and Mike Wells	NZ Photography Workshops
Ken New & Ruth Pemberton	Andrew White	Niko George & Micaela O'Leary
NG Bishop	Frida Inta	James Kim
Kim & Stu Free, Canterbury Pet Foods	SM Jones	J's Café, Westport
Daniel Beetham	C Stewart	New World, Westport
Anna McKay	Meg Ede	Underworld Adventures, Charleston
Denise Tilling	Alun Hassall	Punakaiki Visitor Centre
Rona Spencer	Chris Conrad	Photo Corner/Post Shop, Hokitika
Steve Charles	Valerie Pollard	The National Kiwi Centre, Hokitika
Breakers Boutique Accommodation	Joan Ironside	Hokitika i-Site
Bernie Calder	Tania Johnston	Greenstone Helicopters
Michael Humphries		

Thanks to our Trust Team

Patron

Craig Potton MNZM

Trustees

Reuben Lane (Chair)
Kerry-Jayne Wilson MNZM
Jill Cotton
Leon Dalziel
Robin Long
Marg Costello
Martin Abel
Zoe Watson (appointed 15 November 2019)
Dr Scott Freeman, Advisory Trustee from DOC

Manager Inger Perkins

Rangers Matt Charteris, Robin Long, Gerald Freeman, Lucy Waller, Luisa von Salis-Soglio, Sarah Kivi

Accounts Karen Grant

Website and IT services

Leon Dalziel of Baby-e Website Design
James Kim

Appendix 1. Publications and reports from the Trust or under the Trust by-line

WCPT person in bold

Refereed papers and book chapters

Mattern, T.; **Wilson, K-J.** 2019a. Yellow-eyed penguin/hoiho *Megadyptes antipodes*.
<https://www.stateofpenguins.nz/yellow-eyed-penguin>.

Wilson, K-J.; Mattern, T. 2019a. Little (blue) penguin/Korora, *Eudyptula minor*.
www.stateofpenguins.nz/little-penguin.

Mattern, T.; **Wilson, K-J.** 2019b. Fiordland penguin / tawaki *Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*.
<https://www.stateofpenguins.nz/fiordland-penguin>.

Mattern, T.; **Wilson, K-J.** 2019c. Snares penguin *Eudyptes robustus*.
<https://www.stateofpenguins.nz/snares-penguin>

Wilson, K-J.; Mattern, T. 2019b. Eastern rockhopper penguin *Eudyptes filholi*.
<https://www.stateofpenguins.nz/eastern-rockhopper-penguin>

Wilson, K-J.; Mattern, T. 2019c. Erect-crested penguin *Eudyptes sclateri*.
<https://www.stateofpenguins.nz/erect-crested-penguin>

Conference Presentations

Wilson, K-J.; Mattern, T.; Waugh, S. 2019. Where and How many; the distribution and abundance of Little Penguins in New Zealand. Poster presentation, 10th International Penguin Conference, Dunedin, 24-28 August 2019

Long R.G. Tawaki surveys in the Gorge River area, poster presentation, 10th International Penguin Conference, 24-28 August 2019.

Submissions

Ellenberg, U.; **Wilson, K-J.** 2019. Submission on the 'Te Kaweka Takohaka mo te Hoiho 2019-2029 - A strategy to support the ecological and cultural health of Hoiho'. *Prepared on behalf of both the Global penguin Society and the Australasian Seabird Group.*

The following submissions were made on behalf of the West Coast Penguin Trust:

Perkins, I.M. 2019. Submission to Buller District Council on proposed changes to the 'Dwellings on Unformed Legal Roads Policy 2019 and Licence to Occupy – Dwellings and associated services located on unformed legal road.

Perkins, I.M. 2020. Submission on the National Plan of Action – Seabirds.

Perkins, I.M. 2020. Submission on the National Inshore Finfish Fisheries Plan.

Perkins, I.M. 2020. Submission on the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

Non-refereed articles

Wilson, K-J. 2020. Letter to the editor – Conservation. *Birds New Zealand* 25; 2.

Wilson, K-J. 2020. Database of NZ penguin colonies. *Birds New Zealand* 25; 7.

Public talks

Wilson, K-J. Various lectures on penguins, other seabirds and Antarctic wildlife given at Union Glacier and Gould Bay, Antarctica while employed as a lecturer by Antarctic Logistics and Expeditions.

Wilson, K-J. The world of penguins. Public talk, Westport 15 November 2019.

Wilson, K-J. Old bones in caves, providing a context for conservation. Public talk, Charleston, 14 September 2019.

Wilson, K-J. West Coast Penguin Trust, The Tawaki Coalition and Tawaki. Taronga Zoo Sydney, NSW. 20 June 2019.

Long, R.G. The Tawaki Story, presentation at Franz Josef Glacier TED Talk event, October 2019.

Perkins, I.M. The West Coast Penguin Trust: who we are and what we do. Westland Library, April 2019, Westport November 2019, Fulton Hogan January 2019 (focus on how contractors could help), Westland Milk Products February 2020 (focus on induction for pipeline project)