

ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

in brief



**West Coast
Penguin Trust**

July 2025

Message from Trustees

Our vision continues to be that “Sea and shore birds and their habitat of the West Coast Te Tai Poutini are healthy and thriving”.

Our Mission is to achieve the vision through research, education, awareness, advocacy and practical projects, founded on strong science.

Our team of Trustees has shared the role of Chair over the past year, and we now share our review of the year April 2024 to March 2025.

In last year's Annual Report, then Chair and current Trustee, Robin Long, noted that we have had to shift focus to more fundraising as well as trim our budgets. That was working and has continued to work well and Robin added that we believe in the value of our work and the need for it to continue. That is even more true now in the face of increasing pressures on nature and the environment.

In addition, we have reviewed our field work programme to ensure it is fit for purpose with the invaluable advice and guidance of our scientist, Dr Thomas Mattern. Our breeding success monitoring combined with using microchips will enable us to determine whether the study colony is increasing, stable or declining, and to track that every year. Adding and analysing the foraging study data will provide greater insight by relating breeding success data to marine parameters and the link, if any, with changes in the climate. We know that penguins are indicator species for marine issues and we will share our findings wherever they may be useful.

This work is important and we aim to continue and to keep it consistent. That means continued fundraising efforts and we always value contributions of all sizes and types. We remain immensely grateful for everyone's support and hope it will continue as we work towards our vision.

Little penguins – kororā

- Main study site moved from the Nile, Charleston, to Camerons, Greymouth
- Camerons colony: 61 nest boxes, 21 breeding nest sites, 32 chicks fledged, 76% success
- 24 adults and 23 chicks microchipped
- Rahui colony, Charleston: 13 active nests, 17 chicks, 65% success
- 162 burrows checked twice at five other Buller colonies, 57 active, average season assumed for breeding success



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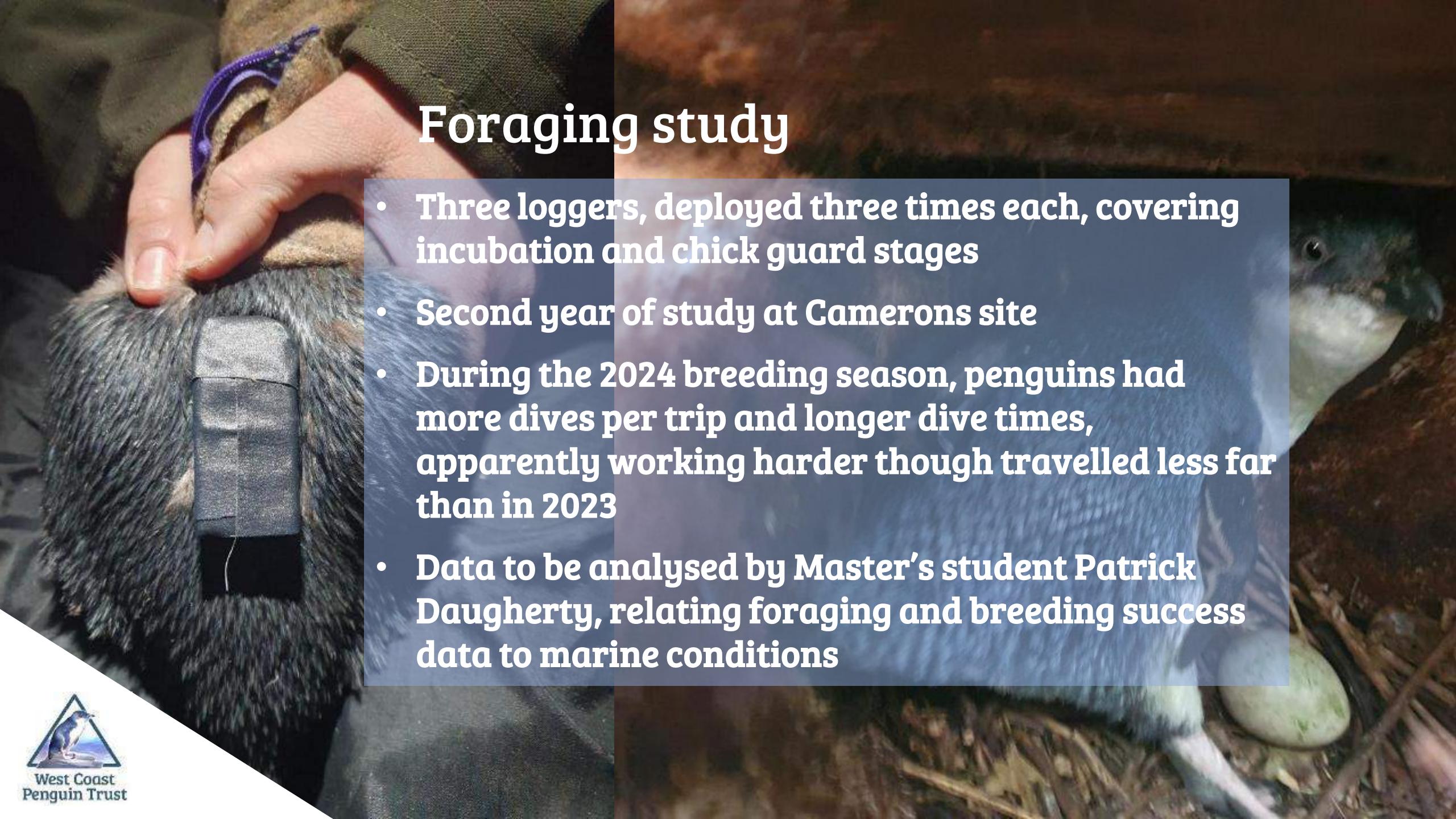
Penguin protection fences

Fulton Hogan and WestReef kindly picked up the slack after NZTA cancelled their annual contribution towards fence maintenance. Huge thanks to WestReef for repairs after damage by storms and by a car.

The Hokitika fence, sponsored by Westland Milk Products, continues to protect penguins and we're grateful to Westland DC and Kiwirail for ensuring their weed control covers our fence and penguin interests where fences are aligned.



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Foraging study

- Three loggers, deployed three times each, covering incubation and chick guard stages
- Second year of study at Camerons site
- During the 2024 breeding season, penguins had more dives per trip and longer dive times, apparently working harder though travelled less far than in 2023
- Data to be analysed by Master's student Patrick Daugherty, relating foraging and breeding success data to marine conditions





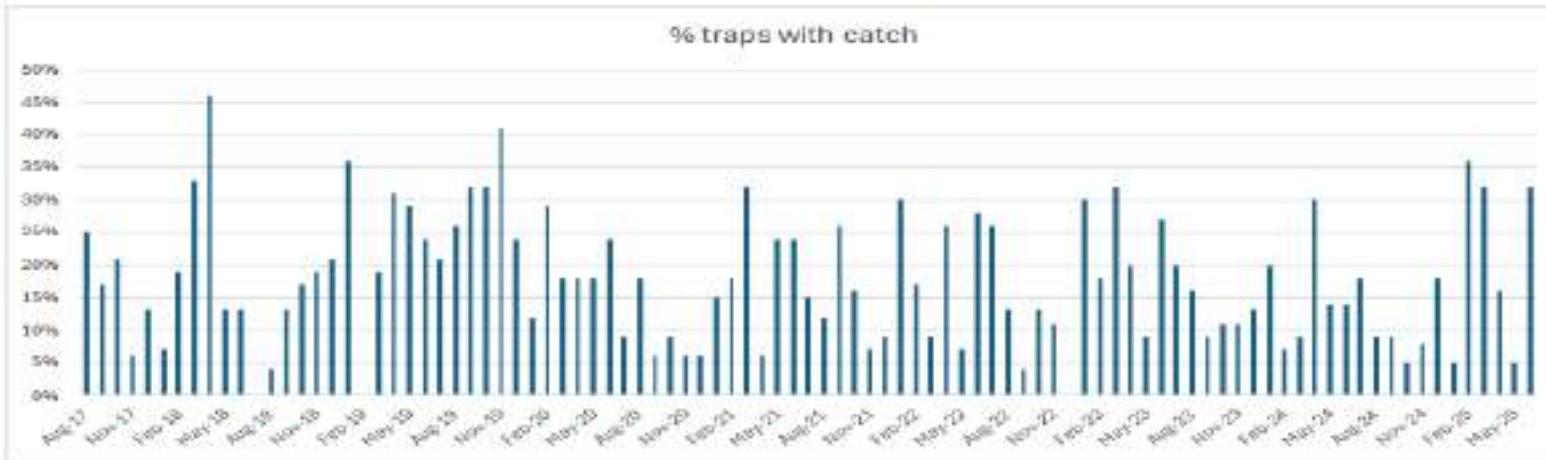
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Trapping projects for other seabirds

While rats and stoats don't present a major threat to little penguins, they certainly do to other seabirds and in fact most native birds.

Our trapping project at the Southern end of the Cape Foulwind walkway (23 traps) keeps rat and stoat numbers down for the protection of sooty shearwaters there and for sooties and other seabirds on nearby Wall Island.

Trapping on the mainland beside Seal Island (22 traps) protects sooties and spotted shags, aiming to keep rats and stoats off the island, which is connected to the mainland at low tide.



Fiordland crested penguins - tawaki

Breeding success good for the 2024 season in South Westland at around 84%, i.e. over 8 chicks fledged per 10 breeding attempts, (100% would be one chick fledged from two eggs, believed to be an evolutionary adaption relating to food supply variability and energy constraints of long foraging trips, compared to two chicks from two eggs for kororā).

Monitoring was undertaken two or three times at two colonies (10 and 11 nests) and six times plus some trail camera monitoring of 27 nests (10 with cameras) at Gorge River.

Trail cameras at Gorge River indicated stoat predation led to at least one nest failure.



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Westland petrel – tāiko



Over the years, the trust has participated in and supported research to understand and improve the conservation of Westland petrels. Our late Chair and scientist, Kerry-Jayne Wilson MNZM, was key to that focus, being recognised internationally for her work with and knowledge of seabirds.

Our role is more as an advocate now, speaking up for tāiko and their habitat through various RMA and other processes, and referencing Kerry-Jayne's research.

Education

Education remains a key component of our work. We know that giving children an understanding and appreciation of penguins and their environment is an excellent way to help them develop an enduring love and appreciation for nature.

Educational Resource used (hard copy and available to download) and valued by teachers and youth leaders, including for the Golden Bay edition.

Teachers from Hokitika to Westport supported in their penguin journey or voyage of discovery.

Volunteers from schools assisting with field work have taken their knowledge and experience back to the classroom to enhance their teaching.





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Awareness and advocacy

We use our website, newsletters, media releases, facebook and public talks and events to share what we do and raise awareness about penguins and other threatened seabirds across the region, as well as threats to those species.

We work with others including council animal control officers and DOC rangers to raise awareness of and encourage wildlife friendly behaviours. Advocacy has never been more critical. We work with planners and speak up through RMA and other processes including small and large resource consent applications as well as plan and legislation changes, offering suggested consent conditions, making submissions and speaking at hearings.

West Coast Penguin Trust Board and beyond

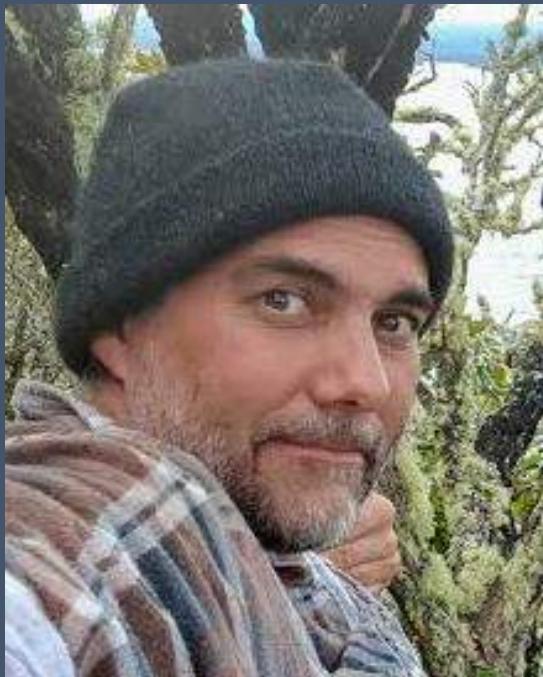
We welcomed Chris Woolmore as a trustee in August. Chris brings an abundance of conservation experience and joins other trustees Jill Cotton, Margaret Costello, Robin Long, Martin Abel and Deborah Carden.

Each brings a great deal of skill and experience to our small team, and we are enormously fortunate that they contribute their time to ensure the success of the trust's work.

The trust is honoured to have Craig Potton MNZM, conservationist, environmentalist and photographer, as our Patron, and Dr Scott Freeman, Senior Biodiversity Ranger at DOC in Westport and past Trustee, as our Advisory Trustee.

Our relationship with DOC rangers across the region continues to be valued enormously.

Thanks to scientist Dr Thomas Mattern



We remain grateful beyond words that Kerry-Jayne Wilson's frequent penguin science collaborator, Dr Thomas Mattern, kindly agreed to support, guide and work with the Trust after Kerry-Jayne died in 2022.

Since then, Thomas has ensured that we remain focussed, effective and successful in our field work and data analysis, enabling the Trust to build on strong foundations and do even better.

Behind Thomas, we are immensely fortunate that the Global Penguin Society supports Thomas to support community conservation projects like ours. They are “dedicated to the conservation of the world’s penguin species, the coasts and the oceans they inhabit”.

Thanks to our sponsors and donors

With funding harder to come by and taking up more time, it is only with the generous assistance of Supporters, other donors, grant making bodies and others who have provided in-kind support and wonderful volunteers, that we can carry on our important work – conservation projects that are critical to understand the situation and issues, and then ensure that penguins and other threatened seabirds in our region thrive.

Thank you all.



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Nourishment made beautifully



Thank you



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai