



ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

Message from the 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.

Thank you, with appreciation for all your help - nga mihi nui ki a koe

Trustees

West Coast Penguin Trust
July 2025



WCPT Team (from left): Margaret Costello, Lucy Waller (Ranger), Chris Woolmore, Deborah Carden, Martin Abel, Jill Cotton, Inger Perkins (Manager). Missing: Robin Long, Karen Grant (Accounts).

Highlights of Trust Projects over the Year

Little penguin / kororā monitoring

- Our foraging study in 2023 was based out of a colony of kororā at Camerons, south of Greymouth. Access to penguins was easier in terms of both travel time and access to penguins in nest boxes. As a result, the decision was made to shift our main study site from Charleston to Camerons for the 2024 season.
- 22 active nest boxes were monitored by Ranger Lucy Waller twice a month, though one did not have a breeding attempt. Lucy found that of those 21, eggs were laid in all but five nests within the same three-day period at the end of August. Of those 16 coordinated breeding attempts, it likely that 12 fledged both chicks and the others fledged at least one, possibly two. In some cases, it was not possible to determine as nests have been dug beyond nest boxes. Taking those confirmed numbers of fledged chicks, breeding success was 76.2%, where two chicks fledged would be 100%. As the first year at the Camerons colony, we don't have data to compare, but that figure is similar to the good season from the Nile colony at Charleston of 2021; the following two years at the Nile colony were poorer, especially in 2022 when New Zealand experienced a marine heatwave coinciding with a La Niña climate pattern.
- One nest had eggs two weeks earlier than the rest but both chicks and adults struggled with one adult dying in the nest box and the chicks surviving but fledging some four weeks later than the normal time.
- Three nests had eggs in mid-October but one failed and the other two saw one chick each fledge.
- In every nest where two chicks were seen, Lucy noted a dominant, larger chick from hatching to fledging. She also observed a general trend with a more dominant penguin and a shyer partner among the adult kororā.
- At the Rahui colony in Charleston, Matt Charteris reporting on 13 active nests and twice monthly monitoring. Three nests failed, at egg stage, one fledged one chick and the other nine fledged two chicks, a 65.4% success rate a little down on the previous season but up on the poor 2022 season that was the start of the marine heatwave.
- Establishing the new study colony at Camerons included microchipping penguins. With fabulous assistance from volunteers, Lucy microchipped 24 adult and 23 chicks. That will continue each season as we build up data and learn about survival rates of chicks and recruitment of any new unchipped penguins.
- Along with the old study colony in Charleston, the Nile colony, Lucy also monitored four other sites along the Buller coast twice during season for an indication of population trends. 59 burrows were checked at the Nile colony, finding 18 active, 38 were checked at Whitehorse Bay – 17 active, 57 checked at Joyce Bay – 17 active, 5 checked at Bullock Creek – 2 active. With some equipment failures, it was hard to determine whether eggs or chicks were present but seven were confirmed to have failed and with the knowledge of the Camerons and Rahui sites, we assume an average breeding season for those colonies.
- The sixth site monitored regularly in the Buller is beside the Punakaiki River mouth. This has been declining for many years due to vehicle collisions on the adjacent SH6 and loose dogs. But this year, Lucy was astonished and delighted to find three active burrows. Sadly, two failed with eggs abandoned, but the third successfully raised two chicks and we hope this site will continue to improve.
- Our grateful thanks go to former ranger, Matt Charteris, and his family for their monitoring of kororā on their coastal property in Charleston over many years and continuing to share data with the trust. Their passion for the protection of kororā has ensured that the colony is safe and thriving.
- Our thanks too to wonderful volunteers Ellen Richardson, Grace Lockington, Maria Lockington and Sharon Macleod in particular.



Penguin protection fences

- Our penguin protection fences north of Punakaiki and north of Hokitika continue to keep penguins safely off the highway. Sadly, the generous support for some of the maintenance of the Buller fences from NZTA ceased in July 2024 but we were hugely relieved and grateful when Fulton Hogan and WestReef picked up the slack, agreeing to help when they could, including repairing the fence at Limestone Creek after some stormy weather and following damage by a car.
- We're also very grateful to penguin fence initiator, Fiona McDonald, and her family for keeping an eye on the fence at Pahautane and carrying out some repairs since it was built.
- The Hokitika Fence, sponsored by Westland Milk Products, continues to protect penguins from the highway on the northern side of Hokitika and their ongoing support is hugely appreciated. Part of the fence is beside the railway and Kiwirail contractors keep weeds under control. Part is beside the sewage ponds and Westland DC keep weeds down there. We are grateful to both.



Penguin fence looking good beside the railway at Hou hou Creek, Hokitika

Foraging study – GPS tags for kororā

- With generous support and flexibility from the Brian Mason Trust and the Environment & Heritage Lottery Fund, 2024 was the second season we tracked kororā from Camerons with the guidance of penguin scientist, Dr Thomas Mattern. The intention is to carry out the study annually and Thomas hopes to automate the collection of marine condition data that can be linked to penguin activity at sea and breeding success.
- Three loggers tracking using GPS and recording dive times and depths were deployed on kororā during the incubation stage in early September. All three birds stayed on their nests for the entire week, so the loggers were recovered, recharged and redeployed onto three other birds and data was recovered.
- Loggers were deployed again in mid-October during the chick guard stage, when chicks are a minimum of 8-10 days old. That leaves a short window before the chicks are left alone. After chick guard, there is a much higher risk of losing an expensive logger.



- During the 2024 breeding season, penguins had more dives per trip, longer dive times, apparently working harder though travelled less far than in 2023. ([More details on our website.](#))
- We're grateful to Master's student, Patrick Daugherty, who will be analysing our data and relating it to marine conditions.

Trapping to protect seabird colonies

CAPE FOULWIND

- The trust maintains a network of 23 rat/stoat traps at the southern end of the Cape Foulwind walkway, with the twin goals of maintaining the predator-free status of nearby Wall Island, where seabirds nest on every inch of the island, and protecting any sooty shearwaters which breed on the mainland in this area. We are very grateful to Trustee Margaret Costello, husband Jim and new volunteer Hayden who have kindly picked up this project (more volunteers would be welcome). We're grateful to Buller DOC Volunteer Group who have offered to clear the trap route and keep access open.
- It seems likely that weka will be taking sooty shearwater chicks as soon as they are hatched, a very natural situation but very disappointing. We hope to better understand the situation with further monitoring during the 2025 breeding season, approximately November to January, and with the deployment of cameras at nests, and then assess whether any action can be taken.



Cape Foulwind and Wall Island

SEAL ISLAND

- Seal Island, an island other than at low tide a few kilometres north of Punakaiki, is home to spotted shags and sooty shearwaters. Other than mice, it is otherwise predator free. Our predator control project is aimed at keeping the island rat, weasel and stoat free. Margaret Costello, with the help of Jim, has installed and maintained 22 predator traps on the mainland adjacent to Seal Island for eight years. Huge thanks go to Margaret and Jim for all the patient and consistent effort over the years. A colony of little penguins / kororā also nest in this area, protected from the highway by a section of our penguin protection fence.

Fiordland crested penguins / tawaki

- After a very successful season in 2023, with several monitored nests raising two chicks, rare for crested penguins, the 2024 season was back to a more normal level of breeding success.
- Tawaki Ranger, Sarah Kivi, monitored nests at two sites in South Westland twice during the season. The first checks were in early September, looking for nests with eggs and then later in the month to check for chicks.

- At the colony north of Haast, 10 active nests were found, of which two failed at egg stage and eight had ten chicks at the second visit. A third visit from Lucy found the same chicks alive but it's not clear or perhaps even likely that both chicks survived in the two nests where they were seen, so 8 chicks fledged from 10 breeding attempts is assumed, at least as a minimum.
- At the Jackson Head colony, 11 nests were monitored, 20 eggs were seen, 1 nest failed at egg stage and another at chick stage. Nine nests successfully hatched 11 live chicks at the second visit, but again, we assume a minimum of 9 chicks fledged from 11 breeding attempts.
- Sarah reported a large slip along part of the west-facing Jackson Head colony that would have destroyed several nesting sites unfortunately.
- Tawaki Ranger, Catherine Stewart, continued the more frequent monitoring of nests at Gorge River, for the 11th year, the earlier years started by daughter and Trustee, Robin Long.
- Monitoring comprised six checks of 27 nests between mid-August and late October, nine of which had trail cameras deployed. A further 15 nests used in previous years were checked but were not used this season.
- Poor weather meant access around the colony was difficult. Of the 27 nests with penguins, 24 had penguins sitting on eggs by 20th August. All eggs were hatched by 22nd September.
- Two of the nests monitored by trail camera appeared to have failed by mid-September; trail camera footage for one showed the nest failure after a stoat visit. Two healthy chicks were present close to the end of the chick guard stage, after which chicks move around and 'crèche', hanging out together waiting for parents to return with food. It is therefore difficult to determine chick survival rate, but we could estimate that 9 chicks fledged from the nest with cameras, a similar rate to the other South Westland sites, resulting in an average of 84% breeding success, where 100% would be one chick per nest.
- With trail cameras coming to the end of their life, we are grateful to David Cary for donating two new cameras and then the DB Environmental Trust for funding eight new ones, plus four for monitoring kororā.



Tawaki nest cam records parents and chick

- We would like to acknowledge the wonderful annual support from the Wellington Zoo Trust, which supports our monitoring and better understanding of tawaki. Our research puts us in a strong position to advocate for better conservation management of this taonga species.

Westland petrels / 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 for nature. Those lifelong values start with understanding and connecting to nature and our programme does that through everyone's favourite, the little penguin or kororā, and extends to other seabirds. Our Ranger, Lucy Waller, is delighted to work with teachers and schools who see the value and the importance of helping their students to respect and empathise with their local environment and nature.
- Lucy has worked with St Mary's School and Westland High School in Hokitika, St Patrick's, John Paul II as well as girl guides' and scouts' groups in Greymouth, and with St Canice's in Westport over the past year. That will continue and extend to other schools in the coming year, including dissection classes for senior biology students at JPll with the generous support of vet Marjan Sprock.
- A happy crossover of education and field work came about during the 2024 breeding season through the wonderful volunteering of teachers Maria Lockington (St Mary's) and Sharon Macleod (Westland High School), and senior student Grace Lockington. Each assisted with field work including microchipping penguins, foraging study logger deployment and retrieval, and breeding success monitoring.
- The direct experience empowered teachers to develop their teaching back at their schools, extending to making nest boxes at St Mary's. Level 3 student, Grace, shared her knowledge and promoted penguin conservation at her school.



Lucy with Greymouth guides and rangers at the beach

- Our Educational Resource continues to be used in hard copy and downloaded from our website, and we encourage and support teachers and youth leaders to use it to help children learn about penguins and threats to penguins locally and then consider taking action.
- We continue to be grateful and honoured to be working with many wonderful and committed teachers and leaders across the region and their students. We are also enormously grateful to the following for grants, without which, this programme would be much reduced: the Sargood Bequest, the West Coast Community Trust, the ANZ Staff Foundation and the Auckland Zoo Conservation Fund. Donations from our generous supporters also keep this enormously important and valued work going.

Awareness and advocacy

- Through our website, Facebook page, newsletter, media releases and occasional public talks and events, we continue to raise awareness about penguins and other threatened seabirds across the region, as well as threats to those species, reaching interested folk around the country and around the world. We offer guidance to minimise risks, particularly for dog owners, often with the support of council animal control officers and DOC rangers (thank you all!), and those driving on the coast road after dark, and we invite donations and connect our community to our projects and the nature on their doorstep as much as possible.
- Advocacy is another essential area of work and never has it been more critical. Our support for the protection of penguins and other threatened seabirds could be relevant for anything from small or large scale resource consent applications in coastal areas, and through consultation on plans, policy and legislation at regional and national levels. For example, we share our knowledge of the location of penguin activity with planners and developers, we propose actions or conditions that could keep penguins and other seabirds safe if development goes ahead, and we make submissions and speak at hearings.
- Contributions have been made to the Proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan at length as well as through the consent process for mineral sands mining on the Barrytown flats, where both Westland petrels – tāiko and little penguins – kororā are present.

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.
- Since the Trust was founded in 2006, our relationship with DOC rangers across the region has gone from strength to strength and continues to be valued enormously.

Huge thanks to our Trust Team:**Patron**

Craig Potton MNZM

Trustees

Robin Long
Jill Cotton
Margaret Costello
Martin Abel
Deborah Carden
Chris Woolmore
Dr Scott Freeman (Advisory Trustee, DOC)

Manager Inger Perkins**Accounts** Karen Grant**Rangers** Lucy Waller (Ranger and Education/Awareness Ranger), Tawaki Rangers: Catherine Stewart, Sarah Kivi**Scientist** Dr Thomas Mattern**Website and IT services and support**

Leon Dalziel of Baby-e Website Design
James Kim
Natassja Savidge

Special thanks to our scientist and scientific advisors:

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".

Thomas worked with Kerry-Jane Wilson MNZM to research and then publish a state of the nations paper, summarising the [research priorities of the six penguins in the New Zealand region](#).

Master's student Patrick Daugherty, working with Thomas, will be investigating the links between the breeding success and foraging study data we collect and the ever-changing marine parameters.

Our grateful thanks again go to Dr Philippa Agnew at the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony. Philippa has led the research programme there for many years, driving and supporting [little penguin / kororā science](#). Our Ranger, Lucy Waller, is our second ranger to have benefited from training from Philippa and her team, and we are very grateful to her and environment team leader, Henry Elsom, for their ongoing support and guidance.

Enormous thanks to our sponsors and donors:

We are enormously grateful for the ongoing support we have received from our sponsors, Supporters (Annual Supporters are those who donate a minimum of and often far more than \$50 a year plus a few Supporters for Life (minimum \$500 donation)), other donors, and those who have provided in-kind support for the financial year to the end of March 2025.

With funding harder to come by and taking up more time, it is only with their generous assistance, plus that of 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.

We cannot thank the following wonderful individuals and organisations enough for their marvellous generosity, encouragement and belief in what we do, not forgetting others who wish to remain anonymous, or we may have missed. Thank you all.

Generous providers of grants	Supporters for Life	Superb Supporters	Other Fabulous Donors
West Coast Community Trust	Anna McKay – Woodpecker Bay Baches	Alice Shanks	Pension Insurance Corporation PLC
Wellington Zoo Trust	Christine Robertson	Alun Hassall	Westland Milk Products
Sargood Bequest	Chuck Theriault and Elysa Dennett	Amy Wilson	Kerry Jeffs – Hokitika Fire Station
Auckland Zoo Conservation Fund	Daniel Beetham - Woodpecker Bay Baches	Andrew Pester	Richard Young - NZ Photography Workshops
Lottery Environment & Heritage Fund	Deborah Carden	Andrzej Suchanski	Tumbleweed Tees
Brian Mason Trust	Dr Gerry McSweeney and Anne Saunders - Wilderness Lodge Lake Moeraki	Annie Inwood	Elizabeth Meaclem – Sunset Lodge
ANZ Staff Foundation		Brenda Kaye	Shaun Tipson
Air Rescue Trust	Haydon Ditchburn	Briar Charmley	Meena Janthakun – NZ Craft
Pub Charity	Jack & Kay Davidson	Carolyn Hewlett	Karla Martin – Orderly Stitching
	Jan Macdonald & Stephen Roberts	Catherine van Paassen	Kia Ora Vancouver
	Jessica Inglefield	Christian Masser	Phyllis & Mike Wells
Very Special Mentions	Dr Jonathon Clearwater	Christine Stet	Anthea Ibell
Matt Charteris & Annabel Gossett	Kim & Stu Free, Canterbury Petfoods	David Stone	Emily Kerr
Catherine Stewart & Robin Long	Luke & Taylor – Choose Sarcasm	Dorte Herholdt Silver	Holger & Katayun Ludwig
Luisa Salis-Soglio	Maria Valls	Gemma, Martin and Ashton Torr-Nunn	Jenny Greene
WestReef Services & Rota Carroll	Mark Davies	Jane Marshall	Lisa Jankowska
Chris Pullen	Mark Hangar – Nature Quest	Karen Grant	Philip Tisch
Pancake Rocks Café	Maxine Kissling	Kim Free	Ria Brejaart
Jeanette Goode	Monique Kors	Little Blue Falmouth	Vanessa Cameron-Lewis
Julie Leighton	Nic Neame - Bella Vista Greymouth	Lore Leseberg	Juliet Adams
Cassie Mealey	Nicholas George	Louisa Narbey	
Tracy Johnston-Coates and family and friends	Peter Wall	Lyn Stobie	Donation Box Hosts
	Prof Phil Bones	Michael Humphries	DOC Punakaiki Visitor Centre
Jase Blair	Sarah Ayto	Michelle and Bob Chase	J's Café - Westport
Wilderness Gallery – Hokitika	Sarah Griffiths	Mike Hay	Westport New World
Fung Lai	So-Young Park	Natasha Meynell	Hokitika Craft Gallery
Hokitika Glass Studio	Stefan Ayto	Nicky Armstrong	Hokitika Glass Studio
Sarah Griffiths		Nicola Hill	Woodpecker Bay Bach
James Kim		Paul Caffyn	Craig Potton Gallery
Fulton Hogan		'Peng' Armstrong	Kiwi Centre - Hokitika
		Rohan Wanigasekera	Photo Corner / Moments in Time - Hokitika
		Ruth Killman	Underworld Adventures - Charleston
		Susi Luecht	Ross Store
		Valerie Pollard	Gentle Annie Accommodation
		Victoria Halliday	
		Yuki Yonezawa	