

SEABIRDS

Seabirds find all, or most of their food at sea, shorebirds (waders) feed along shorelines, in estuaries and lagoons.

Only 360 of the world's 9,000 bird species are true seabirds. 86 of these breed in the New Zealand region, including 38 which breed nowhere else. Nine species that breed elsewhere visit New Zealand each year, and a number of others are recorded here from time to time. New Zealand is the world's seabird capital.

Seabirds roam widely and are regularly seen far from their breeding colonies. Those most likely to be seen from here are Australasian Gannet, White-capped Albatross, Sooty Shearwater, Cape Petrel, Fairy Prion, Spotted Shag, White-fronted Tern and Arctic Skua.

Westland Petrels breed only in the hills near Punakaiki but between breeding seasons migrate to South American seas. These large black seabirds can occasionally be seen off Greymouth.

The endemic Hector's Dolphin is the world's smallest; they and New Zealand Fur Seals are common on the West Coast. Occasionally Southern Right Whales pass this way.



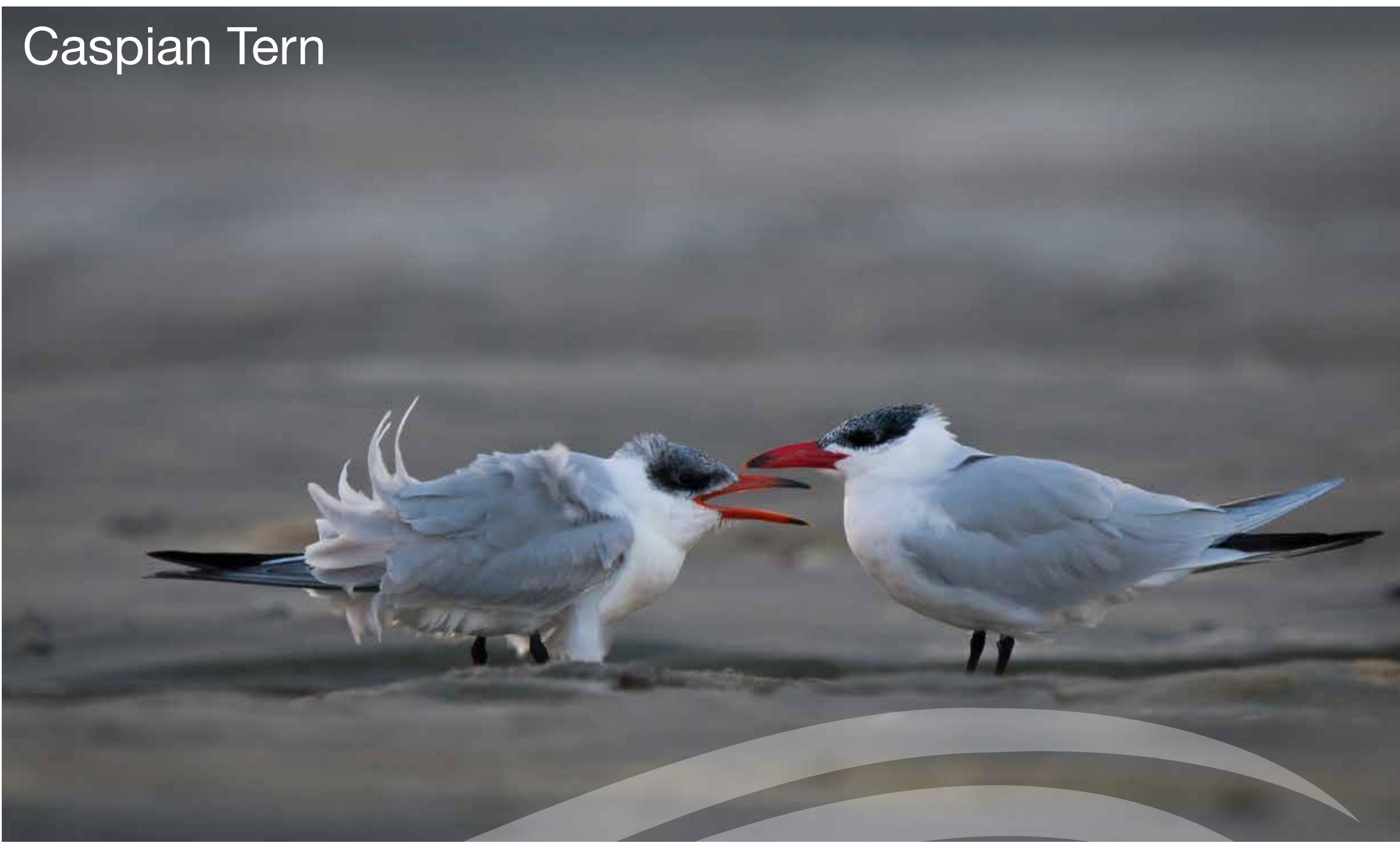
COASTAL BIRDS commonly seen near the Grey River mouth

Red-billed and Black-backed Gulls are common coastal species. The endemic, endangered Black-billed Gull is more often seen on braided rivers.

The White-fronted Tern breeds on some West Coast rock stacks. The larger Caspian Tern visits the West Coast between breeding seasons so is more likely to be seen in winter than in summer.

The most common of the shags (cormorants) is the Spotted Shag which breeds on coastal cliffs near Punakaiki and roost nearby. Pied, Little and Black Shags may also be seen on the wetlands.

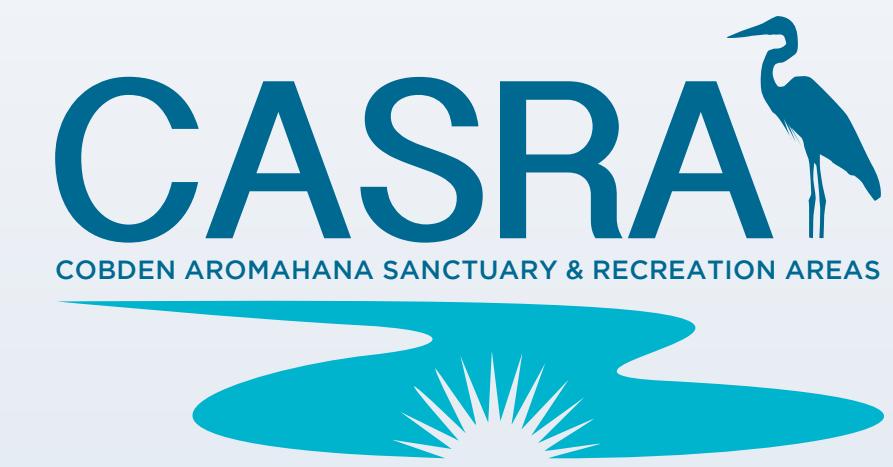
Wading birds are more common on the adjacent wetlands but Banded Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers do use beaches. South Island Pied Oystercatchers occur on fields and wetlands.



**West Coast
Penguin Trust**
www.bluepenguin.org.nz



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SEABIRDS AND THE
COASTAL ENVIRONMENT.
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PENGUINS

The Blue (Little) Penguin (Korora) breeds around most of New Zealand and on the Chatham Islands. Those breeding in Otago and southern Australia are now considered to be a separate species. There are a few Blue Penguin nests hidden away in burrows and rock crevices near the river mouth and behind the beach. At present it is not possible to see them; however, habitat restoration underway should enhance penguin numbers so that public viewing may be possible in years to come.

On the West Coast, Blue Penguins lay their eggs between July and October and their chicks fledge from October to December. After breeding penguins undergo their annual moult, growing a complete new set of feathers in just a few weeks. During moult they can't go to sea, relying on their fat reserves. This is an extremely stressful time for penguins. If you find a penguin sitting forlornly surrounded by old feathers, please leave it alone; disturbance when moulting is especially detrimental to the birds.

Although Blue Penguins remain widespread they are declining through most of their range including here on the West Coast. The West Coast Penguin Trust has carried out research to determine the causes of their decline and undertakes management to allow penguin numbers to recover. Dogs and road kill are the major threats to West Coast Blue Penguins. Please keep your dog under control when near the coast or river mouths. Keep dogs away from coastal vegetation where penguins may be nesting and on a leash if near the beach at night. Even mild mannered small dogs can harass penguins and other wildlife. Please drive slowly and look out for penguins when driving on coastal roads at night including the roads here and around Cobden.

Occasionally endangered Fiordland Penguins visit West Coast beaches. They breed south of Bruce Bay but a few stray as far north as Cook Strait between breeding seasons.

Blue Penguin



Checking blue penguin burrows



Fiordland Penguin

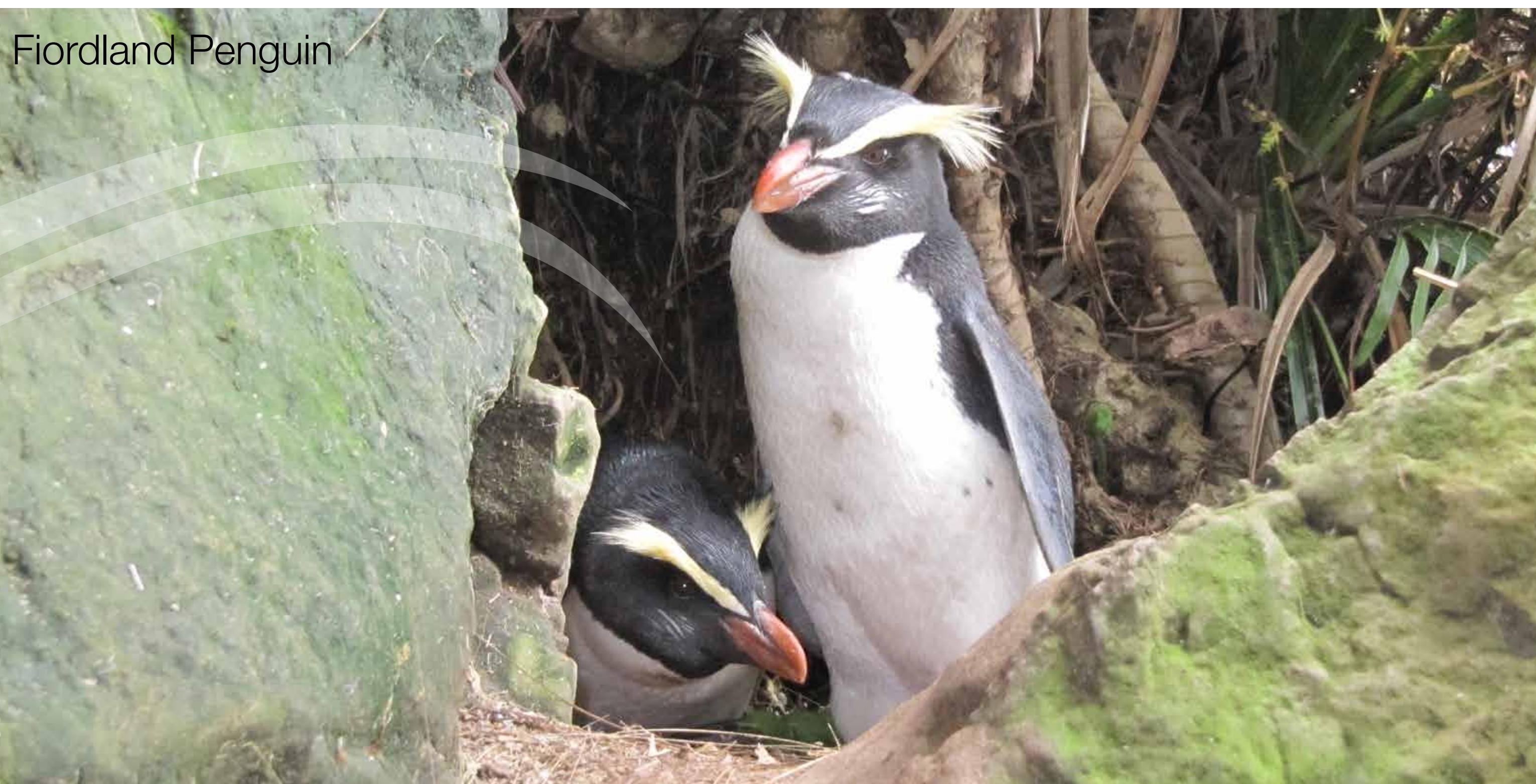
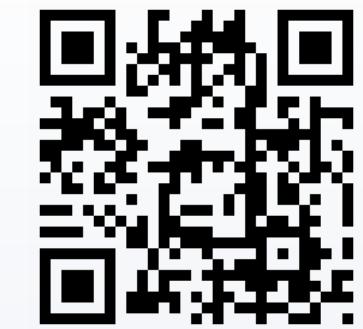


Photo: Cobden Aromahana Sanctuary & Recreation Areas



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