



West Coast Blue Penguin Trust

Annual Report, 2013

After our success last year in winning both the Community/Charity section of the **West Coast Leading Lights Awards** and the Protecting our Coasts and Oceans Section of the national **Green Ribbon Awards**, this has been a year of consolidation for the West Coast Blue Penguin Trust. The main new initiatives in the education/advocacy arena have been the creation of an education package for West Coast schools, and the release of a new leaflet on West Coast seabirds. The most exciting development for the research arm of the Trust was the discovery of large fairy prion and sooty shearwater colonies on Wall Island. These are described later in this report.

The penguin-proof fence that was built in 2011 to prevent penguins from the Punakaiki River colony straying onto the highway has been successful with no known penguin deaths along this short stretch of highway. The next step is to build a 2.5km fence that will begin just uphill from the Perfect Strangers Bach at Meybille Bay and end where the road leaves the coast at Pahautane. This would prevent penguins straying on to the road at several of the major mortality sites. We thank the **New Zealand Transport Agency** and **OPUS** for permission to build the Punakaiki fence and paying for the materials. We are currently in negotiations with both these organisations regarding the construction of this new fence.

At the time of the last AGM, Inger Perkins, a long-time supporter of the Trust, had only recently taken over as coordinator from Robyn Janes. Inger works for the Department of Conservation and prior to that worked in a managerial capacity for other organisations. Inger has done an excellent job in improving the management of the Trust in addition to the many other tasks requested of the coordinator. She has worked alongside Zoe Watson, a local teacher, to develop and raise funds for our schools education package.

Robyn Janes has continued to act as our media liaison person. While coordinator, she used her media skills to raise our profile in both local and national newspapers, radio and other media. Previously our outreach into the community was limited. Robyn gave the Trust a huge boost which has helped us raise funds, and spread the findings from our research to the wider West Coast community.

Our multitalented ranger, Reuben Lane, continues his excellent work with colony monitoring, predator trapping plus an ever growing range of other tasks.

During the year, Nia Edwards handed over the financial management to Lisa De Rooy but has continued to help Lisa and Inger complete a thorough revision of our financial management and ensure the financial year end is managed properly. We are especially grateful to Nia for her work to bring the accounts up to date and resolve some IRD queries.

We have recently introduced an Annual Supporter scheme where individuals are encouraged to donate \$25 per annum and business Supporters \$250 but so far take up has been slow. We hope that eventually this will help reduce our reliance on grants.

The Trust was successful in securing a further two years' funding (to August 2014) from Biodiversity Funds, managed by the Department of Conservation. The grant supports both the Ranger and Co-ordinator roles as well as paying for meetings and public workshops,

During the year Kim McPherson was appointed as a trustee. Kim has been a loyal supporter of the Trust and has been responsible for the links we have developed with the Hokitika Scouts and encouraging links with other youth groups. Kim was the manager of Hokitika's National Kiwi Centre and is now second in charge of the new **West Coast Tree Top Walk**. Her links with youth groups and West Coast tourism will be valuable. Regrettably the AGM will be the last meeting for trustee Ian Davidson-Watts; Ian and his family will be returning to the UK in July. With his experience in wildlife research, administrative skills and involvement with local authorities, Ian brought a range of experience to the Trust. He will be missed. Thank you Ian for all you have done for the WCBPT.

Projects

The West Coast Blue Penguin Trust is currently involved in three restoration projects, one each near Westport, Greymouth and Hokitika. At Cape Foulwind we are enhancing both blue penguin and sooty shearwater populations with the eventual aim of providing free public viewing of both species. The first two years of this project were funded by **Solid Energy**. We have installed a sound system that plays penguin and shearwater calls, more penguin nest boxes and trap lines to protect nesting birds. Last summer, penguins used, but not yet bred in some nest boxes and shearwater nesting pairs increased from 5 in the 2011/2012 breeding season to 13 last summer. Unfortunately this has been a disastrous year for sooty shearwaters with nil to very low breeding success throughout New Zealand. The cause of this is not yet known. Interpretive signage for both species as well as other marine and coastal birds likely to be seen at Cape Foulwind should be in place later this year.

At Hokitika, native shrubs have been planted in hind-dunes at the northern edge of town to enhance an existing penguin colony. Flax plants have been provided by **Westroads** and further plants have been funded by the West Coast Branch of **Forest and Bird**. The **Hokitika Scouts** discovered that this colony was under threat from dogs and have collaborated with the Trust from the outset on this project.

The **Grey District Council** has initiated a large project to develop the Cobden Wetlands and the area on the north side of the Grey River mouth. This will involve habitat restoration, interpretive signage, walks and bird hides. While the Grey District Council is leading this project, the Penguin Trust is working alongside the Council in a collaborative role.

Research and Monitoring

It is essential that management undertaken to protect penguins is based on good research and that the research undertaken is reported not only to the scientific community in the form of referred papers and conference presentations, but equally important is its delivery to West Coast laypeople through our education and advocacy activities. We have now monitored breeding success in colonies with and without predator control for five years in the Buller area and three seasons in South Westland, there being no significant difference in colonies with or without predator control in any year, at any location. A scientific paper reporting these results is in preparation. We have decided not to continue this colony monitoring for the next few seasons; it has taken up much of the ranger's time which could be more productively spent on other activities. Monitoring of both penguins and shearwaters at Cape Foulwind will continue with more intensive predator control (to protect shearwaters). There was a significant setback to this project when 15 adult penguins were killed by roaming dog/s at the start of the 2012 breeding season. These birds came from a nearby colony from which we might have expected to recruit their offspring into our Cape Foulwind viewing population. Dog kills remain a significant threat to West Coast penguins.

With ever increasing pressures on beaches in the Buller region through sand and gold mining, four wheel driving and dogs, further distribution surveys are crucial. Last summer, Reuben surveyed penguins between Westport and Hector, an area where there have been a range of threats to penguins. Our research priority now is a study of foraging and at sea ecology of West Coast blue penguins. We are seeking funding for this.

Submissions

The Trust's Mission Statement includes advocacy with local, regional and central government for the purpose of conserving blue penguins and other seabirds. We maintain a watching brief on issues that may affect West Coast penguins or other seabirds. The Trust receives notification of consent applications from the West Coast Regional Council (WCRC) on a weekly basis.

Comments were supplied to WCRC on the following resource consent applications:

- Cape Foulwind Quarry - reopening
- Buller DC, airstrip – rock armouring, Carters Beach
- Westland Milk Products – ocean outfall, Hokitika
- B&K Smith – coastal erosion protection, Arahura
- Westroads – coastal gravel extraction, Greymouth
- G&L Robinson – coastal erosion protection, Arahura

Comments were supplied to DOC on the following concession application:

- Bach, Punakaiki

A comprehensive submission was prepared by Paul Elwell-Sutton relating to the Marine Protected Area process and the Trust's concern that the proposal for Marine Reserves on the West Coast was woefully inadequate.

Education and advocacy

The media report by Robyn Janes provides a list of newspaper, radio and other media articles published during the last year. This year, the Trust held its February supporters and trustees meetings at Punakaiki and in the evening Reuben held a trapping workshop and Kerry-Jayne gave a talk on penguins and other West Coast Seabirds. Both were well attended with over 30 people, mostly locals present. Thanks to Conservation Volunteers for hosting the meetings and the Pancake Rocks Café for hosting the evening session and generously providing refreshments. The Trust shared a stall at the Westport A&P Show with DOC and had a stall at the Fox River Market Day.

Once again we ran 'Penguinville' at the Hokitika Driftwood & Sand Festival. As previously, Penguinville was a hit with the children and was a wonderful way to get our message out to kids. This year Penguinville was bigger and better than ever before with over 150 children taking part.

The Trust is working with Zoe Watson, a Hokitika teacher and environmental educator, to develop an educational package on penguins and other seabirds to be used in West Coast schools. We have recently obtained funding for this project from the **Lottery Grant Board** and the material is expected to be available to schools within the next 12 months .

Kerry-Jayne has prepared interpretive material on penguins and other West Coast seabirds as part of a major revamp of signage at Cape Foulwind. A leaflet on West Coast seabirds will be 'launched' at this AGM. Kerry-Jayne continues to work with DOC and the Grey District Council on interpretation for the Cycle Trail and Cobden Wetlands development.

We have recently joined the environmental umbrella group ECO. Kerry-Jayne attended their summer gathering at Arthurs Pass where she presented a brief introduction to the Trust.

Thanks to our sponsors and supporters

We are very grateful for the on-going support we have received from our sponsors, supporters and those who have provided in-kind support; without their assistance, plus that of numerous volunteers we would have achieved so much less.

Holcim Cement	Biodiversity Fund	Kea Heritage Tours
Solid Energy	Department of Conservation	Grey District Council
Birds Ferry Lodge	West Coast Trustpower	Rotary group, 'Lend a Hand'
Sand Dunes Classic	West Coast Community Trust	Lottery Grants Board
Breakers Boutique Accommodation		Shining Star Chalets and Accommodation

Patron

Craig Potton

Trustees

Jill Cotton	Ian Davidson-Watts
Paul Elwell-Sutton	Kim McPherson
Kerry-Jayne Wilson (Chair)	
Tim Shaw, Advisory trustee from Department of Conservation	

Coordinator

Inger Perkins

Ranger

Reuben Lane

Media liaison

Robyn Janes

Bookkeeping

Lisa de Rooy

Web site services

Leon Dalziel of Baby-e Website Design

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kerry-Jayne Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Kerry-Jayne" on the first line and "Wilson" on the second line, with a small flourish at the end.

Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Chairperson, West Coast Blue Penguin Trust