



## West Coast Penguin Trust

### West Coast Penguin Trust Annual Report, 2016

The 2015-16 year has once again been especially busy with several new projects commenced in addition to the continuation of our other activities. We were relieved to be granted just over \$98k (inc GST) over two years from the DOC Community Fund. The application process is demanding and both Inger Perkins and Kerry-Jayne Wilson put in a huge number of hours to achieve this. The process needs to be refined, the days spent preparing the application are days not spent conserving seabirds. Success with DOC funding gives us two years of certain funding, yet there remains a sense of urgency to obtain ongoing funding and reduce our dependence on DOC funding. We are making progress; during the last 12 months we have received project support as below;

- Review of threats to the Westland petrel; funder Brian Mason Trust.
- At sea tracking of blue penguins in the Buller area; JS Watson Trust, with additional support from Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
- New penguin protection fence at Seal Island: Department of Conservation West Coast Mining Compensation Fund
- Education, supporting schools and youth groups to use our “Blue Penguins and Other Seabirds” resource: the Sargood Bequest, Scotlands Te Kitoroa Trust and Holcim
- Cobden Interpretation panels (in preparation): the Blackadder Trust
- We have also received generous sponsorship from Mont d’Or Mining, and donations, both online and in donation boxes, and we are hugely grateful for this support.

During the year we were sad when Trustee Kim McPherson had to resign for family reasons but were delighted that Scott Freeman, a long time Trust supporter could step up to become a Trustee. At the AGM Paul Elwell-Sutton will step down after many years as a Trustee. We will welcome to the Trustee board Ian Cooper and Robin Long. Ian lives at Okarito and operates Okarito Kiwi Tours. Robin grew up at Gorge River with Fiordland penguins as neighbours. Both bring new skills and enthusiasm to the board.

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

#### 1. Charleston blue penguin monitoring

We began monitoring blue penguin colonies in Charleston even before the Trust was formed in 2006. While annual monitoring is not the most newsworthy of our activities it does allow us to measure the success of management, it is an essential research tool and it provides early warning if conditions change with the advent of new threats. It is reassuring that those colonies under management are stable with year to year fluctuations in numbers breeding, while the Rahui colony on private land where nest boxes have been provided is increasing. The annual monitoring has been funded by the DOC Biodiversity Fund and is now partly funded from the DOC Community Fund and partly from donations.

## **2. Other blue penguin monitoring**

The monitoring at Charleston involves fortnightly visits for five months each year. We can only devote that amount of time to our Charleston study colonies. In addition we monitor other colonies between Cape Foulwind and Punakaiki at least twice each breeding season and colonies near Okarito once every second year. We would increase monitoring intensity and enact conservation management at these colonies if declines were observed. Several very small colonies near Punakaiki have been lost due to dogs; others are stable with year to year fluctuations. In the past monitoring of these colonies has been funded by the DOC Biodiversity Fund; for the next two years it will be funded by our grant from the DOC Community Fund.

## **3. Cape Foulwind/Wall Island trapping and seabird monitoring**

The Trust sees Cape Foulwind as a premier site for the viewing of coastal wildlife. In the past we have worked with DOC to install new interpretive signage and we have installed a sound system to attract sooty shearwaters and blue penguins into sites where free public viewing will become possible. The sooty shearwater colony is hidden in flaxes above the walkway and, thanks to our years of predator trapping, a few can be seen most evenings between November and March circling overhead and crash-landing in amongst the flaxes. Our predator trapping has encouraged those shearwaters unable to get a nest on over-crowded Wall Island to nest at the Cape but breeding success has been poor. We continue to adapt our predator control in order to allow successful mainland breeding for the shearwaters. Blue penguins are less responsive to the sound system and build up in their numbers has been disappointingly slow, due in part to 21 adult penguins killed by dogs in a nearby colony in 2012.

Wall Island just offshore remains free of introduced mammals. We maintain traplines along the Cape Foulwind coast in order to catch stoats before they attempt to swim to Wall Island, and we visit the island annually to check for any incursions by stoats or rats. Numbers of fairy prions and sooty shearwaters on the island appear stable.

This project is has been funded from donations and the DOC Biodiversity Fund and for the next two years, will be funded by the DOC Community Fund.

## **4. Coast Road Penguin fences**

We are delighted that in the two breeding seasons since the 2.6 km fence was built at Pahautane, no road-killed penguins have been reported along that section of SH6. Previously, 6-8 deaths were reported on this bit of highway each year. In 2015, a 300 m fence was constructed close to Fox River opposite Seal Island, where penguins had been run over most years. This was funded by the Department of Conservation West Coast Mining Compensation Fund. No penguins have been reported dead on the road there since. Regular maintenance of the fences is ongoing, with repairs on two occasions when cars have hit the fence and on one occasion when a gate was stolen. Ranger Reuben Lane has added fence building to his many skills.

## **5. At sea tracking of blue penguins**

After years being on our wish list and following a small trial in 2013, in 2015 we teamed up with Dr Sue Waugh and Tim Proupart of The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa to begin what we hope will be a three year study of blue penguin marine ecology in the Buller area. This is part of a three location wider Cook Strait and NW South Island study, with Te Papa managing sites either side of Cook Strait and the WCPT managing sites in the Buller.

Analysis of tracks requires GIS expertise which the Trust does not have. Te Papa has the expertise in house and collaboration with them allows a more scientifically rigorous study than we could manage alone. Funding for this project has been received from the JS Watson Trust and Te Papa.

## **6. Education Project including the educational resource**

The Trust's educational resource developed by Zoe Watson has been well used in the 18 months since it was released. Now that is available and primary school teachers and youth leaders have it for teaching, the Trust's focus has shifted from taking *ad hoc* opportunities when Trust personnel availability and school teachers' or leaders' needs have coincided, to supporting a structured exposure of penguins and other seabirds in the curriculum or youth group plan at times to fit in with time tabling. Zoe has run training sessions for teachers/leaders in Westport and Greymouth and one for Hokitika is planned. The Trust will of course continue to make school visits from time to time. During the past year we have visited Granity School, Westport High School, St Canice's School, Barrytown School, Cobden School, Brunner Sea Scouts and Hokitika Primary School.

After nearly four years with the Trust, Zoe is about to follow other educational opportunities but has kindly offered to support the Trust as we transition to a new phase of environmental education, broadening our horizons to include senior school students and develop further our collaboration with DOC, Enviroschools, WestREAP and the West Coast Regional Council.

The resource is available online at [www.bluepenguin.org.nz/education](http://www.bluepenguin.org.nz/education) and a few booklets remain in stock. To date it has been downloaded over 90 times, mostly by New Zealand educators but also by some Australians. The DOC Community Fund provides some year to year certainty for our schools programme; during the last 12 months generous grants from the Sargood Bequest, Scotlands Te Kiteroa Trust and Holcim have supported our education work.

## **7. Awareness, outreach and advocacy**

Awareness and advocacy are always important. We maintain our website, facebook page and newsletter, which is emailed to some 475 recipients, posted to a further 30, and distributed to libraries about four times a year. Press releases are made to West Coast newspapers and we are grateful for their continued support.

New leaflets describing the actions dog owners can take to help keep blue penguins and other wildlife safe have been printed for distribution by each of the three local councils with their annual dog registration packs. A new penguin brochure is almost ready for publication. Thanks to DOC for funding these publications.

Donation boxes were funded by a Pub Charity grant along with accompanying window stickers that proclaim "Proud to be a Penguin Protector". These are kindly displayed by a variety of Coast businesses and we have received several hundred dollars to date through the boxes; (a few more boxes are available if you could display one on our behalf).

The Trust must maintain its visibility in the West Coast community, a challenge given the geographical nature of the Coast. We have a stall at some market days and while this generates some money through donations and sales, our prime aim is to share information with our fellow Coasters. This year we have attended Okarito's 150th celebration at Easter, the Westland Petrel festival at Punakaiki and four Fox River market days.

The ‘Return of the Westland Petrel Festival’ draws large numbers of West Coasters and perhaps does more than anything else to raise the profile of the petrels. Our Trustee Leon Dalziel was on the organising committee, Inger and Kerry-Jayne ran a stall at the Saturday market and Kerry-Jayne gave a short talk about petrels on the beach on Friday evening just before the birds flew overhead, and again at the evening concert.

The 150th celebrations at Okarito attracted large crowds mostly of Coasters and other New Zealanders. Inger, Trust Ranger Reuben Lane, and most Trustees met on Good Friday to review the Trust deed, strategy, and other key documents, then had a stall at the Saturday and Sunday markets and Kerry-Jayne gave a talk on seabirds as part of the entertainment and associated activities.

Although tourists come and go, the Fox River markets tend to attract the same group of locals each time, so the value of attending every market day is questionable. Four spread over the summer plus one at the beginning of the blue penguin nesting season is perhaps the optimal return for effort at this event.

In a first for the Trust and due to the generosity of our Patron, Craig Potton, in November 2015 we presented two fundraising events. Support from Hokitika’s Regent Theatre and sponsorship from Peter Yealands wine led to a successful evening of ‘Penguin Encounters’ and a photography workshop, both presented by Craig and both enjoyed by all who attended.

As an advocate for conservation, the Trust submits on resource consent applications as well as plan and legislation amendments, locally, regionally and nationally as appropriate. Links with other environmental organisations need to be developed.

## **8. Fiordland crested penguin (tawaki) pre-predator control project**

The DOC Community Fund has supported a three year study of land-based predators at Fiordland crested penguin (tawaki) nests, which began in 2014. This project uses motion activated cameras to record any predators or nest disturbers at tawaki nests. The primary study site is Jackson Head where we are privileged to work in collaboration with Dr Thomas Mattern and Dr Ursula Ellenberg (see below) who are conducting research on the marine ecology of the penguins. We also have cameras at Gorge River, which are operated by Robin Long and Catherine Stewart who live there. All images from 2014 and 2015 have been viewed and we have found that possums frequently visit penguin nests, while stoats, rats and mice do so less often. Of hundreds of mammal visits observed, two tawaki chicks have been preyed upon by stoats, both at Gorge River, both resulting in breeding failure. Thanks to Geoff Robson of Greenstone Helicopters who provided helicopter transport between Jacksons Neil’s Beach and Gorge River.

## **9. ‘The Tawaki Project’**

The Trust is delighted to be able to provide some support for the Tawaki Project led by Dr Thomas Mattern and Dr Ursula Ellenberg of Otago University, who returned to Jackson Head in September to conduct more research into the foraging ecology of Fiordland crested penguins. They found that chick mortality was high in the early part of the season due to starvation. Adults were having to forage far and deep for food with poor nutritional content. This was attributed to the El Niño conditions. By contrast, simultaneous study of tawaki at Milford Sound found that foraging was so good, some penguins raised two chicks. The project team hope to extend the study in 2016 to a third site at the southern extent of the species’ range, off Stewart Island.

## **10. Seal Island shag monitoring**

For the last five years, Kerry-Jayne has carried out counts at the spotted shag colony on Seal Island. Until 2015, these counts were made on an opportunistic basis, however, now that the Trust has begun seabird surveys of Seal Island with a view to restoration (see below) these counts have been brought under the Trust's umbrella and are now made at least monthly year round.

## **11. Seal Island seabird survey (year 1), trapping and restoration (year 2)**

A new project part funded by the DOC Community Fund is a survey of seabirds and introduced predators on Seal Island, which took place in late 2015. Depending on the findings and discussions with DOC, predator trapping and island restoration will follow should this prove worthwhile. After three weeks with seven tracking tunnels on the island, only mice were found to be present. Two sooty shearwater colonies were discovered and red-billed gull and white fronted tern colonies were censused. We also found a good diversity of coastal plants. In 2016 we plan to facilitate specialists to undertake botanical and lizard surveys. The Trust is working with DOC to develop and implement predator control on both island and adjacent mainland with vegetation restoration on the Island.

## **12. Westland petrel, review of current status and threats.**

The West Coast Penguin Trust is concerned for the conservation of all West Coast seabirds and we have particular interest in the Westland petrel. The Westland petrel breeds only at Punakaiki although its at sea distribution extends around much of New Zealand and they migrate to South America between breeding seasons. The Brian Mason Trust funded a review of ecology and threats to the species which was carried out by Trust chair Kerry-Jayne Wilson. The review will be available on the Trust website by the end of June; we are currently waiting on some information on bycatch in South America.

## **13. Westland petrel survey**

Survey work on Westland petrels has been flagged for 2017, the extent and nature of this work to be guided by the findings of the threats reviews funded by the Brian Mason Trust. In 2015 and 2016, Kerry-Jayne and Reuben continued to work with Dr Sue Waugh who is leading ecological research on the species and they will discuss with her and with DOC how we can best contribute to the conservation of this species.

## **14. Cobden Aromahana Sanctuary**

Restoration of the Cobden Aromahana wetlands in Greymouth is being undertaken by Cobden Aromahana Sanctuary and Recreation Area Inc (CASRA) supported by the Grey District Council and DOC. The WCPT is contributing to this large project with the installation of penguin nesting boxes and the installation of interpretation panels providing information on penguins and the other coastal birds present in the area. The interpretation panel text and photos have been completed and the panels will be ready for installation in the next few months. The Trust's contribution to this project has been supported by the DOC Community Fund and the Blackadder Trust. Trustee Jill Cotton and our manager Inger Perkins are liaising with CASRA and Grey District Council regarding this project.

## **15. Grey District Aquatic Centre**

Following on from last years 'Cook Strait Swim' fundraising event at the Grey Aquatic Centre where our supporters swam lengths equivalent to the width of Cook Strait, we are hoping to work with the Centre team to promote seabird conservation at the Aquatic Centre possibly including a mural. This will be supported by our DOC Community Fund grant and is coordinated by Trustee Jill Cotton.

## **16. Conservation leadership - workshop/seminars**

Part funded by our DOC Community Fund grant, in 2017 the WCPT will offer a series of workshops under the provisional title 'Facilitating Community Conservation on the West Coast'. Planning for these has begun although the format of the workshops is still under discussion.

## **17. Upskilling Trust staff and Trustees**

Staff and Trustees have attended two conferences recently, the biennial Oamaru Penguin Symposium, and Conservation Inc, a community conservation conference in Dunedin, both in May 2016. Both were excellent opportunities for networking and upskilling of staff and Trustees in areas including governance, health and safety, and conservation psychology as well as recent research. Associated site visits enabled further networking and learning opportunities from scientists, rehabilitation practitioners and eco-tourism providers.

This was supported by funding from the DOC Community Fund as well as the generous loan of DOC vehicles.

## **18. Trust Board and public meetings**

The Trustees met four times over the last year, twice in Hokitika, once in Punakaiki and once in Westport hosted by our loyal supporters Holcim. In addition Inger, Reuben and most Trustees spent Easter at Okarito where we held an extra meeting alongside other activities. There has been a lot of Trust business to get through each time so on three occasions we have stayed together the night following the meeting with a 'fieldtrip' next day. Even with these meetings, most Trust business is still conducted by email. With Trustees and staff spread from Westport to Haast, wherever on the Coast we meet there are significant travel costs involved. Our funding from the DOC Community Fund meets some of the meeting costs.

## **19. Penguin/Seabird Centre**

The Trust has been working with Holcim over many years and discussions have taken place over the past year to consider how the Trust may be a part of Holcim's legacy at their Cape Foulwind site. The Trust is optimistic about a possible eco-tourism centre that would contribute to the Buller economy as well as supporting the Trust's conservation work.

Discussions have been held with Buller District Council, Development West Coast, DOC and others, and the concept is receiving broad support. To date there is no funding for this.

## Thanks to our sponsors and supporters

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

DOC Biodiversity Funds	West Coast Community Trust
DOC Community Fund	Trustpower/Rotary Lend a Hand Foundation
Sargood Bequest	NZTA
Scotlands Te Kiteroa Trust	Maccaferri
Brian Mason Trust	CRT
JS Watson Trust	Breakers Boutique Accommodation
DOC West Coast Mining Compensation Fund	Off Beat Tours
Holcim	New Zealand Travel Inc
Lottery Grants Board	Daniel Beetham
Pub Charity	Denise Tilling
Impulse Fishing Co/Greenstone Helicopters	Kim & Stu Free
Mont d'Or Mining	N Bishop
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa	M Humphries
Pancake Rocks Café	

### Patron

Craig Potton

### Trustees

Jill Cotton	Kim McPherson (to November 2015)
Leon Dalziel	Kerry-Jayne Wilson (Chair)
Paul Elwell-Sutton	Tim Shaw, Advisory Trustee from Department
Scott Freeman	of Conservation

### Manager

Inger Perkins

### Ranger

Reuben Lane

### Web site services

Leon Dalziel of Baby-e Website Design

### Bookkeeping

Lisa de Rooy

### Education

Zoe Watson



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

**Appendix 1. Publications and reports from the Trust or under the Trust byline**  
WCPT person in bold.

**Refereed scientific papers**

**Wilson, K-J.**, Turney, C.S.M. Fogwill, C.J. & Blair, E. 2016. The impact of the giant iceberg B09B on population size and breeding success of Adélie penguins in Commonwealth Bay, Antarctica. *Antarctic Science*; doi:10.1017/S0954102015000644

Jamieson, S.E., Tennyson, A.J.D., **Wilson, K-J.**, Crotty, E., Miskelly, C.M., Taylor, G.A., Waugh, S.M. in press. A review of the distribution and size of prion (*Pachyptila* spp.) colonies throughout New Zealand. *Tuhinga*

**Wilson, K-J.**, Turney, C. Fogwill, C. & Hunter, J. 2015. Low numbers and apparent long term stability of South Polar Skuas *Catharacta maccormicki* at Commonwealth Bay Antarctica. *Marine Ornithology* 43; 103–106.

Waugh, S.M., Poupart, T & **Wilson, K-J.** 2015. Storm damage to Westland petrel colonies in 2014 from cyclone Ita. *Notornis* 62; 165-168.

Waugh, S.M., C. Barbraud, L. Adams, A.N.D. Freeman, **K.-J. Wilson**, G. Wood, T.J. Landers & G.B. Baker. 2015. Modeling the demography and population dynamics of a subtropical seabird, and the influence of environmental factors. *The Condor* 117; 147-164.

**Conference presentations**

**Long, R.** Tawaki surveys in the Gorge River area: results and lessons learned. 10th Oamaru Penguin Symposium, Oamaru, 5-6 May 2016.

**Lane, R.** Practical solutions to penguin conservation on the West Coast. 10th Oamaru Penguin Symposium, Oamaru, 5-6 May 2016.

Kennedy, E., **Wilson, K-J.** Are we leaving leadership and professionalism behind in the rush to community inspired conservation? Conservation Inc Conference, Dunedin, 18-20 May 2016.

**Wilson, K-J.**, Gummer, H., Taylor, G & Rayner, M.J. 2015. Recovery of the endangered Chatham petrel (*Pterodroma axillaris*): a review of conservation management techniques from 1990 to 2010. Australasian Ornithological Conference 2015, Flinders University, Adelaide 25-27 November 2015.

**Submissions**

**Perkins, I.** Proposed West Coast Regional Policy Statement (May 2015).

**Perkins, I.** Proposed Regional Coastal Plan (March 2016)

**Perkins, I.** New Marine Protected Areas Act Consultation (March 2016)

**Public talks**

**Wilson, K-J.** Seabirds. Okarito 26 March 2016.

**Wilson, K-J.** Westland petrels. Punakaiki, 29 & 30 April 2016.