



Places for Penguins

a Forest & Bird Wellington Branch project



**Forest
& Bird**

GIVING NATURE
A VOICE

Newsletter

June/July 2016

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

In June most little penguins are starting to come ashore and find nest sites — hopefully lots of pairs will choose our nestboxes. All penguin activity on land takes place after dark. A camera trap exercise last breeding season showed some birds are active for several hours overnight especially when collecting nesting material. One or two eggs are laid 2–5 days apart. Like the eggs of birds that nest in burrows, hollows in trees and other completely concealed places, the eggs are white. A nestbox



Three abandoned eggs in one nestbox

at Tapu te Ranga island was found to have three abandoned eggs last season, but it is thought that one was probably put in the box by someone who found an abandoned egg from a natural nest.

Once eggs are laid, the adults take turns incubating the eggs while the other parent is away feeding. During the day, the sitting bird does not leave the nestbox and the bird that has been at sea always comes ashore after dark. Incubation takes 30–43 days with an average of 35 days.

EGGMOUFLAGE

In contrast with penguins' eggs, variable oystercatchers' eggs are laid in a scrape in the open. Their eggs are highly camouflaged to conceal them from gulls and other predators. Can you spot the single oystercatcher egg in the picture on the right? Look about a third of the way from the left and about a fifth of the way up. See it now?



Ah -there it is. Take care not to tread on eggs in the open

Gull and shorebird eggs are usually very well 'hidden in plain view'. It pays to be cautious on shingle beaches, and take particular care if adult birds seem agitated or are making efforts to distract your attention — there may be a nest nearby.



Camouflaged variable oystercatcher egg in nest scrape

LITTLE PENGUIN RESCUE

A month or so ago we received an email from a Karaka Bay resident wanting to know what to do about a penguin in the cavity behind the mid-level rear wall of a split level house built up a bank. Karin Wiley explains:

I went out Saturday to see what I could do. The penguin had not been evident for a couple of days and there was no sign of it within the space where it had been heard and sighted. By examining the perimeter foundation from both inside and outside the space, the entry point was found and blocked. Job done, or so we thought.

On Sunday the resident called to say he had found a penguin in his basement garage (one floor below where it was first sighted) hiding behind two kayaks leaning against the wall. It had been banging on the inside of the garage door with its flippers in the early hours of the morning.

I returned again and caught the penguin, checked for injuries and dehydration, took it across the road to place it in the closest nest box, then went back to the garage to find out where it could have got in. There was nowhere it could have entered from outside at this level unless the garage door was open, so it was assumed it may have been there for a couple of days somewhere between the two spaces or left and returned again to get through the hole at the upper level before it had been blocked up the day before.

A couple of items that had been placed on top of a part height concrete wall retaining the clay bank where it had been cut away had been knocked off, possibly as the penguin made its way to the garage floor. If this



"We are rescued, but we are not amused"



Karin about to put the penguin in a nestbox

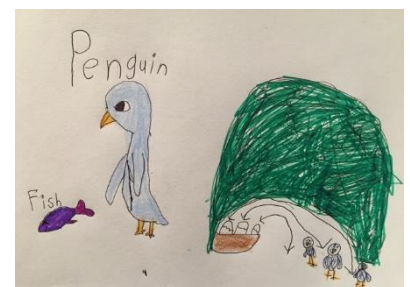
assumption is correct, the penguin would have travelled the width of the house in the upper cavity, then at right angles through a small opening between the underside of the flooring and the top of the clay bank between two floor joists which would have been only about 20 cm high, tumbled down the steep clay bank until it reached the 1.4 m high concrete retaining wall and jumped to the garage floor below.

It appeared none the worse for its ordeal and was checked the following day to see if it was still in the nest box. It had disappeared — hopefully back to sea for a good feed.

CHALLENGE 55 — TRASH BUSTERS

By Freddy, Monica, Mandy and Roger Leathers

As part of the WWF New Zealand 'Challenge 55' campaign to raise money for the last 55 Maui dolphins, our family Challenge 55 was to collect 55 kg of trash from the South Coast of Wellington during April and May. We are Houghton Bay residents and love our Tapu te Ranga marine reserve. We also love Maui dolphins and think they would approve of our challenge.



By cleaning up the coast, we aim to:

1. raise heaps of money for WWF's work to save Maui dolphins
2. reduce the amount of plastic and other rubbish that threatens marine life and
3. have an awesome fun time playing and exploring along the coast!

Team trash busters



Monica (6 years) has super powers with animals. She is a bumblebee rescuer, and a wild cat tamer. Her tools are honey potions, cat biscuits and some kind of love hypnotism.

For Monica, cleaning up the beach makes perfect sense. She knows that sea birds, fish and mammals can get trapped by rubbish or tricked by it — mistaking it for food and becoming sick.

Freddy (2½ years) is chubby and cheeky with a flowing golden mullet. He already loves our challenge 55 and enquires in his unique way “*is it not beach time mummy.*”



Mandy is the mummy, Roger is the daddy, and all together we are team trashbusters!



All photos and artwork by Trashbusters team

In early June Mandy sent more news:

We've collected 69.4 kg of trash from the South Coast of Wellington in total, and exceeded our original goal of 55 kg! We may keep going to reach a new goal of 100 kg (as we are really enjoying it) — especially if we continue to get some support and donations.

Great work, Trashbusters. You set a great example. Any other teams out there with stories to tell?

PFP LITTLE PENGUIN NESTBOX BREEDING COMPARISON FOR THE PAST 2 SEASONS

The nesting season for 2015–16 lasted 6 months, with the first egg sighted at the end of August and the last chick fledging in February.

In the table below are the numbers and percentages calculated using the data entered into the nest box monitoring results. The percentages are done in line with calculations used by the Matui/Somes island project. As our records only cover 2 seasons there is not sufficient information to know whether the little penguin population is increasing, decreasing or stable. We'll have a better idea after the boxes have been monitored for at least 5 years.

	2014–15	2015–16	Comment/calculations
Eggs produced	35	55	
Nestboxes monitored	87	105	
Nestboxes occupied	23 (26%)	30 (29%)	
Abandoned eggs	2	10	
Dead chicks	3	2	
Chicks fledged	30	43	
Number of 1 chick nests	12	9	
Number of 2 chick nests	9	18	
Hatching success	94.3%	78.2%	Number of chicks/number eggs
Fledging success	91.0%	95.6%	Number of large chicks/total number of chicks
Breeding success	85.7%	74.6%	Number eggs laid that fledged/total eggs
Breeding success by pair	1.4	1.6	Number of chicks that fledged/number nests

Notes:

- The hatching & breeding success percentages were reduced in 2015–16 season owing to the increased number of abandoned eggs.
- The fledging success was reduced in 2014–15 season owing to the increased number of dead chicks found.
- The increase in the breeding success by pair was due to the increased number of nests with 2 chicks.

FIRST WORKING BEE 2016

Weeding and planting at ‘The Outcrop’ Seatoun/Worser Bay

Sunday 10 July 10:30am–12:30pm

PfP is joining with Te Motu Kairangi–Miramar Ecological Restoration Group to weed and plant an area on Marine Parade, opposite Beerehaven Steps, 150m north of Seatoun Wharf and the junction with Ferry Street — refer to map at right.

Join us to help weeding and planting on this outcrop area between Seatoun & Worser bays on Sunday morning 10 July 10:30am–12:30pm.

Please bring gloves and trowel or spade if you have one to dig out weeds and for planting. We will provide rubbish bags and some gloves and tools. Morning coffee will be provided. We are planning to cover the sandy areas to enable future planting of species for ecological restoration and penguin nest boxes.



If any dead or injured penguins are found please contact the **Department of Conservation Area Office on 472 5821 (after hours 0800 DOCHOT)**

Thanks to all our partners: Wellington Zoo, Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, the Society for Conservation Biology group at Victoria University, and Crombie Lockwood

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