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Yellow-eyed Penguin News

Set-netting Bad News

A recent study indicates that set-netting is even more of a problem than first thought. At least 72 Yellow-eyed penguins are known to have been entangled in these floating fishing nets in the last 18 years. Caught in a net, a penguin is held underwater and drowns.

John Darby, who co-authored the report with Stephen Dawson, described the figure as “unfortunately the tip of the iceberg” because the majority of catches go unreported. Three of the four reports from commercial fishers consisted of multiple kills, suggesting that this type of event may happen more frequently than reported. John sees the figure as an underestimation of the true number of penguins caught.

Most of the entanglements in the study were from a small geographic area supporting very few Yellow-eyed penguins. Set-net by-catch has particularly severe effects on these struggling communities. One small penguin breeding area just inside the entrance to Dunedin’s Otago Harbour recorded seven adult deaths from nearby set-netting. The remaining penguins have since abandoned the site.

72 deaths in 18 years may seem minimal. Yet, apparently low catch rates have caused population declines in similarly long-lived, slow reproducing species. One study attributed a 22% decline in a United States population of Wandering Albatross to a mere 1% to 2% take of female albatrosses on long fishing lines.

Otago Peninsula hosts about two thirds of the mainland population of Yellow-eyed penguins. Regardless, set-netting is allowed 200 metres offshore from penguin breeding areas that support up to 200 breeding pairs. Each day penguins swim up to 12 kilometres out from shore, so, although a local ban is a good start, it only skims the surface.

The high rate of by-catch suggests there should be a ban on in-shore set-netting. You may like to write to the Minister of Fisheries to encourage him to visit the issue at:

**Minister of Fisheries
Parliament Buildings
Wellington**

You don’t need to put a stamp on the envelope.

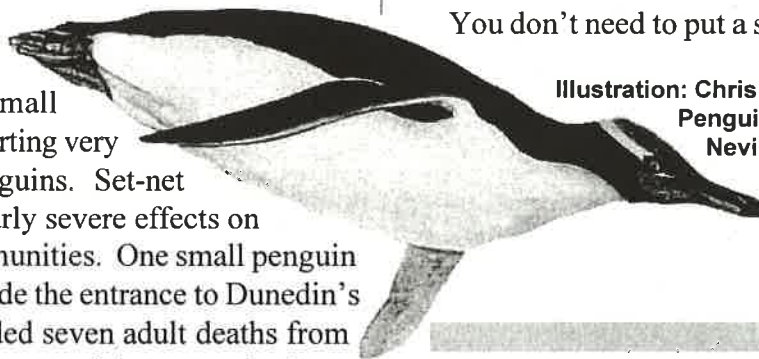


Illustration: Chris Gaskin in “The World of Penguins” by Chris Gaskin and Neville Peat

Trust Praised by Conservation Minister

Dr Nick Smith, the Minister of Conservation, called the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust a “national leader” during a recent visit to the office. The Trust was reviewing its relationship with his department, the Department of Conservation, after the Trust’s 10 years of existence.

Dr Smith said the Trust had become a national success story. Since 1990 the mainland population has quadrupled from 150 to 600 breeding pairs. He said the Trust is playing a crucial role in saving the penguin, in partnership with its sponsor, Mainland Products Ltd and the Department of Conservation.

In some places, the Trust has begun funding predator control, a responsibility traditionally shouldered by the Department of Conservation (DoC). Dr Smith explained that DoC has a finite, shrinking budget which must be rationed over the third of New Zealand that DoC manages. Any increase in funding for the Yellow-eyed penguin would be to the detriment of other aspects of our native biodiversity. Dr Smith suggested that Trust members can encourage sufficient funding for the conservation of native biodiversity by lobbying their local member of Parliament.



photo: (Otago Daily Times) Trustee, Lala Frazer gives Minister Nick Smith a ngaio tree to symbolise the continuing partnership.

We're On the Right Track!

A recent analysis by University of Otago student, José Derraik, suggests sufficient predator control and an increase in habitat could guarantee Otago Peninsula's population of Yellow-eyed penguins.

Penguins need plants. Plants shade them from the sun and protect them from the eyes of other penguins - being visible to another pair is enough to make a breeding pair lay barren eggs. Unfortunately, most penguin habitat has been highly modified since human arrival.

The Yellow-eyed penguin evolved in a land free of predators, having developed few of the defence strategies and communal habitats so essential to the survival of its colonial relatives. The introduction of mammalian predators such as stoats, ferrets and cats greatly increased the mortality of penguin chicks. As a result, the penguin population has declined steadily during the last 150 years.

Computer models are providing a new insight into the dynamics of animal populations. José Derraik, an ecology student, used software called Vortex to perform a Population Viability Analysis (PVA) of the Otago Peninsula population. He had two aims. One was to assess the present trend in the population. The other was to test the efficiency of two conservation strategies: predator control and habitat recovery.

Most data used in the model was estimated from a variety of literature sources, and many assumptions had to be made. Therefore, Jose cautions that the margin of error is quite considerable. One has to be careful when taking into consideration the results of such a study.

However, his findings offer hope and suggest conservationists are moving in the right direction. The Population Viability Analysis firstly indicated that the Yellow-eyed penguin is an endangered species, which, without human intervention, is likely to be severely reduced in the next fifty years. The resulting low number of individuals could lead the Hoiho to extinction. However, results clearly indicated that human intervention can guarantee the continuation of the population. The most important management strategy seems to be the control of predators. Predators can kill large numbers of chicks, which jeopardises the viability of the future population. Their control is pivotal.

Results also suggested it is important to work on the restoration of existing habitats and the

acquisition of unprotected areas. A growing population needs room to expand, especially the Yellow-eyed, with its need for privacy.

Applying both management strategies is most likely to guarantee the survival of the Yellow-eyed penguin. The analysis found that neither strategy alone would be sufficient and a combination of both is what is required. The Trust and other penguin conservationists are doing exactly that, so it looks as if, in the short term, we are on the right track! In the long term, hopefully we can look forward to a day when research and advocacy have found a way to make the penguin and other native fauna and flora self-sustaining.

Water for Okia Reserve



Okia Reserve now has a guaranteed water supply in the event of fire. Two tanks, supplied by Fulton Hogan, were placed in a hole and covered. A condition of the resource consent is trees are to be planted to minimise the visual impact of the disturbance. Fulton Hogan and their contractor, John Clearwater, did such a good job that already, you can hardly see where the tanks have been buried.

A Good Thing Who Took His Time

He said good things take time, and he practised what he preached. Actor Robert "Roy" Wesley, star of the Mainland Cheese advertisements, died at Palmerston North in August aged 83 years.

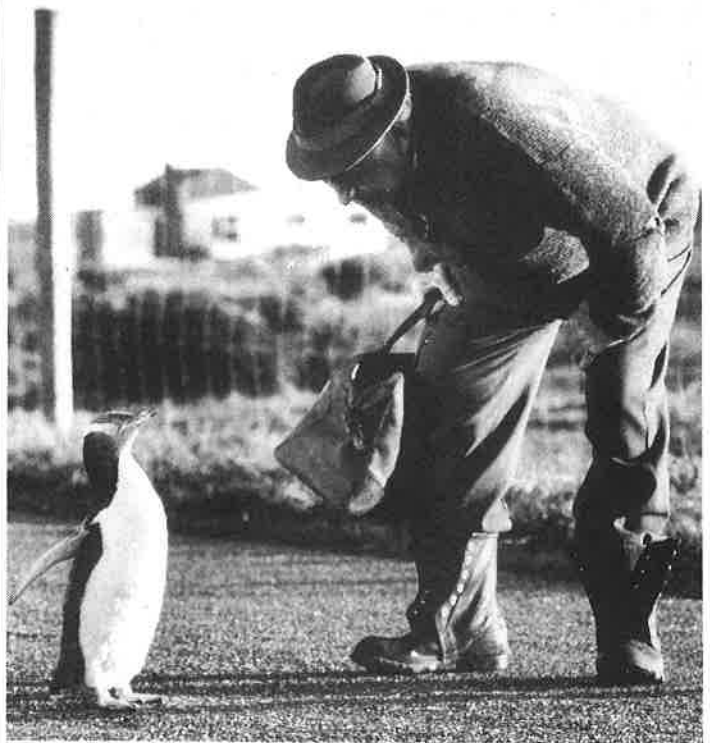
Possibly the nation's best-loved grandfather, Roy took his time to start acting, only finding his call at the age of 60. It turned out to be a good thing for Roy - his world-weary character, with trademark stetson hat and scarf, starred in nearly 20 advertisements.

It was Roy who introduced Hoiho to New Zealanders through Mainland Cheese advertisements. His time working in these advertisements produced many a yarn, including, "the time when we were filming near Hokitika, the easy-peel wrappers, and it took take after take after take. The locals started turning up to get a share of the opened cheese."

But some were not there for the cheese - they simply wanted to share the warm humour of a man who confessed to liking music, a bit of quiet and no pressure.

Roy is survived by his wife Noeline, daughter-in-law Yvonne, three grandchildren and thousands of adoring fans.

Both Mainland and the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust appreciate Roy's contribution to saving the penguin.



Roy and Hoiho

Mainland Supports New Cookbook

Alison Holst, in association with Mainland Products and Hyndman Publishing, has published a fun new cookbook called "Alison Holst's Step by Step Cookbook". Hoiho, the Yellow-eyed penguin, gives cooking tips throughout the book, useful for beginners of all ages.

The cookbook contains easy to follow recipes for popular, family foods using Alison's reliable and delicious recipes. Each recipe features step by step drawings and instructions using everyday, inexpensive ingredients. The first issue, titled "Snacks, Light Meals and Treats" is dedicated to the thousands of young people who have written to Alison with their favourite recipes.

This fun, new cookbook is being promoted through schools and sold as a fundraising venture. Keep an eye out for it.

Space Out, Trust!

The Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust has now gone into cyberspace



with three web sites and an e-mail address. A big thank you to Natural History New Zealand Limited who upgraded our computer. You can now e-mail the Trust office on yept@clear.net.nz

As you know, we have had our web site for some time and hope that if you have access to the Internet you have bookmarked it. Check out the one that John Hodgkins, our newsletter designer, created for us. It attractively presents all the up to date information as well as distribution maps. It can be found on www.deepsouth.co.nz/yeptnz Dave Houston of the Department of Conservation in Oamaru also created a web page for us which includes graphs on population and dispersal. www.penguin.net.nz Our third web page was organised and donated by a company called Converge, keen to see environmental organisation

on the net. It too, is a really well laid out site, easy to read and with great photographs www.converge.org.nz/hoiho/helping.html

Check out these web sites for more penguin information, great for school projects:

<http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/CITE/penguins.htm> is a good readily accessible source of information about all types of penguin.

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/peter_and_barbara_barham/pengies.htm is another really good site packed with information

<http://www.webcom.com/~jimallen/pages.html> has a whole host of web sites you can browse through, all about penguins, as well as a newsgroup you can join, especially if you like collecting penguin memorabilia.

<http://www.vni.net/~kwelch/penguins/> has a wealth of information on all species and we are on the top of the list as a group who helps penguins.

26,000 Trees Planted

In the last newsletter we asked for volunteers to plant trees over the winter. We were very grateful to have over 100 people plant 26,000 plants for penguins to nest in.

It was a dry winter which was both good and bad. On the one hand, good weather meant no planting days had to be cancelled. On the other hand, newly planted trees need water to allow their roots to establish.

850 shrubs and 700 flax were planted at our new reserve, Otapahi, on the Peninsula. We flax, Ngaio, Totara and Manuka, amongst other species. 500 shrubs and 600 flax were planted at Tavora. A large number of these were broadleaf trees, which are particularly resistant to wind, salt spray and frost.

There were such good numbers of reliable volunteers that the trees were planted ahead of schedule. As well as individuals, volunteers came from our sponsor, Mainland Products, Department

of Conservation Habitat Helpers and Conservation Corp, Teen Greens, Dunedin Academy, Environment Centre and the Volunteer Centre. Some planters were rewarded with more than just knowing they were helping the penguins - they had a close view of penguins landing on the beach, returning after a day's fishing at sea.

People for Penguins

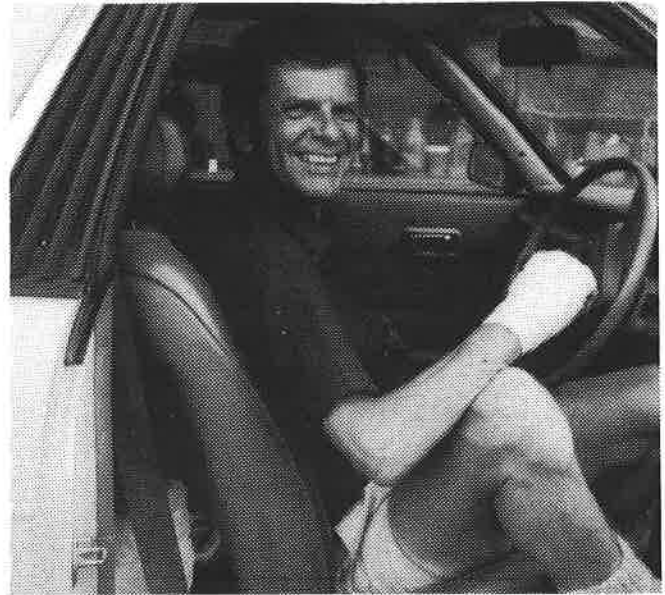
Peter Schweigman has missed only two of the Yellow-eyed penguin censuses since they were initiated by researcher John Darby in 1981. Both times with good reason - once because of a daughter's graduation and the other because of a daughter's wedding.

The census involves a team of watchers up and down the Otago and Southland coast all at the same times on the same days and is now held twice a year. It has proved an invaluable source of information on the status of penguin numbers throughout the years.

However it would not have been possible to continue it without the dedicated volunteer help of roster co-ordinators such as Jan O'Callaghan in the Catlins and Peter Schweigman for the Otago Peninsula area. Since the early 1980's Peter has spent many hours on the phone checking when people are available then matching them up according to their level of fitness with a particular location. Another phone call confirms their final availability and he posts out the census sheets. Where recorders are new he has to match with more experienced people to train them and he has been known to take them out the week before and train them himself to ensure the standards remain uniform. Then there are always the nail biting last minute changes as rostered people fall sick, or find they have another engagement.

Peter speaks with pleasure and enthusiasm of the sights he has been privileged to see as a penguin census watcher. The Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust considers we have been privileged to have the benefit of Peter's superb organisational ability, rostering over a hundred people through the years, in order to ensure the census data reflects the true

status of the penguin.



Peter Schweigman

Fighting Fire with Explosives

In February 1995 at least 54 penguins were killed at Te Rere by a devastating fire. The Forest and Bird Society's Te Rere Reserve is on the southeast coast of the South Island and was treasured for its original Rata and Kamahi forest, most of which was burnt.

Three years later, the penguins are looking good. Last season 27 nests were found by field workers. The colony appears to be making a steady recovery with 3 additional nests counted in each of the last two seasons. Large numbers of juveniles reflect the success of previous breeding seasons. However, there may be a shortage of nest sites in the heavily burned west end and perhaps because of this, there has been more activity in the older planted flax areas.

People are busy replanting flaxes that were destroyed in the fire. This year they successfully trialled a new, unorthodox method devised by Alan Mark. Usually volunteers manually split mature flax bushes to produce mini-plants that can be replanted. This time they planted explosives under the flaxes first, and split the bushes into manageable sizes the easy way.

For two years a caretaker has been working at the reserve. Each month he stocks 30 bait stations with anti-coagulant poison, about two cupsfull per station. Most of the stations are emptied by hungry possums and the plants are left alone to grow.

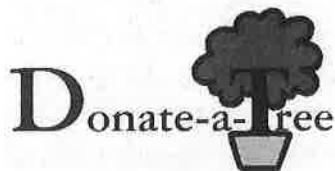
A recent workday was followed by a function in the local hall celebrating Forest and Bird's 75th Anniversary and 20 years of penguin conservation work at Te Rere. Congratulations Forest and Bird, on your tenacity.

Your Chance

Would you like to become more involved in the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust? Each year trustees are elected from the membership base. Trustees meet monthly in Dunedin and govern the organisation. They are elected at the Annual General Meeting which is scheduled for 7.30 pm on Tuesday 1 December. At the time of going to print, the venue had not been finalised so please ring the Trust office, 479-0011. Any members are more than welcome to attend the AGM, whether or not they are interested in standing for election.

Welcome to Tree Donors

With the May newsletter we enclosed a brochure inviting you to become a member of our new Donate-a-Tree scheme. Thank you very much to those who did. We now have 35 tree donors who make regular automatic payments. Tree donors have chosen to donate anything between \$5 per month to \$30 per month. A lot of people chose to make a single donation or indicated an extra donation on their subscription renewal form was for trees.



and give this penguin chick a home

These donations have totalled over \$13,000 to date.

At \$3 per tree there are going to be a lot of future trees for penguins. Thank you again. If you are interested in joining the scheme by setting up an automatic payment please contact us for a copy of the brochure illustrated. Tree donations sent when receiving subscriptions are also very much appreciated.

Annual Accounts

Speaking of trees, we'd like to save some. Instead of sending a copy of our annual accounts to all Trust members, we will send one to you on request.

Office Hours

The Trust's office is open from 1.00 to 4.00 pm every week day. It is on the 3rd floor of the Queens Building, 109 Princes Street, Dunedin.

Mail Order Penguins

Well, not quite....penguin books, key rings, pens and videos can be ordered on the forms enclosed.

For each video purchased, Natural History New Zealand Limited will donate \$10 to the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust, so you can make someone's Christmas present a present to the Trust too.

Thanks

Mainland Products Ltd	The 100 tree planters
Canon Copiers	Oamaru Licensing Trust
Cooke Howlison Toyota	SPCA
Community Trust Grants	Ansett NZ
Fulton Hogan	Taylor Purification
José Derraik	Kyle Begg
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Dave Houston	Graeme Youngman
John Hodgkins	Dave Asquith
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