

Pohatu penguins' Newsletter - December 2020

Summer is here!

With the days getting longer and with some very hot day already since November we are definitely into Summer ... This feel a bit strange right now as, unlike the previous years, Akaroa is still pretty quiet without international tourism. But once the school holiday will kick in next week, we know Akaroa will become very animated, beaches, cafes, restaurants full of families enjoying their favourite holiday destination: the beautiful peninsula that we - Pohatu Penguins team along with some other 700 people - are lucky enough to enjoy all year long 😊



Pohatu bay, located about 30 mins rugged drive over the hill from Akaroa township, seems always exempt from the Xmas holiday agitation. A good place to enjoy for those in need of slowing down and of getting away from technology's harassment :D

Breeding season in full swing

Since our last newsletter (when we were just discovering eggs in nests) many eggs have hatched, chicks grown and most of them have already left the nest! A few late breeders are still rearing their young chicks and our little blue female, after raising successfully a first clutch of 2 healthy chicks - *see photo below* - is now looking with her partner after the second clutch (chicks about 3 weeks old as I write this letter). This is always very rewarding to witness the pretty short penguin breeding cycle: 38 days in average of egg incubation, 8 weeks of chick rearing... and off they go!!

During the monitoring of the nests, we do sometimes take photos for education purposes. I have made a compilation of the best photos of our breeding season 2020 just for you to enjoy.



Left: Which came first: the penguin or the egg? Not always easy to spot the eggs as usually they are well hidden under parents' belly. There is actually a 2nd egg in this nest that we can't see.

Right: 7 weeks later in the same nest: 2 beautiful white-flipped chicks about to fledge.

There is still a bit a

baby down left on the neck, once all the down is replaced by mature feathers, the chicks are ready to leave the nest.





Hard to not fall in love with these little cuties: 3 weeks old (Left) and 5 weeks old chicks (Right).



Left: The 2 little blue penguin chicks (first clutch) were the first of the season to fledge early October

Below: Chicks almost ready to leave the nest to enjoy life in the big blue backyard. We wish them well for their big O.E!



Rehabilitation

As you probably know - *if you came on a tour with us or if you read our blog "Rehabilitated penguins"* – Pohatu Penguins holds a licence to rehabilitate penguins in need. Our main work is to pick up critical situation in the nest or sometimes outside the nest (on the rocks, at sea, around the penguin habitat) then to feed the starved penguins until they are healthy or mature enough to be released at sea.

During the last breeding season (2019-2020) we had a total of 40 Little penguins in care (34 chicks and 6 moulters) brought in rehab' in starved condition or chicks lost out of their nest. All penguins were released successfully at sea! This season, so far, we haven't had many penguins to rescue which is a very good sign. However breeding

season isn't finish and usually the penguins in need are the chicks of the late breeders, so we are keeping a close eye for any suspect situation.

Two chicks about to fledge were found in the nest with a lump on their back. The lump is very likely due to a stoat attack in the nest that led to an infection of the wound. The 2 chicks were sent to a Vet at the Wildlife hospital in Christchurch to treat the lump. They are now enjoying a 5 stars quality care with our friends Kristina and Thomas in Christchurch (*see photo on the right*). They will be brought back to Pohatu once they are healed to be released at sea.



Two young chicks - from two different nesting boxes - were found with a growth delay compare to their sibling. This can happen when parents struggle to find food at sea, then they concentrate on raising only one chick or sometimes one chick might just be a bit



greedier (*see photo on the right*)! This means the smaller chick (*see photo on the left*) isn't likely to survive due to a lack of food. Both "small chicks" are now being looked after by Kristina and Thomas as well. Due to their young age these chicks needed complete attention. We are looking forward to their return to Pohatu to be released when the time comes...



Left: *The neighbour nesting box with the same situation than above, a healthy chick (at the back) and a thinner chick (at the front) before being brought in care*

Predator control

During Spring and Summer our predator control work intensifies as this is also the season when penguin predators like stoats breed and produce litters of more potential threats for our native wildlife. Jessica Helps our dedicated trapper has had successful catches lately. Each trap line is checked and rebaited once a week.



Left: Jessica is about to place a new trap



Right: Mayonnaise as a bait for rats or stoats is a favourite!

A much needed help: Thank you *Bunnings*!

In Spring we had the visit of a team from *Bunnings* (a retailer of building, home, garden supplies - *for those who don't know*) who kindly provided equipment and material to build penguin nesting boxes and predator traps and helped building them as well!

It all started from a conversation between Averil from *Pohatu Penguins* and Jack a *Bunnings* employee one day while Averil was collecting some timber for our conservation projects. Jack found it was a fantastic project so he talked to his manager and here they were a few weeks later helping out and enjoying a great day out in the bay!

(See photos below)



Meeting the sheep



Jack - the man who got this idea started



Under construction - making DoC 200 trap boxes



Completed traps and penguin nesting boxes



Getting ready to place nesting boxes



A well deserved cooling off on the beach at Flea Bay

Go TEAM BUNNINGS !

Horomaka Korora 2020: The big Little Penguin survey

In our last Newsletter we announced this exciting project of the season!

Since the 1st of November we have crawled up steep hills and under bushes and stinging nettles, nostrils and eyes wide open to find Little penguin burrows. We were joined and supported by numerous volunteers ready to take up the challenge.



Above: This is where the love of penguins can lead you to...



Above: From the top of the hill to the sea

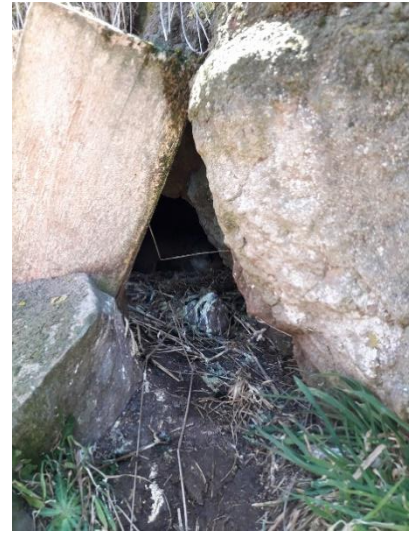


We became experts in tracking penguin's poo trails. You wouldn't believe how far and how high from the sea these tenacious Little penguins travel to create their nest... 208 meters high on the hill was the highest nest recorded!!

Left: A well-deserved rest half way through the day...



Earth burrow, rock burrow, root burrow, under buildings... we found nests in every possible corner of the places we were surveying.



Left: A multiple entrance earth burrow

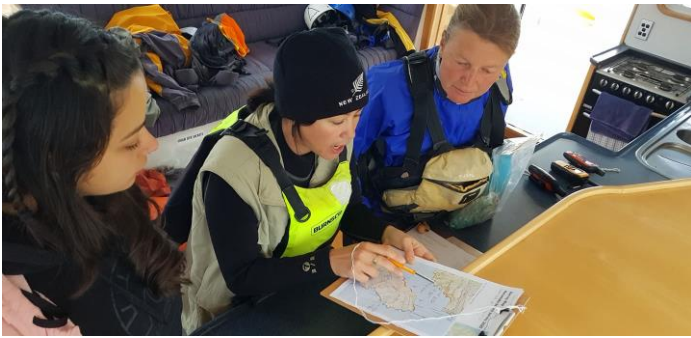


Right: Penguin Highway: penguin's claws leave marks on the rocks they climb



Even the local schools took part in the survey and got inspired for some cool penguin beach art at the end of the day...





Most of the surveying sites could be accessed only by boat and kayak. Those days were pretty intense and challenging. Especially when you have to avoid seal colonies... not even talking about the sea sickness for the observer staying on the boat!

A huge thank you to *Black Cat Cruises* and *Akaroa Dolphins* for lending us boat, skipper and time to access those places.



Pop-Up penguin trail



Another exciting event is the arrival, a couple of weeks ago, of many colourful penguins in Christchurch city and on Banks Peninsula. Over 100 of them have just popped up one day and they are now spread everywhere!

This is what happen when you raise awareness through art. The penguins highlight themes like climate change, community, Antarctica, creativity, innovation and exploration.

Visit <https://popuppenguins.co.nz/> to find out more...





Pohatu Penguins is very proud to have sponsored – collectively with 5 other local businesses – Akaroa’s very own penguin decorated by local artist Katrina Perano. “One fish” is majestically standing near Akaroa beach on the main road. If you want to find out more about Akaroa’s penguin statue Click on the link: <https://popuppenguins.co.nz/penguins/one-fish/>



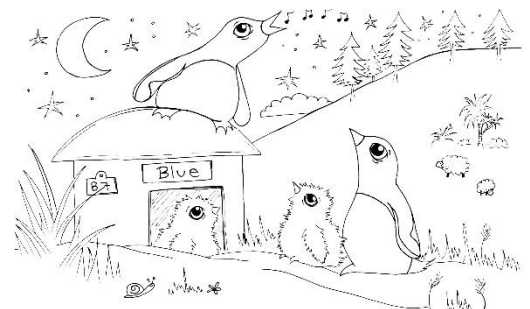
Two local schools – Akaroa Area School and Duvauchelle School – have also decorated their own penguin (*Right*).

We are amazed how much creativity there is in those little minds...



Thank you from the bottom of our heart and Happy Xmas!

Lately we have seen several adoptions and donations coming through our “Adopt a Penguin” program. Whether you came on a tour and got inspired by our mission to help penguins, heard about us and wanted to contribute or were after a meaningful present for a loved one... we would like – on the behalf of the penguins – to say a huge **THANK YOU!** This makes an enormous difference in the penguin world...



With your generous donations, penguins will be protected from predators, find new homes to breed or moult in, get healed and fed at times they might struggle. *Helps Pohatu Conservation Trust* also carries on sponsoring wonderful people with bright minds studying penguin’s behaviour, diseases, foraging area...

Left: Names ready to be fixed on penguins’ home

Above/Right: Averil has designed a very cute and original colouring book. The sale goes straight to penguin’s conservation. Sold at our booking office, shipping to you possible too...

Visit our website www.pohatu.co.nz

Follow us on



“A Very Happy Xmas to everyone from the Pohatu Penguins crew!!”