

THE GREAT LITTLE PENGUIN COUNT

The wonderfully tenacious little blue penguins are counted in Pohatu/Flea Bay every four years. This whole colony count takes two weeks as these little penguins climb to the ridgeline, up bluffs, under scrub, through stinging nettles and amongst logs to make their nests.

The Great Penguin Count started in 2000 with 717 pairs of penguins counted. Each year the penguin pairs have increased by a remarkable five percent. In 2012 we counted 1304 pairs of penguins, with an annual 5% increase. Now the population looks to have leveled off with 1250 pair counted. Predator control in other Wildside bays has allowed penguins to start to explore old and unused nest sites. This appears to be happening in Otanerito where new nests have been found in burrows unused for at least 15-20 years.



White-flipped little blue penguin nesting in a Ngaio tree in Flea Bay.

FEEDBACK – TRAP DATA, SPECIES SUCCESS STORY

The Predator Free NZ 2050 announcement has drawn a lot of attention lately to predator control. The Wildside has had trapping for over 25 years and we have seen the results that the removal of predators (and the protection of habitat) brings about for species such as

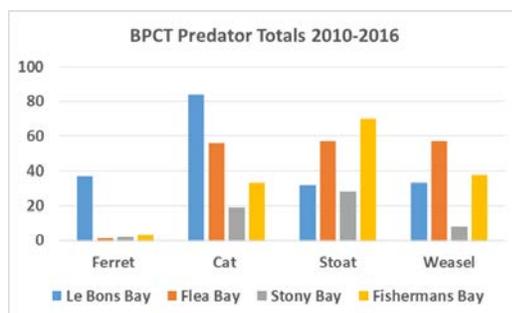


Figure 1 BPCT trap data from John Stuart.

Over the past six years alone we have caught over 190 cats and 190 stoats. Imagine what would be left of our native wildlife if these tenacious predators had not been removed.

Possoms are not included on this graph as in Hinewai alone at least 18,000 possums have been removed. There is ongoing control at Misty Peaks CCC Reserve, DOC Reserves, BPCT trapping and private landowners are also controlling possums and on the Wildside the Banks Peninsula Pest Liaison Committee has reduced possums down to one percent.

YELLOW EYED PENGUIN

The 2016 yellow-eyed penguin nest count found four nests. In past years we have counted six nests, and in the 1980's numbers peaked at ten. The monitoring team has been revisiting nests recently and counted seven hatched chicks, one chick has subsequently died. One juvenile penguin was found entangled in vines and died of kidney failure due to starvation and heat stress. Another chick has been in care with the Christchurch Penguin Rehabilitation team, it was found with a wound to the beak and has since been re-released.

On a very positive note several juvenile YEP's have been found around the Wildside coast this summer which we have not seen for several years, one has come up from Otago while another was raised on the Wildside last summer. The team will now be keeping a close eye on the penguins as they head towards fledging and as the adults and juveniles go into moult, ensuring that the penguins are a healthy weight to survive the pressures out at sea. We encourage as little disturbance to the YEP's as possible as they are under immense pressure on the mainland from human disturbance.

FRESHWATER PROTECTION – LEADING THE WAY

With much national attention on the state of New Zealand's freshwater and clean green image, the landowners on the Wildside can be proud of their



An Immediate Steps-funded fence on the Wildside, excluding stock to protect the waterway and biodiversity.



Young yellow-eyed penguin chick.



A stoat in a DOC200 kill trap.

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efforts to lead the way. We already have the first summit to sea covenant through farmland in the country. Following from this fine example we have another farming family covenanting their land to protect their rich freshwater biodiversity from summit to sea!

In Onuku work is already well underway to exclude stock from most of the catchment. Several Le Bons Bay landowners have much of their streams protected. In Paua Bay, BPCT covenants will soon protect most of the stream course and stock exclusion has been completed or is underway in much of the upper reaches of Goughs Bay. Most of this funding has come through Environment Canterbury's Banks Peninsula Zone Committee. The landowners that actively undertake this work are to be applauded.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

The Wildside is now starting to gain much local and national attention in acknowledgement of the years of hard work by this extraordinary community.

The Wildside Project was nominated for the 2016 Aoraki Conservation Board Biodiversity Award and was announced as a finalist at an event in Christchurch in October. The winner of the category was the Arthur's Pass Wildlife Trust.

In December the '[mission to count tenacious penguins](#)' was on the TVNZ news showing how difficult but also how rewarding our jobs can be.

While our expert penguin careers at [Christchurch Penguin Rehabilitation](#) have an excellent video on Stuff showing the planning and love they put into getting our rescued birds back to health.

ZOOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

The Wildlife Disease Association of Australia and The Wildside Society of New Zealand was forced to move its conference from Kaikoura to Christchurch and Marie Haley was invited to fill in as a local conservation group speaker. Predator control was a hot topic at the conference and Marie highlighted the quiet successes of the Wildside and the results that come from dedicated and inspired landowners. As the audience was largely vets or ecologists, the plight of the yellow-eyed penguins as a species was reiterated. The status of the Sub-Antarctic populations is unknown and research into diseases and fishery threats are needed.

BPCT VISION LAUNCH

The Banks Peninsula Conservation Trust has launched its vision document outlining eight goals for conservation on Banks Peninsula. Many of these goals are being led by the Wildside community. Goal 4: 'Four core indigenous forest areas of more than 1000ha each have been protected' having already been achieved. Goal 8 is 'Banks Peninsula is effectively free of pest animals'. You can download a copy at [2050 Ecological Vision for Banks Peninsula](#), pick up a copy from our Tai Tapu office or watch the [video here](#).

Acknowledgements

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