



# Hoiho

May 2014

[www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz](http://www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz)

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## Two poor breeding seasons



YEPT General Manager, Sue Murray (right), presents Penguin Place Manager, Lisa King, with a cheque to help with the penguin chicks' rehabilitation.

The last two yellow-eyed penguin breeding seasons have involved the Trust in a major mortality event and a subsequent very poor breeding season. Field Manager, David McFarlane's March report is worth quoting: "After the mass mortality of adult yellow-eyed penguins on the Otago Peninsula in January – February 2013, we had hoped for a successful breeding season throughout the mainland range of the bird, but unfortunately this was not to be.

"Following an unusually extended and late egg laying period, indications of trouble appeared at transpondering time in mid- to late-January, when the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust marks fledging chicks at its reserves with microchips. Many chicks were still

small and down-covered, while others although older were lightweight and did not have a sufficient fat roll to safely inject the transponder.

"At the Trust's Long Point/Irahuka Reserve, the monitoring results say it all; while a similar number of eggs hatched – 77 compared with 80 in 2012-2013 season. The average weight was 3.9kg, down from 4.95 the previous year.

"In total 26 chicks were removed from the Long Point Reserve for rehabilitation by Lisa King and her staff at Penguin Place on Otago Peninsula, where the facilities were strained to the limit coping with between 60-70 chicks. Chicks are fed morning and night and consume about a kilo of fish a day.

“The continued survival of yellow-eyed penguins on the south-east coast of the South Island may very well be in question if the birds continue to suffer such poor breeding seasons and unexplained occurrences like the adult mortality event”

YEPT Field Manager, David McFarlane

"It is hoped most of the chicks under care will be released in the next month.

"Removal from the wild both offers the chicks a chance of survival as well as freeing-up the parents from feeding duties. This enables the adults to forage and build up their own energy reserves for the moult, which is currently underway.

"Unlike the previous adult mortality event which was confined to the Otago Peninsula, the experience at Long Point was reflected up and down the coast, with the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust's Okia and Otapahi Reserves on Otago Peninsula having their worst season for 15 years or more.

Continued on page 2 >>

"As to the cause there is a lot of conjecture but little hard evidence, with more research urgently needed to identify the factors in the marine environment causing the reduction in food availability.

"The continued survival of yellow-eyed penguins on the south-east coast of the South Island may very well be in question if the birds continue to suffer such poor breeding seasons and unexplained occurrences like the adult mortality event."



*A healthy, preening chick*



*An example of an underweight chick showing the protruding breastbone*

## Coming up...

### Thursday 5 June

Arbor Day / World Environment Day tree planting at Okia Reserve, Otago Peninsula. Meet at the Dick Road carpark at 9:30am. Bring your own spade, warm clothes, food and drink.

### Sunday 6 July

Planting day at Tavora Reserve, East Otago. Meet at the carpark, Goodwood Road at 10am. Bring your own spade, warm clothes, food and drink.

### Thursday 31 July

International World Ranger Day. See the flyer with this newsletter.

### Saturday 2 August

Annual Yellow-eyed Penguin Symposium, watch the website for details.

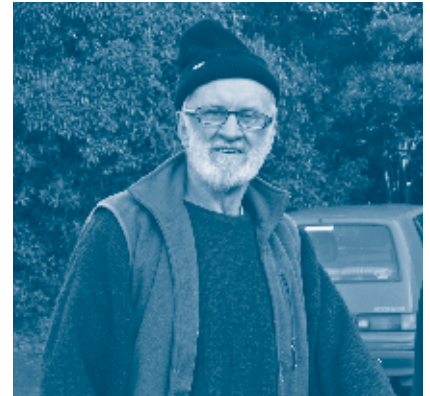
# Farewell to two friends

Since the last edition of Hoiho the Trust has farewelled two friends – supporters of the Trust who contributed hugely to our work with their respective roles.



*Marian at Long Point enjoying a refreshment break*

**Marian van der Goes**, who served as DOC's Community Relations Manager and then as Conservator, passed away in December 2013. Marian's contribution to the Trust will be remembered in many ways, but an enduring legacy will be her support to the Trust through difficult land negotiations (2006 – 2009) which resulted in the purchase of Long Point / Irahuka Reserve in the Catlins. Marian had the ability to make us feel like her 'best friend' while remaining professional in her communications. The Trust, along with her family, is planning to plant an area of native trees at Long Point in the near future.



*Bill at his work bench making pegs and cages*

**Bill Wilson**, a valued volunteer at the Nursery and our master peg and cage maker, passed away in March. He and his wife Diana have assisted weekly since 2000 with every aspect of Nursery, habitat and office tasks.

Bill's legacy will be the 10,000+ plants protected from predators that will one day be coastal forest for the penguins. He will be greatly missed not only for the work undertaken but the laughs and conversations with staff, volunteers and trustees.

# New Ranger for the Trust



The Trust welcomes their newly appointed Ranger, **Aviva Stein**, to assist with both the habitat work and plant propagation at the Trust Nursery.

The Trust was heartened by the response to the advertised position, receiving more than 50 applications. It was fantastic to see such wide and varied interest from people wishing to get involved with our organisation and the work to help save the penguin.

We were thrilled to appoint Aviva for the position. Aviva has a strong background and knowledge of yellow-eyed penguins,

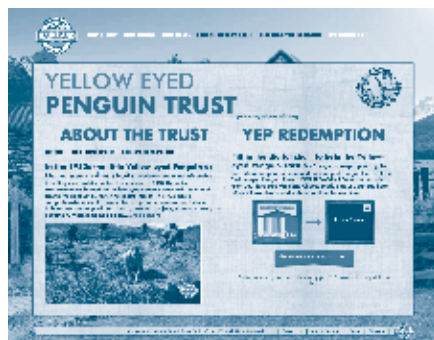
having completed her Master of Science in Wildlife Management in 2012 with a thesis based on the reproductive success of yellow-eyed penguins and the influence of life-history parameters and investigator disturbance.

She has also been a volunteer to both the Trust and the Department of Conservation for the last five breeding seasons, helping out with many aspects of the yellow-eyed penguin monitoring programme at a variety of locations, including the sub-antarctic Auckland Islands. Aviva also has extensive plant knowledge from other roles she has undertaken either paid or voluntary and will therefore be a great asset to the Nursery team.



# Mainland update

Proving that *Good Things Take Time*, Mainland has finally caught up with many other companies and brands and has moved its yellow-eyed penguin barcode collection to be primarily digital. This means that consumers can enter their barcodes into our website ([www.mainland.co.nz/yellow-eyed-penguin-digital-chart/](http://www.mainland.co.nz/yellow-eyed-penguin-digital-chart/)) and create a digital chart, without the need for saving the cheese and butter wrappers and posting them in.



However this has created a few issues for those of us who do not have access to computers. Rest assured, you can still send them in to Save the Yellow-eyed Penguin (Mainland), PO Box 5409, Dunedin 9058 and they will be manually uploaded by a wonderful volunteer.

If you wish, you can also print a chart from our website to stick them on and send in. Either way, by collecting the barcodes and sending them in or entering them online, you are still contributing to saving the yellow-eyed penguin.

In addition, Mainland has also recently launched a Facebook page (Mainland NZ) where you are able to come and share comments, ideas, recipes, stories, thoughts about Mainland, cheese, yellow-eyed penguins or anything you feel relevant. We run competitions to win our cheese from time to time too. So if you are on Facebook look us up. We are planning to use the fan base we have built on this page to educate further around the life and trials of the yellow-eyed penguin and highlight the plight of this bird to a wider audience. As you can see, the yellow-eyed penguin drives lots of engagement with our Facebook fans.

For more information about Mainland products, recipes or how you can help us raise funds for the yellow-eyed penguin, visit [www.mainland.co.nz](http://www.mainland.co.nz).

The Mainland team  
0800 CHEESE (0800-243-373)



## What's happening IN THE COMMUNITY

# Trust's joint planting day

The Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust and Sinclair Wetlands Trust (SWT) recently held a planting day at the Sinclair Wetlands on the Taieri Plain, south of Dunedin.

Our Trust donated about 200 plants to help revegetate a grassy area at the beginning of the wetland's walkway.

The collaboration came about following the SWT's coordinator Glen Riley assisting the Trust with its penguin monitoring last season and YEPT wanting to reciprocate with assistance. The opportunity to do this is an example of how conservation agencies could further progress conservation effort by practical assistance and sharing of skills.



Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust Field Manager, Dave McFarlane (left), and Sinclair Wetlands Trust co-ordinator, Glen Riley, and volunteers dig in plants at the wetlands.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ODT

# Weird and wacky

## A ripe old age



When the Trust's Ranger, Leith Thomson researched the band of a moulting penguin 'J10001', he was surprised to find this bird was 25+ years old.

Originally banded by the Department of Conservation in 1989, the bird has successfully bred at the Trust's Tavora Reserve from 1995. It was last known to breed in 2011 when it successfully raised two chicks. It is believed to be one of only three banded yellow-eyed penguins to reach that age and the only one still alive.

Leith uploaded the photo and story onto the Trust's Facebook page and within days it had gone viral, catching the interest of followers on both Facebook and Twitter.

After two difficult breeding seasons it has been a boost to find such a senior bird still surviving.



*These Auckland Island yeps are on a mission*

## Cross-billed chicks

Chicks are sometimes found to develop with mild deformities of their skull and/or bills. Although an abnormality such as a crossed or scissor bill can be fairly mild, the deformity would prevent a bird from foraging properly as it grows into an adult. They are unlikely to survive once they have left the nest. Watch out for the full story about rehabilitation of some chicks during the 2013/14 breeding season in the next edition of Hoiho, written by Serena Finlayson of Wildbase (Massey University).



A Dunedin company added a special touch to a private purchase – check out The Dunedin Cupcake Company [www.dunedincupcake.co.nz](http://www.dunedincupcake.co.nz)



*More metro than Cory Jane – a juvenile yep before the yellow banding develops on its head*



# penguins



*Bad haircut day! This yellow-eyed penguin is in the final stages of its moult*



*"Come here little stoat. I have a surprise for you in this box"*

## Gulls picking on penguins

Californian Victoria Alba is a recent arrival in Dunedin and was fortunate (or unfortunate enough) to witness some interesting behaviour by black-backed gulls towards yellow-eyed penguin chicks.

On two occasions, at Katiki Point (2 February) and Curio Bay (Waitangi Day), Victoria and her husband observed black-backed gulls harassing and menacing yellow-eyed penguin chicks. As she commented: "Penguin watchers at Curio Bay were riveted by the drama of the adult penguin protecting its chicks from the gull"

In one case the adult led the chicks into the water in an attempt to escape the attentions of the gull.

Dunedin ornithologist Derek Onley reports having also observed both black-backed and red-billed gulls behaving in such a manner towards yellow-eyed penguins, and comments that it is most likely a case of the gulls trying to intercept food the parents were bringing in for the chicks.

So probably more the case of gulls behaving naturally rather than badly!



## Summary of yellow-eyed penguin reproductive success at Trust reserves

Observation	Period	Tavora	Okia	Otapahi	Long Point	Cosgrove Creek
No. of nests	2013-14	3	6	7	48	11
	2012-13	2	15	20	53	11
No. of chicks fledged	2013-14	6	3	7	60	10
	2012-13	4	17	22	71	18
Average weight of chicks fledged (kg)	2013-14	5.0	4.35	4.15	3.99	4.55
	2012-13	5.3	5.01	4.88	4.95	5.13
Chicks fledged per nest	2013-14	2.0	0.5	1.0	1.25	0.9
	2012-13	2.0	1.13	1.1	1.34	1.63



*Who's that knocking on my door?*

# Auckland Islands escapade

**By Luke Gardener, Emerging Leader Trustee**

When Sue (YEPT General Manager) rang me in November last year to ask if I was free to visit Enderby Island as part of a YEPT survey, she didn't even manage to finish the sentence before I had said yes. Two weeks later I found myself on the yacht *Tiama*, heading south with great excitement. Alas, the journey itself was a bit of an ordeal and I succumbed to sea sickness the minute the yacht left Bluff Harbour.

We arrived in Sandy Bay on Enderby Island two days later and, for the first time in over forty hours, the boat wasn't rocking. We had a load of equipment and provisions to get onto the beach, including a door; all of which had to be transported in a small zodiac and then carried haphazardly over a beach of sea lions to the hut. It is a slightly unnerving experience trying to carry a heavy door through a beach of male sea lions weighing upwards of 450kg, especially when they decide you look interesting!

The penguin work began as soon as we had stowed away the provisions. Our first tasks were to replace the batteries in a number of nest cameras and download the images. Dave (Dave Houston, team leader on the island) took us on a route straight through

the thick bush – it later turned out that two of the cameras were on either side of a marked track. He pleaded his innocence when this became apparent, however; there was something about the way he said it that suggested the route was chosen to test the 'new guy' and that he knew all along the track went straight past the cameras.

The next day we had an early start, 4am. We planned to do a beach count to get an idea of how many yeps were in the area we were surveying. Watching more than 40 yellow-eyed penguins meander down to the sea is a pretty special experience considering that such a sight on the Otago Peninsula is just a memory following the mass mortality events. This was only the first of many beach counts so the next morning I went back to the same exposed spot above a bluff, to enjoy the penguins but also gale force winds, hail and rain. Dave 'had' to do a beach count of the main beach at Sandy Bay. Conveniently for him, this meant that he got to stay in the hut, where it was warm and not hailing. It was only day two and I was becoming increasingly suspicious of the things Dave 'had' to do.

Our other main task as part of yep monitoring work was to re-find the nests the October survey team had found. This would enable us to monitor the success, or

otherwise, of the breeding season. While understanding that being a yep ranger sometimes involves having to clamber into large clumps of stinging nettle to examine nests, I had never really understood just what hard work yep monitoring is. Finding nests involves following penguin trails from beach landing sites for hundreds of metres through, frankly, some of the worst bush I've ever had to venture into. We would be "army crawling" through bush that was so thick it was impossible to crawl with a backpack on. Instead, I ended up having to drag my bag behind me. I have a new found respect for the work that Leith and Dave (YEPT Ranger & Field Manger respectively) do on the Trust's behalf. Over three days we found all of the nests that previous groups had found, as well as locating a few more. Although we found a large number of nests with thriving chicks, there almost seemed to be an equal number that had failed, suggesting that it was not a good season for yeps on Enderby either.

On our second to last night on the island we were given a very rude awakening. At one in the morning I awoke to a very loud 'thwump' outside the bunk room. Thinking I may have been imagining it, I tried to get back to sleep, but was interrupted by very loud shuffling noises combined with large crashes



every couple of seconds. Opening my door, I discovered a large sea lion, which had somehow managed to clamber over the two feet high sea lion exclusion barrier. Of course, while it was able to get over the barrier, it was not willing to clamber back. Dave ended up chasing it out of the newly constructed hut fire escape, which we can now safely confirm will work in emergencies if it is able to support a 300kg+ male sea lion.

The end of the trip came very quickly and we soon found ourselves having to pack up for the journey home. Unfortunately, the bad weather had caused the once calm Sandy Bay to become quite rough and our loading site was unusable. Instead, we had to carry all of our heavy gear 300m along the beach to a more suitable point. Racing darkness, and sea lions, we managed to get all of our gear onto the boat just as darkness fell. Shooting

across the bay in the zodiac in semi darkness, with a number of our possessions thrown haphazardly into the boat is one of my most memorable and exciting moments of the trip, though I'm not sure Hank, the Skipper, was enjoying the experience as much as I was.

We sailed back to Bluff in record time, and better yet, I was even able to enjoy the ride without becoming seasick! It was an awesome adventure, and we got a lot of important yellow-eyed penguin work done, Cheers Sue for the phone call!



## Codfish Island/Whenua Hou breeding season

Sandy King (contractor), and volunteers Sarah McCallum (Massey vet student) and Jen Lowther (Southern Institute of Technology student) visited the island between 24th-29th January 2014 to assess the breeding season, and catch, weigh and insert transponders into the chicks. All 37 nests found in November 2013 were revisited.

Of the 71 eggs that had been laid, 67 had hatched successfully, but only 29 chicks were found, indicating that 38 chicks had died

since hatching. One of the chicks avoided capture by running into dense undergrowth and low scrub, but it appeared large and healthy, and is considered likely to have fledged. The remaining 28 chicks were caught, weighed, and transpondered. Chick weights ranged from 4.15-6.25kg, with an average weight of 5.02kg.

Assuming that all 29 chicks fledged, the productivity on Codfish Island / Whenua Hou for 2014 is 0.78 chicks/nest, down from

0.89 chicks/nest in 2013. Overall the island's results are very disappointing and do little to relieve the general impression that the 2013/14 breeding season was little short of disastrous.

Thanks to Sarah and Jen for their help in the field, and to DOC staff in Invercargill and on the island for their help and hospitality.

(Codfish Island/Whenua Hou is located off the north-west tip of Stewart Island/Rakiura).



## Leave something in penguin paradise

Please remember the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust in your Will. Your bequest can be invested in restoring penguin habitats and controlling predators to help secure the hoihos' survival.

Charities Commission Registration Number CC22822



## A note from the Chair

As always, everyone has been busy working on producing conservation outcomes by applying conservation effort. That is today's way of describing what we do, otherwise known as saving penguins and coastal habitat.

I mention this because we have just recently submitted a major funding application to the Department of Conservation's new fund, the Community Conservation Partnerships Fund. The name and purpose of this fund reflects DOC's new look and priorities, with NGOs like ours being encouraged to take on more responsibilities.

One implication of change is that, to keep up our profile, staff need to travel more frequently and be seen close to where the decisions affecting our functioning are made. Essential travel is one demand on our operating budget and, along with all sorts of other demands, has resulted this year again in our dipping into capital reserves, a trend that must soon be reversed.

It was pleasing to be given \$1500 from Holiday Parks Association of New Zealand, resulting from their sales of Ecowai water. Of course Mainland continues to be our founding sponsor, over the years having contributed more than \$1 million, enough to run the essential parts of the organisation.

This year, for the first time ever, we have a full complement of 15 trustees and this has allowed us to fulfill our governance functions more effectively, drawing on the wider range of skills now available. The website has the details of who's who, as well as information about what is going on around the traps, literally.

Our March Annual Meeting received good local press coverage and the Annual Report is on the website. All-in-all it has been a very exciting few months, with more to come, keeping YEPT at the forefront of penguin conservation.

**Eric J. Shelton**

**Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust Board Chair**



*The Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust has traditionally focused its work on increasing penguin numbers by protecting them and their habitats on land. However, it was becoming increasingly apparent that what happens to the penguins at sea needs to be better understood. It's a big turning point in penguin conservation. See the home page at [www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz](http://www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz)*

### Thank you to our regular supporters:

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DOC Biodiversity Advice Fund  
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Otago Community Trust  
Otago Peninsula Trust  
Penguin Fund of Japan

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Scenic Hotel Dunedin City  
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### Special thanks this issue to:

Ant Smith  
Bill Wilson memorial fund donations  
Crowe Horwath  
Delta  
Gail & Brian Loughrey  
Gilbert's Fine Food  
Penguin Place  
Roseanne Price  
Tony Stewart

### Thank you to:

All the landowners who have contributed to our habitat protection work.

### Thank you to all volunteers:

We are tremendously grateful to all the other volunteers, including the regular Nursery workers and the Habitat Volunteer Team for their valuable contributions to our work. Special thanks to the team at AdArt Brand Promotion for the design of this newsletter.

The *Hoiho* newsletter is printed on Royal Offset Hi-Brite paper which passes the green test.

2nd Floor, Conservation House  
77 Lower Stuart Street  
PO Box 5409  
Dunedin 9058, New Zealand

Phone +64 3 479-0011  
E-mail [yeptrust@gmail.com](mailto:yeptrust@gmail.com)  
Web [www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz](http://www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz)

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