



Hoiho

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Lockdown – what does it mean for hoiho?

Like many, little did YEPT staff know Friday 20 March would be our last 'normal' working day. The following week, as we went into Level 2, 3 then Level 4, a small team worked behind the scenes on getting us operational during this critical time when many of this year's breeding hoiho were mid-moult.

New Zealand escalated to Level 4 of the COVID-19 alert system as of 23:59 Wednesday 25 March 2020. How did this impact on hoiho?

The alert system placed restrictions on human contact, travel and business operations. At Level 4 people were instructed to stay home, travel was severely limited, and only essential services remained open.

A portion of YEPT's core work fell under the following essential businesses criteria:

"Primary industries, including food and beverage production and processing: Any entity whose closure would jeopardise the maintenance of animal health or welfare standards (including the short-term survival of a species)."

Consequently, our Rangers undertook core work in a reduced capacity and following strict, approved protocols. But what did that mean?

These restrictions were time-consuming, but vital to allow us the ability to work. Every movement of staff was recorded; vehicles were constantly sanitised and only a designated person was allowed to use a particular vehicle. The transportation cages were given additional sanitisation when the

day's trip was completed; and of course the schedules of both Penguin Place and Dunedin Wildlife Hospital (thank goodness they both also had the dispensation to remain operational!) had to be considered so no party broke the physical distancing or sanitisation rules. It may not sound like much, but it does add another layer of anxiety to an already difficult time as we strive to help this vulnerable species.

This core work was critical to ensure that hoiho survives into the future. March and April is a key time of the year for hoiho as they go through a 3-4 week moult.

Those birds that are not of sufficient weight would have starved to death during this time if we had not intervened and taken them to rehabilitation for supplementary feeding. Equally it was a time where the incidences of

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foot and flipper injuries are high and, again, birds may have died without treatment. Hoiho are in critically low numbers on the mainland now and any further deaths would pose an issue for the survival of this species.

The Rangers were present in the field on 19 days since lockdown on 25 March and, as of 23 April, had uplifted 24 hoiho and one erect-crested penguin. Without intervention, most of these underweight moulting birds would not have survived in the wild. The Rangers were also able to assist DOC by responding to any calls received on the Helpline about sick or injured birds.

We were delighted part way through the Level 4 lockdown when the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) updated the essential services list to include nursery operations and permit urgent maintenance and care for plants. Our Nursery staff were then able to check the stock; seedlings to ensure their survival and full-sized plants that will be ready for planting this season. Again, this was within very restricted capacity but it was great to see another aspect of our work up and running to some extent. Other office-based staff have been working from home on a variety of projects, and even the field-based staff have been roped into helping with some research projects on their stay-at-home days.

Overall, our team has managed the shift to working from home successfully and where possible, it is business as usual, even our staff meetings. The whole team meet successfully using video-conferencing – even holding a 'bring-an-Easter-egg-drinks' social at the end of one week.

But we are missing our volunteers! Volunteers help us at the nursery and in the field operations as well as transporting penguins, and this resource is such a huge help to staff fulfilling their tasks. So although we are not allowed to work with them at the moment, we can't wait until we can have them all back.

And what about Level 3? When New Zealand moved to Level 3 it allowed the Rangers to do more field operations such as habitat restoration work which did not come under the descriptive as an 'essential service'. Apart from that, little changed as



Underweight, post-moult hoiho

the office remained closed with other staff continuing to work from home.

We know that over this period, the environment globally has been a winner – smog has cleared revealing some wonders of the world, fish are again seen in rivers and streams, animals have been roaming urban streets, and birdlife has increased even in our own backyards. We need

to be innovative so that the environment can continue to benefit. We know that though terrible and absolutely tragic that COVID-19 is, scientists and other academics are warning that the harms from this virus are not nearly as bad as the long-term predicted harms from climate change. We must continue to invest in our 'blue backyard' and all its wonderful fauna and flora.

One innovative idea came from Environmental Defence Society CEO Gary Taylor who in their latest newsletter suggested "we should also look to emulate President Roosevelt's New Deal and create a civilian Conservation Corps. Large numbers of workers could assist the Department of Conservation to strengthen our green infrastructure by creating new tracks and facilities, tackling

pest and weed infestations, finally getting on top of wilding pines, replanting erosion-prone land in native forests and helping clean up old rubbish tips in danger from sea-level rise".

Let's all get thinking, get innovative, and get into action to continue to help both the endangered species and their habitats and our global environments.



Here's the YEPT team doing what the rest of the world was doing – looking good on Zoom

HOIHO 2019/20 SEASON UPDATE

Increased effort needed to sustain dwindling population

Only an estimated 168 pairs of hoiho bred in the South Island this season, in comparison to 227 breeding pairs last year.

A devastating decline was seen in the Catlins and the Bravo Islands on Stewart Island / Rakiura. Despite intensive searches last season, many breeding females in the Catlins were not sighted during moult. This season they did not return to breed and it is likely that they succumbed to starvation during the events that resulted in many birds in rehab last season. Fortunately, the same decline was not been observed on the Otago Peninsula or in North Otago.

Early chick rearing in North Otago and on the Otago Peninsula was dogged by disease. Diphtheritic stomatitis was again problematic, but this year the affected young chicks were treated in-situ with antibiotics under a special Veterinary

Operating Instruction from the Dunedin Wildlife Hospital. Treatment was successful in approximately 70% of cases and without intervention we are confident that survival of chicks would have been far lower.

Unfortunately, several young chicks also died after exhibiting laboured breathing, in particular at our Otapahi reserve. Post-mortems showed lung collapse and fluid build-up, but it is unclear what caused this respiratory distress syndrome.

Treatment was available at Dunedin Wildlife Hospital for the worst affected diphtheria and respiratory cases, which improved chick survival. Chicks that were successfully returned to the wild were ideally placed back with the parents, but if this could not occur (either because parents had not remained sitting on a dummy egg or were injured) fostering occurred. Fostering was a first this season for the Trust, but was seen

as preferable to a long stay in rehab until fledge. Fostering was successful at nests where foster parents had just lost a chick; or where adults were sitting on a dummy or failed egg; or at nests with one chick where a similar sized chick was added.

As with humans, foster parents need to be carefully chosen – potential parents must have a history of raising healthy chicks, be fantastic foragers, and both parents must be actively visiting a nest for a foster to proceed. Most foster chicks were willingly accepted straight away and all were carefully monitored to ensure success.

In comparison, breeding success was very low at places with limited intervention such as Whenua Hou and Rakiura. The Trust is seriously considering additional interventions at these locations next season. The concept of intervening in more remote locations was proven this year with the

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Nest stats for each of the YEPT-monitored sites

REGION	SITE	NESTS 2019-20	(2018-19)	EGGS	CHICKS HATCHED	CHICKS FLEDGED	CHICKS PER NEST
North Otago	Tavora	3	(2)	5	4	3	1.0
	Okia	3	(4)	6	5	3	1.0
Otago Peninsula	Otapahi	6	(8)	12	11	4	0.67
	Omihi	0	(0)	0	0	0	0
	Otekiho	0	(0)	0	0	0	0
	Allans Beach	0	(0)	0	0	0	0
	Kaikai	0	(0)	0	0	0	0
	Fuchsia Gully	2	(4)	4	4	2	1.0
	Dicks Bush	0	(0)	0	0	0	0
	Long Point/Irahuka	6	(16)	11 (1 shell-less)	8	8 (3 rehab)	1.3
Catlins	Cosgrove Creek	5	(10)	9	6	6 (3 rehab)	1.2
	Helena Falls	1	(3)	2	2	2	2.0
	Harts Rock	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Purakaunui	0	0	0	0	0	0
	The Neck	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stewart Island/ Rakiura: The Neck & Anglem Coast	Rollers	5	(5)	9	6	1	0.2
	Golden	6	(6)	11	9	0	0
	Tommy Island	2	(6)	4	4	2	1.0
Stewart Island/ Rakiura: Bravo Islands	Crayfish Island	1	(3)	2	2	0	0
	Goat Island	1	(2)	2	2	1	0.5
	Groper Island	4	(4)	7	7	2	0.5
	Refuge Island	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Penguin Bay	0	(2)	0	0	0	0
Whenua Hou/ Codfish Island	Sealers Bay	4	(4)	8	7	1	0.25
	Roderiques	0	(0)	0	0	0	0
	Northwest Bay	6	(7)	11	11	0	0
	Alphonse	2	(1)	4	4	0	0

Footnote: In addition, there were two foster chicks at Otapahi and one at Okia all from Boulder Beach). Included in this summary were two chicks from Otapahi (fostered at Pipikaretu), and a chick fostered at a different nest at Otapahi.

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Dr Trudi Webster, Science Advisor, weighs a chick to calculate antibiotic dosage for diphtheria treatment.

feeding of an orphaned fledgling on the Bravo Islands for 10 days with support from the local salmon farm and DOC.

Fewer chicks needed supplementary feeding this season, unlike during the starvation events last year. However a couple of chicks began to struggle at the end of fledge in the Catlins and were subsequently rehabbed for a short period before being soft released.

The moult was not as late as it was last year and rangers monitored progress carefully, uplifting any birds that were deemed to be too light. Unfortunately Covid-19 struck mid-way through the moult. Rangers were grounded for a couple of days while new plans were constructed in line with Government regulations. Rangers quickly got back to work, albeit under rigorous health and safety, and social distancing regulations, and uplifted just over twenty hoiho and an erect-crested penguin that were underweight. Penguins were supplementary fed at Penguin Place and released from a local beach in line with revised permit conditions to limit driving under COVID-19 Level 4.

It is likely that hoiho were helped by this season's cooler temperatures on land and the cooler sea surface temperatures. There was more food available than last season, as well as fewer issues with mosquitoes and overheating. On a happy note, no deaths were reported from malaria or unexplained mortality, which typically plague hoiho between January and March. What proved to be a poor summer for us humans was at least good for the penguins.

Irahuka Field Base opening



The Trusts' innovative and fully sustainable field base at Long Point / Irahuka was officially opened at a ceremony held on 15 February 2020.



John McCarroll, DOC Murihiku Operations Manager, made a pōwhiri and officially opened the field base



Eric Shelton (YEPT Board Chair) with Amanda Salt (YEPT Operations Manager)



It was a great turn-out on a "typically glorious day in the Catlins".



Bruce McKinlay (DOC), Cheryl Pullar (DOC) and Sarah Irvine (YEPT Ranger Catlins)



David McFarlane, YEPT's newly-appointed Long Point Project Manager



Bridget Tweed (Otago Community Trust) and Rebecca Hohnhold (DOC)



Catlins soft release

On 2 and 16 March, thirteen Catlins' hoiho chicks in rehab at Penguin Place, Dunedin were deemed ready for release, back in the Catlins. Now, this is quite a logistical feat.

It involves Penguin Place staff starting very early in the morning to prepare the birds for collection by YEPT rangers. After a two hour journey by road, each hoiho is offloaded and the cage transferred to a human, for a careful foot-journey to the previously prepared soft release pens. Each hoiho is then health-checked, rehydrated and released in the pens. Soft release enables the birds to leave on their terms and provides a safe place to hang out until they choose to go. YEPT and DOC staff visit the pens twice daily to health-check and feed the birds and then, at the end of the week, the doors are opened and the birds are free to go when their natural instincts kick in.

This, from Ranger Sarah Irvine after the first release: "All exited the pens fairly quickly and walked around on grass, seemingly reluctant to walk down on to the platform. Eventually they moved to the large rock and stood together. From the top we watched as all chicks then left together."

However, on checking the area the next day: "Found chick #212 back in pen 4. Fed 12 anchovies and pen left open." After this bonus feed the chick departed and didn't return to the pen – hopefully successfully catching its own meals from now on!

Donation tax credit claims – do it all online

An update from Inland Revenue Department dated 29 January 2020

It's now easier for you as a supporter of YEPT to claim a tax credit after you donate.

Recent improvements to IRD's secure online service – myIR – means you can now claim your donation tax credits and upload electronic receipts, or photos or scans of paper receipts online at any time. This means that at the end of the tax year, you will not have to complete a paper form. IRD will automatically calculate the credit and pay it into the bank account you provide. You'll have less to do and will receive your refund much sooner.

What you need to know:

There's no need to complete a paper form this year because you can now claim donation tax credits online in a myIR

account, Inland Revenue's secure online service. You'll receive your refund much sooner. Your receipts can be electronic receipts, or photos or scans of paper receipts. And your receipts can be uploaded anytime during the year.

You can find more information on www.ird.govt.nz/donations.

During New Zealand's lockdown period due to COVID-19, the Trust's processing of payments may be delayed, and cheques are currently not being processed.

We encourage all supporters to continue to donate via the online portal on our website EverydayHero page or by direct banking www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org.nz/support/support-donate/donations/

We thank you in advance for this.

MAINLAND UPDATE

Here at Mainland, we know this is an unprecedented time and we hope you, your families and friends are doing ok.

The Mainland family are looking after each other and working hard behind the scenes to make sure Kiwis can get their hands on their favourite Mainland Cheese and Butter from their local stores. We take pride in delivering uncompromising quality to New Zealand and we feel honoured to continue to provide our product to the country as an essential provider. Thank you for continuing to support us by enjoying Mainland products.



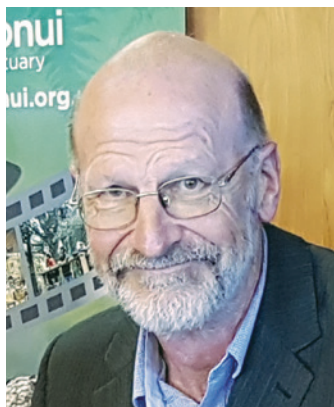
It's great to see so many folk getting back into baking and cooking over the lockdown period. We know good things take time, and we've been using the extra time we have at home to enjoy baking classics from scratch, like Rosie's Orange and White Chocolate Hot Cross Bun recipe. Rosie won our Easter hunt with The Hits to find NZ's best homemade hot cross bun recipe. If you haven't tried it yet, you can find the recipe here: www.mainland.co.nz/recipe/rosies-white-chocolate-orange-hot-cross-buns

We also celebrated Southland Anniversary Day at home with some of Southland's finest cheese rolls. If you missed them on Southland Anniversary Day then don't worry, they're great for any day of the week. Here's our favourite version, we think it's pretty 'tasty' www.mainland.co.nz/recipe/southland-cheese-rolls

We had some great results at the New Zealand Cheese Awards back in March too with our Traditional Crumbly Feta winning a gold medal. Our Haloumi picked up a Silver Medal and our Double Cream Camembert and Brie both won Bronze. The Champion Cheeses will be announced on May 6th so keep an eye out to see how our Feta gets on.

Stay Safe, The Team at Mainland

A note from the Chair



Recently, when I tabled the Trust's 2019/2020 Annual Report, now available on our website, the country was a week out from the launch of the government's package designed to ameliorate the negative economic and health effects of COVID-19. The penguin community wondered what these developments might mean for the delivery of conservation effort.

For the Trust, there seemed to be issues beyond that, specifically financial ones. As a charity, we are dependent on donations and therefore vulnerable to the vagaries of giving. Virtually overnight, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic effect on New Zealand's inbound tourism. Several of our substantial donors come from the tourism industry and it remains to be seen how COVID-19 will affect their ability to provide ongoing financial support.

All of the crucial meetings we had already put in our diaries were cancelled, inducing a feeling of time standing still.

Dealing with COVID-19 involves all staff and Board members taking care to minimise the possibility of becoming infected or of infecting others. As Sue describes in her lead article, this has involved detailed planning involving our responses and obligations. This Disruption Plan provides a structure for our current and future activities. As things stand, we are well-placed to take advantage of moving to Level 3. As an aside, it is interesting to experience running virtual monthly meetings using Zoom, the staff are ahead of the Board in this (see the photo on page two).

The take-home message from this Newsletter is that all is well with the Trust as we move from Level 4 to Level 3; there have been no substantial problems in delivering our direct management of the birds and no doubt we will catch-up with deferred meetings, just as will the other conservation organisations we deal with.

Everyone here is confident we will be ready for the next breeding season, when we can focus our minds on what remains our core task, conserving Hoiho.

Eric J. Shelton
Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust Board Chair



Is this the most stunning view from a kitchen window anywhere on the planet? Looking south through the glass at the Trust's Long Point / Irahuka Field Base.

Our thanks

Thank you to our regular supporters:

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Nursery supporters
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Blackhead Quarries
Canon NZ
Coffee Club supporters
Department of Conservation
DOC Community Fund
Downie Stewart
DCC (Task Force Green team)
Foote Haulage (Woodlands)
Forest & Bird South Otago Branch
Mainland Brand
NZ Deerstalkers Association (Dunedin Branch)
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Tony Stewart
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Thank you to all the Volunteers who assisted with this years' transport of penguins, either bringing them into care or taking them back to their habitat for release, and to those that helped with the soft release of hoiho chicks.

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 production of this Hoiho newsletter by AdArt Brand Promotion ticks all the green boxes

Penguins. Plants. People. Passion.

Te Tautiaki Hoiho

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