



Places for Penguins

a Forest & Bird Wellington Branch project



**Forest
& Bird**

TE REO O TE TAIAO
Giving Nature a Voice

Newsletter

October–November 2018

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NESTBOX RESULTS SO FAR

The kororā have started breeding, and the monitoring results as of the end of October have indicated that nestbox occupancy is currently at around 34 boxes. Breeding started slightly earlier than last season, as the first chick was sighted at Karaka Bay a fortnight earlier than last year. So far 16 chicks have been sighted, but of these four chicks have died and three nest boxes have eggs abandoned.

Overall, PfP monitors are checking 112 nestboxes, including 6 new boxes this season. There are even birds incubating eggs in places where eggs haven't been seen previously!

Tapu te Ranga Island is going very well, with half of the 14 nestboxes on the island being occupied. However, there seems to be a larger number of rats there so an increase in pest control is planned.

Photo by Sandy Winterton



SPRING CLEANING THE COAST!

On the 15th of September “Wellington South Coast Clean Up” organised a spring clean of our southern beaches. Each of the 12 designated clean-up sites were hosted by various local community groups. Places for Penguins and Forest & Bird took charge at Tarakena Bay, welcoming a fantastic amount of volunteers who turned up to help out. Tarakena Bay, like many of the sites, is currently home to nesting Little Blue Penguins.



People were encouraged to bring along their own re-usable gloves (we had spares!) and were provided with compostable bags to collect rubbish in, which we then sorted into landfill and recyclable items. We also had large coffee sacks donated to the clean-up for any bigger items that were collected. One of the competitions for the day was ‘the weirdest item found’ which we are pretty confident a volunteer on our beach would win—false teeth with only three teeth

remaining! Maybe someone had been very seasick somewhere out at sea?!

Along with lots of micro-plastics, bottles, lids, cans, and plastic wrappings, our team also found three large sacks of



bitumen dumped in a bush. We were instructed by the event organisers to keep a tally of the number of cigarette butts found. Cigarette butts are a real problem for our wildlife, as they leach chemicals and heavy metals into the environment that are toxic to marine life and other organisms. It is reported that they are the number one littered item in the world. At the clean-up, in a small area around a bench at Te Raekaihau Point, one volunteer picked up 835 of them! It is important to remember that there is no 'away' when we throw out things we no longer want.

When the rubbish collected from all the sites was brought together at Lyall Bay it was a pretty impressive haul. It is awesome to think that all of it was prevented from entering our oceans and harming our wildlife by amazing volunteers who chose to give up a little time on a Sunday morning.

Next year will be the 10th year of this annual "Wellington South Coast Clean-up", so why not come along and be a part of it?



Keep your eye on the Places for Penguins Facebook page for a date nearer to the time or follow <https://www.facebook.com/Wellington-South-Coast-Clean-up-189965687735595>. If you can't wait until then we will be organising other clean-ups in the future so feel free to join us on those!

Don't forget to bring your gloves!

Images kindly provided by Rob from Ghostfishing (www.facebook.com/ghostfishingNZ)

A TEAM OUTING ON A COLD SPRING DAY

Places for Penguins (PfP) has been fortunate in having several more volunteers join its management team recently, so we decided to spend an October morning visiting some of the many sites where PfP does its work in Wellington.

One thing we couldn't plan for was the weather. When we started out it was 8C, but a southerly wind gusting up to 50km/h brought it down to around 4C with wind chill! However, forecast showers missed us and everyone was wearing multiple layers so was well prepared for the icy weather.



Karin describing vegetation at the NIWA site



Alistair and Mena

We started the day at a fenced area near the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA), where PfP volunteers, led by Karin Wiley, have been restoring an area originally set aside for kororā by NIWA some years ago. (Karin is the team leader for nest box monitoring and for the site restoration at NIWA.) Over time, this area had become very weedy, so the first task a couple of years ago was to remove the weeds, starting with the Old Man's Beard that covered much of the site. Since then a lot of native planting has been done, with plants supplied by Forest & Bird's Wellington plant nursery, and the site is now looking very good indeed. Karin has also placed a dozen or so nest boxes around the site and some of them have been occupied each breeding season.

When we arrived at NIWA, Karin introduced us to Alastair Judkins and his Department of Conservation (DoC) detector dog, Mena. Mena is a Hungarian Vizsla, with an ideal temperament for

the work that Alastair has trained her for, which is to detect the presence of Little Blue Penguins (kororā). Alastair outlined Mena's role and gave a brief summary of how he trained her. He also emphasised that although Mena is highly trained and extremely unlikely to harm wildlife, she still wears a muzzle when she is working — because no dog is absolutely 100% trustworthy.

Alastair and Mena gave us a demonstration of how she works and then they went off to start looking for signs of kororā around the Wellington coastline, while Karin showed us around the NIWA site. This site really is a remarkable testament to the amount of work that she and her team have put in since she negotiated with NIWA management to allow us permission to work on this site.

Next we went to look at a site near Evans Bay Marina, where Karin has placed a number of nestboxes and done some supplementary planting. This is a windswept site, but a good choice of plants means that they are doing well in a very exposed situation.



Bait station

Then we drove around the Miramar Peninsula, stopping briefly to look at places where PfP has sited nest-boxes or done some planting to improve the habitat for kororā in future. We stopped at Tarakena Bay, the place where PfP started its work in 2007, where we met Kerry Shaw, the PfP project manager and pest control coordinator. Kerry showed us a bait station and some of the

various types of traps that PfP uses around the coast.

We were pleased to see that one of the Goodnature™ A24 self-resetting traps had been doing its job well as there were two rat corpses underneath it.

We also looked at where a few of the nest-boxes were on the eastern side of the beach, before returning to our cars for the last part of the tour of PfP sites.



An interested observer

Having just been to the beach where PfP started over 11 years ago, we then went to the most recent part of our operation at Owhiro Bay, where a joint effort by PfP and local residents is establishing pest control along the whole of the bay.

We met one of the local residents, Eugene Doyle, who has done a lot of the local trapping. Eugene invited us in for a very welcome cup of coffee and a chat about how the trapping was going. In future, PfP hopes to do some planting in the area to improve the habitat for kororā and eventually to install some nestboxes.



Mena sits down to indicate; Alastair is about to give her a reward



One A24 and two dead rats

A group of five people, three men and two women, are standing on a grassy path in a park-like setting. They are all wearing outdoor clothing, including jackets, hoodies, and hats. From left to right: a woman in a grey jacket and red beanie, a woman in a purple hoodie, a man in a red hoodie, a man in a blue jacket and grey beanie, and a man in a dark blue jacket. They are all smiling and posing for the photo.

Walking back from a trapline on a very cold morning

When: Sunday 2nd December. Day and time to be confirmed, depending on the weather. When the date and time are confirmed we'll let you know by email and on Facebook.

What to bring: Please bring a fork if you have one. We will provide gloves and other tools to use. Refreshments will be provided. For more information contact placesforpenguins@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page.



Imagery from Google Maps

Text and photos by members of the PfP management team, except where otherwise credited.

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