



# Places for Penguins

a Forest & Bird Wellington Branch project



## Forest & Bird

TE REO O TE TAIAO  
Giving Nature a Voice

Newsletter

February-March 2020

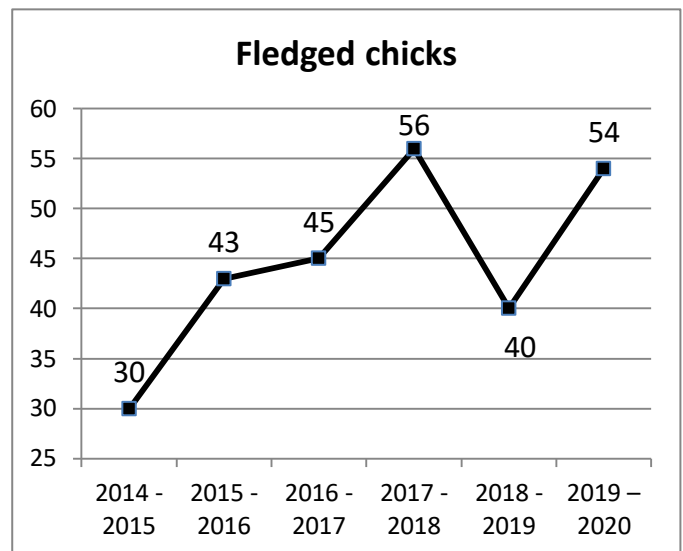
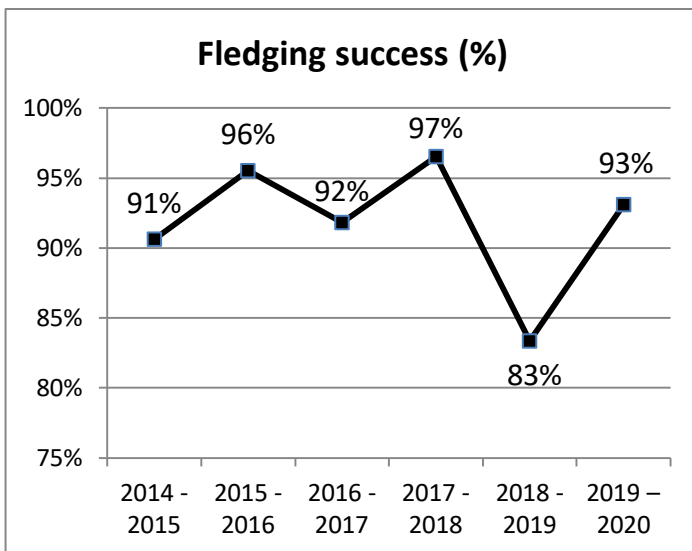
### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Season Update
- The Biggest Little Penguin In Wellington
- PfP Project Next Phase for Predator Control
- Kiwis Making Penguins Better Off

### SEASON UPDATE

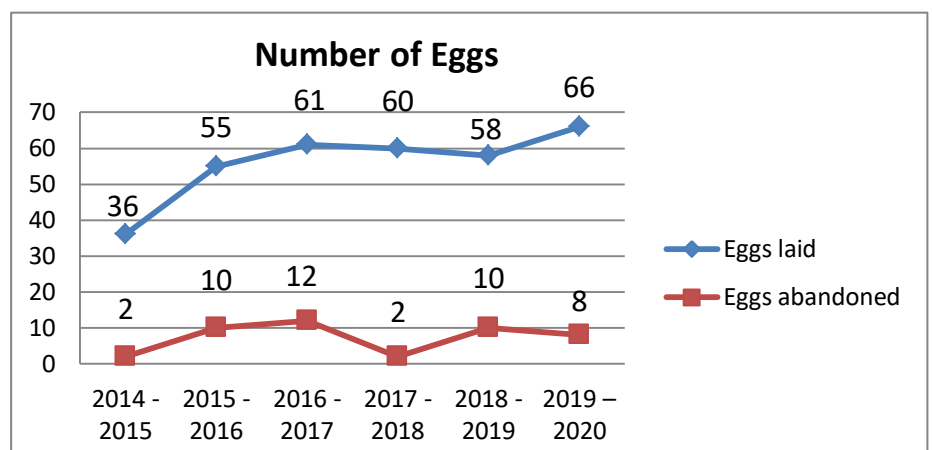
All of our kororā (little blue penguins) have now finished their moult and returned to sea. We expect to see adults coming back in June. Overall, we have had a very good season this year, as most of the couples were able to feed two chicks successfully. As a result, 54 chicks fledged, compared to 40 last season. We also had

fewer deaths and fewer abandoned eggs, and a fledging success of 93%. That suggests the ocean conditions were good and there was good food availability for the parents.



The graphs show that since the boxes were installed in 2014 the South Wellington colony has been steadily growing despite the big drop last season. Although the number of eggs laid was about the same as last season, this season had more chicks that managed to successfully fledge. The big difference in fledging success is probably due to environmental factors affecting the ability of penguins to find enough food.

For instance, the water may become murky if storms occur, and that may lead to decreased visibility for penguins as they try to hunt under the water. On the other hand, good weather conditions and good ocean productivity may lead to a high abundance of fish and a better season for kororā.



- Andrea Westphal

## THE BIGGEST LITTLE PENGUIN IN WELLINGTON

If you follow Places for Penguins (PfP) on social media then you might have already met the human-sized kororā who lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara. Kahurangi (Kahu for short) is a friendly kororā who travels around the city to spread the important word of conservation, and posts their adventures on [instagram.com/kahuthekorora](https://www.instagram.com/kahuthekorora) for everyone to see.



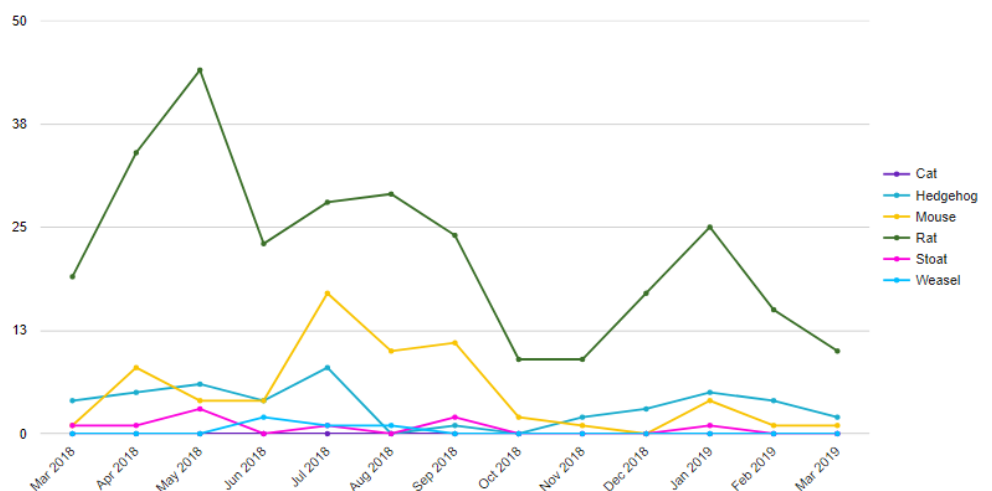
So far Kahu has had such adventures like visiting the rescued kororā at the zoo, helping check a trap line on the coast, finding a nesting spot in an unexpected place and getting flying lessons from planes at Wellington Airport. Don't miss out on any of the action! Make sure you follow [@kahuthekorora](https://www.instagram.com/kahuthekorora) on instagram and share the important messages that Kahu is trying to spread.

## PFP PROJECT NEXT PHASE FOR PREDATOR CONTROL

Miramar Peninsula is nearly predator free; the last rats are being hunted down. Predator Free Wellington (PF Wellington) is now looking to the next stage to focus on preventing pests from re-invading. To do this they are setting up new trap lines and new monitoring lines for "bio-intrusion detection". Once these new lines are in place, PF Wellington will be ready to change the way Miramar Peninsula manages pest control. PF Wellington has been running workshops for volunteers who are interested in this phase to explain the new approach and protocols. A key part of this involves bio-intrusion detection, where blocks of wax are put out and checked for any bite marks, as well as traps alongside them just in case a pest has re-entered. Currently PfP and Te Motu Kairangi trappers that are interested in continuing their involvement have attended these training sessions.

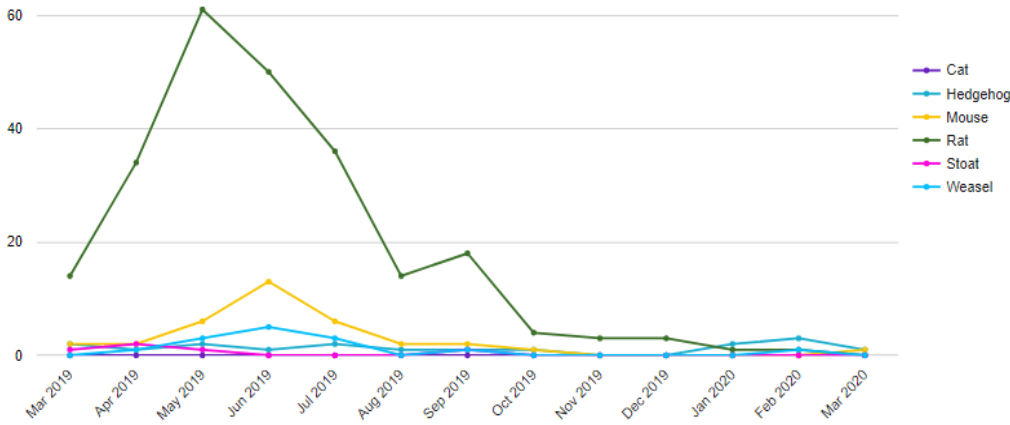
In the next couple of months existing PfP trap lines will be replaced to the revised PF Wellington lines where monitoring/checking for rats and mustelids will be key, especially around the coast line. Therefore, until there is an alternative plan in place the remaining PfP trap and bait monitors will continue monitoring the PfP traps and bait station lines.

Miramar lines Monthly Catches March 2018 – March 2019



Graph by PF Wellington

Miramar lines Monthly Catches March 2019 – March 2020



Graph by PF Wellington

The graphs highlight how successful the eradication programme has been, with the number of pests caught in the last three months presenting as negligible compared to the same months in 2019 where the rat number rose in Dec-Jan.

New Lines:

PfP is now focusing on reducing the number of pests, especially rats, around the coastline from Owhiro Bay to Lyall Bay where we know penguins are nesting. This coastline had very few traps so with the considerable help from WCC we have set up three new lines and are in the process of adding another 3-4 lines from Princess Bay to Lyall Bay.

**KIWIS MAKING PENGUINS BETTER OFF**

*The following is an article by a team of people from Kiwibank that spent a day volunteering to help improve some potential kororā territory. PfP thanks volunteers that clean up the coastline from rubbish & weeds to make it a better environment for wildlife and people.*

On Friday 21 February, a cross section of the Wellington-based Kiwibank Branch Change and Properties Teams got stuck in helping with the Forest and Bird Places for Penguins project.

Little Penguins can be found in nooks and crannies around the Miramar Peninsula, but there’s not many of them left. Predators, dogs and fast cars have brought the population down.



The Forest & Bird Places for Penguins project focuses on regenerating the native plants and trees that the Little Penguins like to build their nests under. This protects them from black backed gulls (who despite their craving for penguin eggs and young, don’t like to venture under canopies and cover) and also means they don’t need to cross the road to reach a sheltered spot.

Sounds simple enough right? Plant some native shrubs and trees, and wait for the penguins to arrive!

Not quite. The areas they like to visit, which tend to have rocky outcrops, a narrow stony beach, then a strip of vegetation are also perfect conditions for stubborn and voracious grass and weeds, which block the penguin’s access to the shelter plants they’re seeking. Penguins do not like anything tangled in their feet.

That's where our Kiwibank team came in. At a rocky outcrop near to Seatoun pier our team set about clearing all non-organic matter aka rubbish from the penguin's habitat. Sadly two black bags collected in 40mins including a duvet and two pairs of shoes. Then it was onto the hard work, armed with grubbers, forks and spades, we got to work pulling out weeds and grasses we coaxed out of the ground (using brute force!) and managed to clear spaces around the native plants we want to keep, leaving lots of room for our penguin friends to build their nests.

Additionally, we reformed a pathway from the carpark to the beach so that people using the beach stop trampling the native plants and upsetting the Penguins' habitat.

It was hard work – those grasses are intertwined in all the native shrubs we needed to keep – but we managed a sizable sacks of weeds throughout our effort. Great use of our volunteer day. Next step is for the PFP team to maintain and monitor the area, so this can be a safe and sheltered home for more than the current pairs using it and the next generation of Little Penguins in Wellington.

The next time you're driving around the Miramar Peninsula, hopefully won't see any of our little friends crossing the road, but just in case though, watch your speed, and keep an eye out for Little Penguins.

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

Thanks to all our partners and supporters: Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington Regional Council, the Department of Conservation, the Society for Conservation Biology group at Victoria University, Conservation Volunteers of New Zealand, Weta Digital, Tumbleweed Tees, Sue Dasler Pottery, and the Henderson Trust via the Nikau Foundation.

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