

Penguin Foundation

2012 Autumn Edition

Message from us

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Penguin Foundation newsletter. In this edition we take you 'behind-the-scenes' of penguin research and one of the exciting projects the Penguin Foundation has funded. We also introduce you to the newest Penguin Foundation ambassador, Rob Gell, and update the latest news in the penguin colony and at the new Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. Finally, we've got a little penguin pop quiz for you to test your penguin knowledge. Enjoy!

Warm regards from Phillip Island, The Penguin Foundation team

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Penguin Foundation assists research

Thanks to your generous support, the Penguin Foundation has helped fund the development of technology for reading little penguin electronic microchips.

Penguin researchers from Phillip Island Nature Parks regularly conduct fieldwork to collect data on the penguins. During fieldwork, each penguin at home in a burrow is scanned for a microchip. Microchips, similar to what your cat or dog may have, are used for identification. Penguin researchers scan the microchip for a unique number and then write in a field notebook any data, such as a penguin's weight, against that number. Over time we build a history of individual penguins and can track any trends across the colony.

At Phillip Island we made the transition from flipper bands to microchips approximately 12 years ago. Flipper bands, a small metal band stamped with a number and attached around a penguin's flipper, had been used by

biologists around the world to mark individual penguins for more than 50 years. Their use, however, fell out of favour over a decade ago.

The penguin microchips used today are detected by hand-held electronic readers. These readers tend to be off-the-shelf models designed for vets and used in an indoor environment. They are not designed to withstand outdoor use.

The four new microchip readers developed with funding from the Penguin Foundation are water, sand and corrosion proof. They are strong enough to detect microchips through a burrow wall (reducing the need to handle penguins). Data can also be entered electronically in the field, reducing time taken to manually enter data.

Your Penguin Foundation membership has helped contribute vital funds for

this project - thanks for your support! Kean Electronics, the company that produced the microchip reader, has also kindly offered to donate five per cent of profit on the sale of any future microchip readers to the Penguin Foundation.



Meet the penguins of burrow 86



With microchip technology, penguin researchers have been able to keep track of a little penguin pair from burrow number 86. The male penguin is known by researchers as 'Dobe' because his microchip number ends in D0BE.

Microchip # 689D0BE - Male - microchipped as an adult in 1998 in burrow 86
Microchip # 689E895 - Female - microchipped as an adult in 2000 in burrow 85

- In 2001-02 both bred next door to each other with different partners
- In 2003 he 'moved in' with her (to burrow 85) and they successfully raised one chick until fledging
- In 2004 they moved to burrow 86 and successfully raised one chick
- In 2005 they successfully raised one chick
- In 2006 they successfully raised two chicks
- In 2007 they had two eggs during the false breed, then laid another clutch during the real breed and raised one chick
- In 2008 they lost their first clutch, tried again, and successfully raised two chicks
- In 2009 they laid two eggs in the false breed, then raised one chick in the real breeding season
- In 2010 they had a break from breeding
- In 2011 the pair did not breed and the female has recently been seen in burrow 86 with a penguin microchipped 6F11581. The new male was first detected in the breeding site a year ago.

The Penguin Foundation

The Penguin Foundation was established to protect and preserve one of Australia's most important natural assets - the little penguins.

Every cent raised by the foundation goes directly to projects supporting the little penguins of Phillip Island. It also has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and all contributions are fully tax deductible.

For more information about the Phillip Island Penguin Foundation visit:

penguinfoundation.org.au or phone:

(+61 3) 5951 2800

Rob Gell newest ambassador

We're excited to announce a new Penguin Foundation ambassador - Mr Rob Gell. Many of you may know Rob as a Melbourne television weather presenter, but he is also an environmental consultant and tireless campaigner for our environment.

"I'm delighted to be an ambassador for little penguins. They're the littlest and they're locals, so we need to pay them some respect while we enjoy them," says Rob.



Rob has strong ties with the scientific and conservation communities and is the chairman of the Mornington and Western Port Biosphere (UNESCO) Reserve Foundation - an area of international importance that includes Phillip Island.

Penguin update

Good conditions, such as plenty of fish and mild weather, have prompted the penguins to begin their false breed. The false breed is a regular season before every winter. Autumn conditions mimic spring and tend to prompt the penguins to have a go at breeding.



If lucky, a pair may lay a couple of eggs but the cold weather of winter usually sets in, fish move further away and the little penguins will leave the eggs and head to sea on longer fishing trips - some lasting up to four weeks.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre update



Opened in August 2011 and built with support from the Penguin Foundation, Phillip Island's new Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre has been busy caring for sick and injured little penguins, possums, lizards and other birds such as albatross and the occasional penguin from New Zealand!

In recent months the rehab centre has had six little penguins, one kookaburra and three possums in care. Several gannets were also brought into the rehab centre after a severe storm in early April. Four were admitted to the centre but unfortunately two were too weak to survive. The other two were released after a week in care.

The short-tailed shearwaters, a migratory bird that visits Phillip Island for part of spring and summer, have just departed for their 8 000 kilometre journey back to the Aleutian Islands near Alaska. During the departure many shearwater chicks are found on Phillip Island's roads as they practice flying for the first time. Over 100 birds were brought into the Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre and many were later released - hopefully they're now over the Pacific Ocean as they make the long journey back.

Penguin pop quiz!

1. How many species of penguins occur around the world?
2. How big is a little penguin?
3. How many little penguins live on Phillip Island?
4. What is the deepest dive of a little penguin ever recorded?



1. 17 2. 33cm high 3. Approx. 32000 4. 73m



Fox Free Phillip Island receives another award

Phillip Island Nature Parks' fox eradication program, supported by the Penguin Foundation, was last month awarded the *Natural Environment Award* at the Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence 2012. This is the second award the 'Fox Free Phillip Island' program has won - the first was a prestigious Banksia Environmental Award last year.

Foxes are capable of killing up to 40 penguins in one night. Since 1985, penguin numbers have increased from 14 000 to 32 000 on Phillip Island, in part thanks to lower fox numbers.

Foundation supporters

Thank you to the ongoing supporters of the Penguin Foundation:

- Peregrine Adventure
- Lewin Education Centre
- Nestle
- PFD Food Distribution
- Bidvest
- ecobud

Every dollar received by sponsors and supporters funds projects and programs approved by the Penguin Foundation.

