

## Where do all the penguins live?

During the last six months Dr Thomas Mattern and I have reviewed what we know, and don't know about New Zealand penguins and have recommended research and conservation priorities for all six species. The four species endemic to this country are either vulnerable, endangered or among the least known of all the worlds penguins, the Erect-crested Penguin being both endangered and least known. This work was funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and the T-Gear Charitable Trust. As a next step toward a research and conservation strategy for New Zealand penguins the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and the Phillip Island Conservation Fund are allowing me to complete a database of all known penguin colonies in this country, a project begun some years ago with support from Te Papa and Forest and Bird.

I began with Little Penguins and now have just over 500 colony records for that species alone. Some records are just a location with no further information, the best records are of actual counts, at a precise location done on a known date. So why is this of value. Firstly, it will provide a greatly improved account of the distribution and abundance of our penguins. It will identify those regions that have been well surveyed (Otago, Banks Peninsula and Buller) and those where survey is most urgent. For instance, I know of just one penguin colony in the Wairarapa; are penguins there rare, is the region poorly surveyed or have Wairarapa members just not told others where their penguins nest? By in large the South Island is better surveyed than the North Island. This database also identifies colonies where there is data on population trends, where regular monitoring is happening and where monitoring is most needed. The data will be made available to bone fide penguin researchers and conservation workers. To protect the birds there should be some restrictions on access to the data; we are not here to tell Trip Advisor where to see penguins for free.

If you know of a penguin colony or if you are doing (or have in the past done) some yet to be published work on any New Zealand penguins please tell me. This database will only be as complete and as useful as the information available. Don't assume we have data for your local colony, for instance we know Little Penguins nest in Eastbourne in Wellington, but not how many or if their numbers are increasing or in decline. If you have information please email me at [Kerryjayne1@hotmail.com](mailto:Kerryjayne1@hotmail.com).

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*The Fiordland Penguin or Tawaki; they breed in South Westland, Fiordland and Stewart Island, but we know the actual locations of just a few colonies and the numbers present at even fewer.*