

WA SEABIRD RESCUE: A PICTORIAL PENGUIN ADVENTURE

MARG LARNER AND CAROL BIDDULPH

Western Australian Seabird Rescue
www.waseabirdrescue.com

MARGARET LARNER
08 95348619
csardous@bigpond.com

CAROL BIDDULPH
08 98451282
biddulph85@westnet.com.au

Introduction

Following the AWRC in Victoria in 2003 the late Lance Ferris and Marnie Bonner founders of Australian Seabird Rescue came to Mandurah WA for a two day workshop for interested locals to learn about pelicans and other seabirds.

It became apparent that a dedicated team was needed to give appropriate care to stranded penguins and other seabirds. WASR was formed in Mandurah following this workshop.

A second workshop was held in Albany in 2006 to address the need of a wider support group in WA. Lance, Marnie along with Marg Larner and Linda Emery from Mandurah came to Albany and a local group was created.

Consequently Western Australian Seabird Rescue covers a distance of 1200kms along the coastline from Jurien Bay to Esperance. We are an effective, small group of passionate and dedicated folk.

Our objectives are:

- The rescue, rehabilitation and release of little penguins and crested penguins along the south west and southern coast of

Western Australia.

- Create awareness to the plight of penguin stranding on beaches as they are very vulnerable to our recreational life style i.e. 4WD, dogs and people. Extremes of weather are another factor in penguin survival.
- Educating the public that there are local active groups caring for these birds. This is done by public education signage at appropriate beaches. We go to schools and other venues sharing our knowledge and passion.
- To work hand in hand with researchers to share and develop better knowledge about these birds. Little penguins are checked for micro chips.
- All Little Penguins from Penguin Island, off Mandurah, are micro chipped.
- Measurements of bill and flippers are taken along with flipper patterns of crested penguins and are sent to Dr Ken Simpson in Victoria. Birds that do not survive are sent to Ron Johnstone, Curator of Ornithology at the Western Australian Museum.
- We have assisted with a project researching the movement of pre-breeding northern rock hopper penguins visiting the coast of Western Australia in partnership with the Department of Parks and Wildlife and the Walpole Nornalup National Parks Association.

Little Penguin

At 1 kg they are the smallest of all penguins. They are widely distributed in Australia from WA along the southern coast up to N.S.W. The little penguin is a non - migratory species. They are the only nocturnal species. They do not generally land before dusk and leave before dawn.

They nest in burrows, under trees, rock crevices and in small caves. The nests are clustered together to form colonies, although single breed in pairs is not uncommon. At sea they are usually found in small groups of up to ten birds. These birds are mainly brought into care because of boating injuries and moulting in inappropriate areas.

Their diet is mainly sardines and anchovies. They are inshore feeders.

Fiordland Penguin

This bird is endemic to New Zealand. The fiordland breeds in winter typically in the rainforest along the rugged coastline of Fiordland and Stewart Islands. They nest individually or in loose colonies. They migrate into the Tasman Sea making their way to the Great Australian Bight where they spend the next four to five years before travelling back to New Zealand to breed. The birds we find on our beaches during the winter months are 1st year juvenile storm wrecks.

Fiordland mainly eat squid, krill and fish.

Length 60 cms. Weight 3.5 kg.

Northern Rockhopper Penguin

Rockhopper penguins breed is found in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It has a restricted breeding range of seven islands with a total land area of 250 square kms. The majority are found on Gough and Tristan da Cunha Islands. The birds believed to travel to Australian waters are from Amsterdam and St Pauls Islands in the Indian Ocean. They breed in large colonies on rocky slopes, among tussocks and sometimes in small caves. The nests are built from tussock, peat and pebbles. We see these birds during the summer months when they come ashore to moult. The diet of the rockhopper is mostly small fish and squid. Length 55 cms Weight 2.7kg

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Karlene Bain	Department of Parks and Wildlife Walpole Nornalup National Parks Association
Dr Belinda Cannell	Murdoch University, Perth, WA - Ornithologist
Dr Ken Simpson	Yarra Valley, Victoria -Ornithologist
Marg Healy	Victoria - Penguin rehabilitator
Damon Annison	Photographer – Albany, WA <i>Albany Advertiser, WA</i>

Margaret Larner has been a wildlife carer for kangaroos since 1975, when the young lad next door brought in a tiny velvet joey he'd rescued from boys at the local shop. Marg lived in a small seaside settlement at the time. From that day her life and career path was changed forever. At the time Marg was working as a clinical nurse in neonatal surgery at Princess Margaret Hospital, Perth. This held her in good stead when caring for these tiny orphans.

With a major lifestyle change in 1998, Marg moved down south to Mandurah, where she became involved in pelican rescues after attending the Victorian wildlife conference. Marg attended Lance Ferris' wonderful workshop on pelican care and rescue in 2004, after which WA Seabird Rescue was formed. Marg began caring for storm wrecked seabirds- especially penguins and giant petrels, with the support of Marg Healy, Victoria, and Elizabeth Hall of Taronga Zoo who helped Marg increase her knowledge and improvement in the care of these magical birds, especially the Penguin.

Carol Biddulph has been rehabilitating birds for the past 16 years. In 2006 the late Lance Ferris, founder of Australia Seabird Rescue came to Albany, WA to demonstrate how to catch a pelican and talked about all things seabirds. This started Carol's passion for seabirds especially penguins. She is a registered wildlife rehabilitator, a member of Born Free Wildlife Carers in Albany and the local co-ordinator and committee member of WA Seabird Rescue.