

Little penguin orphans slowly recovering from trauma following rescue

Meg Powell

It has been nearly two months since nine little penguins were rescued from a sanctuary at Wynyard, and Burnie's Kathy Grieveson is exhausted.

The penguin chicks were discovered only days after a mass killing at Doctors Rocks, and are the first group to be rescued after a dog attack in Tasmania, Ms Grieveson says.

Since that day, the Penguin Rehab and Release president has been working around the clock, feeding, changing and rehabilitating the chicks.

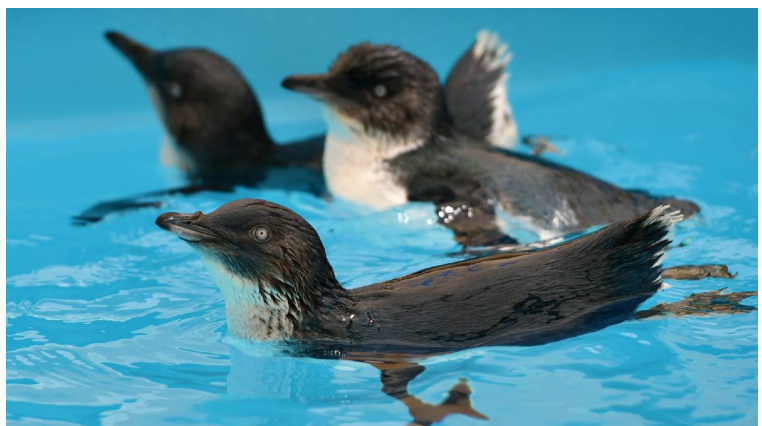
"The first few days were 19 hour days," she said.

"Some of them were still very fluffy when we got them... Their weight now is really good... you can see they've got their adult coats too."

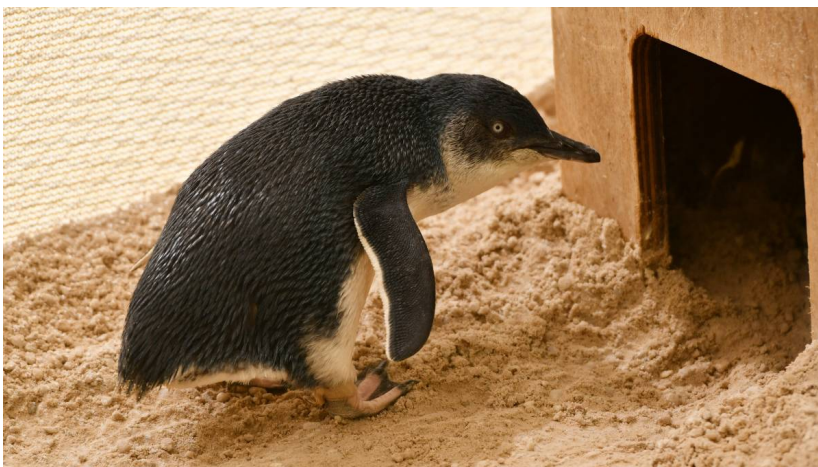
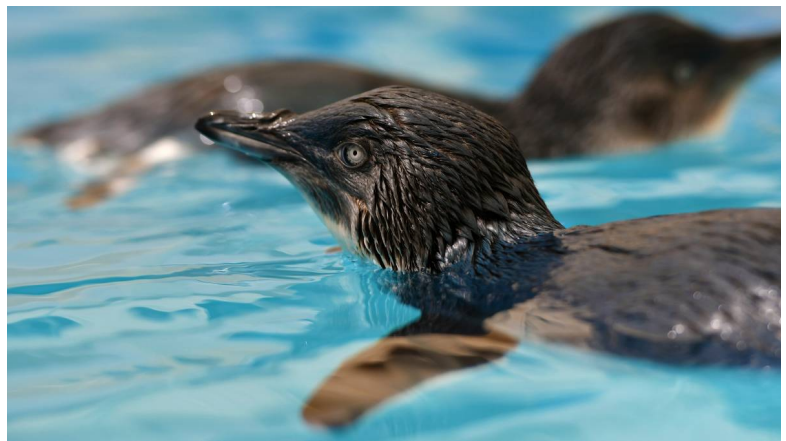
The rehabilitation has been a community effort, the wildlife carer says, with people donating money, dropping off towels and doing endless loads of washing.

"The penguins were going through 90 towels a day," she said.

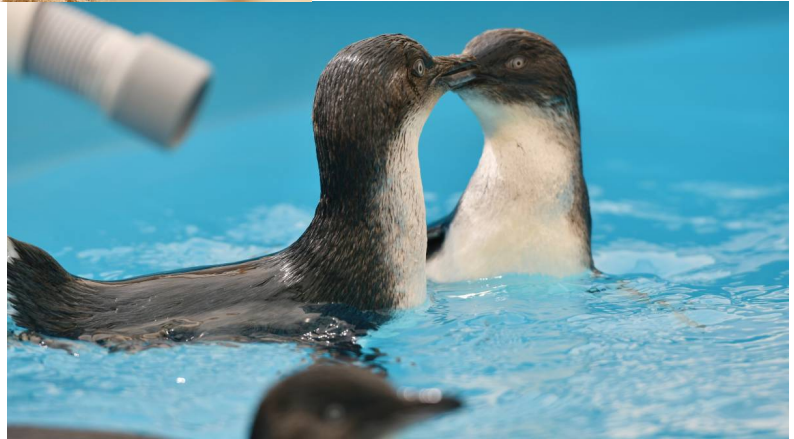
"Our record is 17 buckets full of towels lined up, ready to be washed."



Pictures: Brodie Weeding



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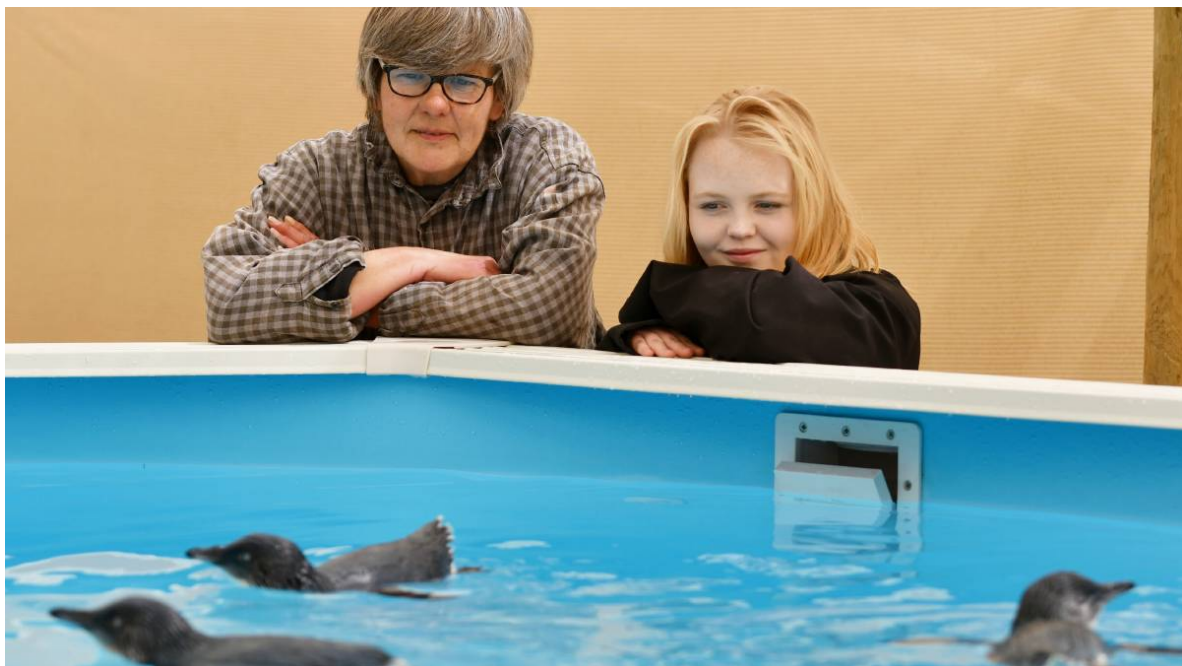
Pictures: Brodie Weeding

Ms Grieveson said the process was ground-breaking work for the rehabilitation centre, as no penguins had been rescued after a dog attack before.

"I thought they'd be back out in a few weeks," she said.

"We had no idea the extent of the trauma. They heard everything.

"They're intelligent. They would have heard the danger call from their parents and then they were waiting and waiting for the all clear. And it never came."



Pool party: Rehab and Release's Kathy Grieveson and lead volunteer Sarah Facey quietly watch the penguins swim. Picture: Brodie Weeding

Ms Grieveson said it had taken long, patient hours to get their confidence back up, and that the chicks were nearly ready to return to their natural habitat by the ocean.

"Eventually they'll 'get their wild on', and hopefully we'll be able to do a mass release," she said.

"They're like teenagers, by the time they're ready to leave you want to kick them out.

"They're wild as, and they don't want to have anything to do with you. That's how you know you've done your job."

The carer - despite a lack of sleep- said she had loved watching their complex social interactions as each personality emerged.

"They're all so different," she said.

"But it will be a relief when they can finally return."