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Penguin Rehab and Release takes in 11 sick birds in first seven months



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Sarah Lansdown



Nine little penguins have been released back into their habitat since the Coast's first penguin rehabilitation centre opened its doors.

Wildlife carer Kathy Grieveson said the day after the facility officially opened in November the first two penguins arrived.

Since then, 11 sick or injured birds have been through rehabilitation.

"The majority were young fledglings... and some had got a bit turned around finding the sea and were found in odd places," she said.

December to January was the busiest time for Penguin Rehab and Release.

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One bird was found at a childcare centre while another was hiding behind some rubbish bins. One bird had sustained feather damage after it was hit by a car.

The shortest stay was four days and the longest was five months and counting. Two penguins remain in long-term care over the winter, including an older female recovering from a brain injury.

The birds need to be able to swim in the rehabilitation pool for up to eight hours before they are strong enough to go back to their habitat.



Sanctuary: Registered wildlife carer Kathy Grieveson set up Penguin Rehab and Release at her Brooklyn property so that injured penguins wouldn't need make the traumatic journey to the south of the state for rehabilitation. Picture: Brodie Weeding

Ms Grieveson ensures the birds do not get used to humans.

"They should not like you.

"They come in as wild birds and we want to keep it that way."

Adult birds need to be released where they were found because they are able to recognise the coastline.

Meanwhile, the young penguins who haven't been out to sea yet will spend time swimming up and down the coastline to log a mental map of the environment.

Ms Grieveson said the penguin attack in West Ulverstone in May was "disturbing", especially as some of the rehabilitated birds had been released there.



The penguin rehabilitation facility is not open to the public. Picture: Brodie Weeding

However, she believes her facility will strengthen the penguin population.

"It does make a difference. It's one bird at a time but over a period that makes a big difference."

Penguin Rehab and Release was launched with grants from councils, businesses and community groups but requires further sponsorship to cover food and medical bills.

See www.penguinrehab.org for more information.

If you find a penguin (or any other wildlife) injured or in distress, please ring:

- Wildlife Management Branch, DPIPWE (during business hours) on 03 6165 4305
- Bonorong Rescue Service (24 hours a day) on 0447 264 625
- Kathy Grieveson on 0437 565 672.