



**Penguin  
Rehab & Release**



**OUR GUESTS  
PAST AND PRESENT  
PENGUINS IN REHAB**



**THANKS TO OUR  
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# NEWSLETTER



P1 & P2

## It's busy in the penguin pool!

After opening on 27 November in 2018, the Penguin Rehabilitation and Release Facility has rehabilitated eleven rescued little penguins, with nine already successfully released to the wild. Here are their stories...

### Best mates

The first day after the facility opened, two penguins (pictured above) arrived for care.

The two male birds, possibly friends travelling together, were found together on the road after one was clipped by a car. The other penguin

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stayed by his side until a motorist stopped and took them to the Parks and Wildlife office.

The penguin clipped by the car (named P1) had a head injury and an injured flipper, but made a full recovery. Both penguins were large birds, and a bit underweight, so even the uninjured one (P2) stayed in care until a healthy weight.

P2 had an injured flipper which was originally thought to be caused by being hit by a car, but turned out to be arthritis. An older bird, P2 had been living with the arthritis for a while and it didn't inhibit his agility or speed in the water.

P1 spent 107 days in care at the rehab facility and left weighing a healthy 1230 grams, after weighing only 864 grams on arrival. P1 indicated that P10 and P11 (see below) were male—he never fussed over them or preened them, and although happy to have them as part of his group, he would chase P10 and P11 away when he wanted to make up to the girls.

P2 spent just 33 days in rehab but gained 268 grams to weigh in at 1200 grams at release.

When penguins first come into care they need to be rehydrated, and their first fish meal is usually a light one (fresh fish fillet with no skin), to ensure that their digestive system is working properly. Unfortunately, P1 and P2 arrived late in the afternoon and the fish shop was closed. Many thanks to Burnie's Fish Frenzy for supplying some fish for their first breakfast.

## P4 makes a splash

Penguin P4 arrived on the 4th of January after being found a long way from the beach in West Ulverstone, probably a bit lost trying to get out to sea for the first time.

P4 was newly fledged and only slightly underweight at 906 grams, but very dehydrated. It took a week to stabilise P4's hydration, after which s/he was able to properly put on weight. (It can be difficult to determine the sex of a Little Penguin using the standard method of measuring bill depth.) After 12 days in rehab P4 left weighing a respectable 1120 grams.

P4 was very predator aware, spending a lot of time in the pool trying to find a way out to sea. A vigorous swimmer, P4 always generated a substantial bow wave and wake in the rehab pool.

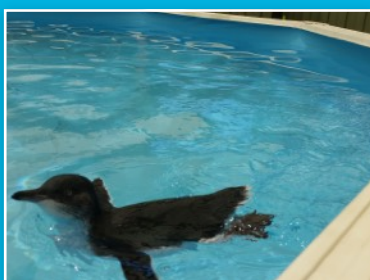
## Which way is the beach?

Penguin P5 spent time in rehab after being found early in the

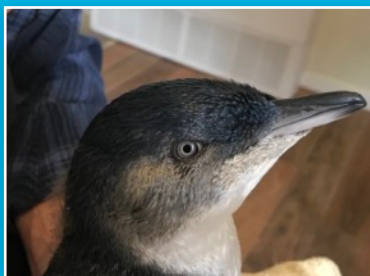
**Some of our rehab guests. (Note that they're not named because they are wild birds rather than pets.)**



**P1 & P2**



**P4**



**P5**



**P7**



**P8, P9, P10, P11 & P1**

morning—during the release of P4!

Like P4, P5 encountered trouble heading to sea for the first time, taking the wrong direction to end up in the middle of the Bass Highway—not a good place for a little penguin!

Still a bit fluffy, P5 had not quite finished fledging and some pin feathers remained undeveloped. After four days in care, P5 finished fledging and was released just before first light.

## Meet P7

P7 was found in the middle of the day walking along the ocean's edge, apparently looking for someone, anyone, to feed her—be it a penguin, seagull or human.

Weighing only 410 grams (less than a can of beans) P7 looked only two to three weeks old but was more likely five to six weeks old. She had an extremely heavy infestation of ticks, fleas, lice and round worms. As a result she was severely anaemic and it took her a good month to recover from this, during which she started to fledge. (Note that many wild animals carry parasites, of which there are many species, and usually only high levels of infestation are harmful). Penguins ingest round worms by eating fish, and pick up ticks, fleas and lice when on land (which don't survive once the penguin spends lengthy time in the ocean).

Due to poor nutrient intake during her early growth, P7 remained undersized for a long time and poor feather development has meant she is not yet waterproof (and therefore not releasable). She will likely remain in care until her first moult, probably around February or March 2020.

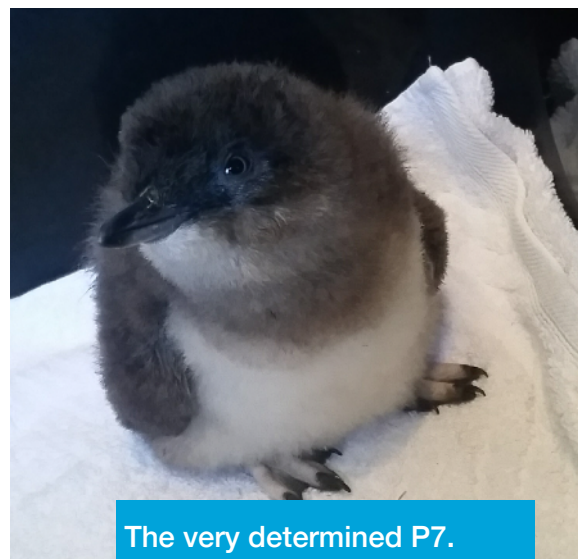
Although not yet waterproof, she loves swimming and is very quick and agile in the water, despite her stubby little tail.

Due to her love of swimming, P7 is tough to get out of the pool. As she starts to get waterlogged (because not yet waterproof), she sinks lower in the water and so spends a lot of her time diving. She has also taught herself to swim backstroke and sidestroke to keep her head above water in order to take breaths between dives.

Having lived in care for longer than in the wild, P7 doesn't suffer from the stress that other birds coming in do—although she does find humans irritating. As she is in long-term care, she has taken on the role of companion for new penguins that come into care, which is important in relieving stress for these social birds.

P7 bonded with P1 after he came out of moult. He was very paternal towards her—keeping guard, disciplining her, and teaching her to preen properly (by example). When in the pool together, he would swim around the edge of the pool, looking up over the combing if she started to have difficulties. This was a behaviour he had previously learnt would bring me to his aid when he was not waterproof.

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P7 while she  
remains in care?  
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The very determined P7.

P7 is prone to expressing her displeasure by vocalizing (similar to a bark) and/or biting. She will go up to the enclosure wall and bark if someone on the other side of the fence is making more commotion than she can tolerate.

## A new addition to the mini-colony

P8 arrived at the rehab facility on the 19th of January after being found in someone's yard.

Only 886 grams on arrival, P8 was newly fledged and covered in little bits of leftover fluffy down. She was extremely stressed and squealed loudly and often on arrival, taking at least three days to settle in.

P8 was only a little underweight but had a bad case of round worms and a tendency to regurgitate her food. Once treated she recovered well and became part of the five-bird penguin mini-colony. The leader of the mini-colony, P1, indicated that P8 was female by making up to her and preening her (along with P9).

After 13 days in care, P8 weighed a healthy 1060 grams and was released (in a group of four young penguins) on the first of February.

... even birds that look healthy can be critically ill and time is of the essence when it comes to taking them to a vet or a wildlife carer.

## A new girlfriend for P1

P9 arrived on the 20th January after being found hiding behind wheelie bins in someone's yard. Newly fledged, she'd been hiding behind the wheelie bins for some time and was underweight. Highly strung, she had a tendency to regurgitate her food when stressed—and to attack any human carers who approached.

Despite P9 remaining a stressy squealer during her twelve-day stay in rehab, P1 took a shine to her and would spend time preening her. Afterwards she would strut around after him with her chest out and her head held high, looking for all the world as though she was saying “Nyah, nyah, I've got a boyfriend.”

P9 was released (after gaining weight) as one of a group of young four birds.

## Competition for P1 (more male penguins)

**P10** arrived on the 20th January after being found at a child care centre in West Ulverstone. Almost fully fledged, bits of fluff remained on his neck and back and he was heavily infested with ticks, fleas, round worm and tapeworm. His keel bone was very distinct, indicating that he had lost a lot of weight. After treatment he took about a week to recover and then became part of the mini-colony in the enclosure.

**P11** arrived on the 22nd January after being handed in to an Ulverstone vet. A fledgling, little bits of fluff still clung

P10 , almost fully fledged.



to his flippers. A penguin in the mould of P9, P11 remained a hissing ‘attack penguin’ during his time in care. P11 quickly gained weight after treatment for tapeworm and was released (after ten days in care) with three other young penguins on 1 February.

**P12** arrived on the 23rd of January after spending 24 hours in someone’s yard. Newly fledged, he was very weak and dehydrated, as well as carrying a large burden of round worm and tapeworm. As he recovered, P12 became increasingly stressed, always on high alert, and remained standing at all times. Because penguins are wild, they see humans as predators and will hide any signs of distress (such as not being able to stand) to avoid being selected by a predator. Thus, even birds that look healthy can be critically ill and time is of the essence when it comes to taking them to a vet or a wildlife carer.

As P12’s feet began to get tender from constant standing, the towels in his hospital box were replaced with sand to prevent bumblefoot (a bacterial infection and inflammatory reaction on the feet). P12’s lack of preening (also caused by stress) meant that once he had access to the pool, he was not waterproof, and his swim sessions had to be kept short as he went through the re-waterproofing process. P12 relaxed much more once he was out of intensive care and had P1 for company. This helped to speed up his waterproofing as he spent more time preening himself. After 18 days in care P12 was fully waterproof, spending six to eight hours swimming in the pool, and was released on the 11th of February. During his 19 days in care, P12 gained an impressive 466 grams!

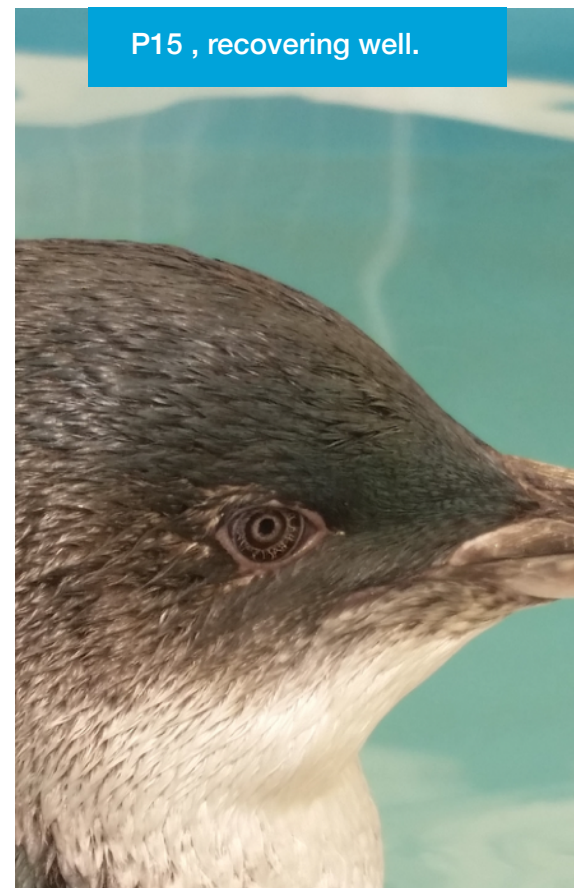
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P15 while she  
remains in care?  
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## Brain trauma

**P15** arrived on the 23rd of March and will remain in care until her coordination improves. An older female penguin, P15 was found on beach rocks critically underweight, very dehydrated and suffering brain trauma. Her pupils (fixed, dilated and uneven) and bulging eyes indicated that she had severe brain swelling. The brain trauma affected her vision, balance, coordination and muscle strength. During the first three days in care her eyes gradually began to respond to light, and after three days it became apparent that she could once again see. Veterinary assessment on day six showed there was still blood pooling behind her right eye.

For the first three weeks, P15 looked to P7 for direction and would follow her around. This rather confused P7 as she was a much younger, less dominant bird. Much to P7’s relief, as P15 regained health she became much more dominant.

Once she started to become self aware again, P15 would go to the north wall of the enclosure at dusk and call for her mate. This continued for about three weeks. Since then she has attached herself more to P7 and, when she wants company, will call for her. A very vocal penguin, she has taught P7 to be much more vocal, and she now voices a series of increasingly sharp barks when she is looking for P15. P15 has a tendency to snap if cornered—and her carer has the scars to prove it!



## Injured penguins

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.

## Thanks to our supporters!

A very special thank you to all our volunteers, Fish Frenzy (Burnie), Kyeema Seafoods and Smithton Veterinary Clinic, in addition to the following generous supporters:



Bunnings Warehouse (Burnie)

Emu Bay Lions Club

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Landcare Tasmania

Redbank Poultry (at Sisters Beach)

The Tasmanian Scale Company

Wynyard Hardware

Yolla Producers Cooperative Society Ltd.

And to DPIPWE and Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary for their advice and support.