



**Penguin  
Rehab & Release**



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



# THE PENGUIN POOL

## Goodbye to P15

As you may recall from our last newsletter, P15 arrived on the 23rd of March after being found on beach rocks critically underweight, very dehydrated and suffering brain trauma. The brain trauma affected her vision, balance, coordination

and muscle strength. An older female penguin, P15 took some time to regain her coordination and strength but was fully rehabilitated by the end of July and successfully released in perfect weather, allowing her time to regain her sea legs.



P15 , released to the wild!

## Dodger

Sometimes you get a bird in that tugs your heart strings more than others, and sometimes a bird touches everyone's hearts whether they've met him or not - Dodger was one of these. Unfortunately not all birds can be saved, sometimes due to the severity of their injuries, or how severely they've been compromised before coming into care.

Dodger received his name because he managed to avoid being hit by two cars that ran over the top of him on the Bass Highway. At only 380grams and three quarters fledged, he should have been dying in a burrow, not attempting to cross a highway - he was far less than half the weight he should have been. Many thanks to the Somerset Town & Country Vet for giving him fluids as soon as he was brought in as they certainly saved his life at this point.



Dodger (17 Sept 2019)

When he came into care Dodger's digestive system had shut down and he was a very, very sick little penguin. He also had a huge overburden of worms that would have stunted his growth. He was likely a chick abandoned by his parents as they knew they wouldn't be able to raise him. Most chicks in this position would die in their burrow, but Dodger had other ideas and an incredible determination to live and for him, the second chance was wonderful. He grabbed it with gusto.

It took some weeks on a special liquid diet to kick his digestive system back into proper working order but right from the start Dodger became the happiest of penguins, delighting in feed times and generally enjoying life. Then, he was introduced fish fillets, his first solid food, and his joy knew no bounds. He would squeal with joy at feed time.

Dodger was with us for 5 weeks and had just topped 600 grams, a point at which we usually think the danger period is over. Unfortunately his heart had been terribly compromised by his early stunted growth and it stopped beating while he was in the middle of a feed of his favourite food. He touched everyone's heart with his delight in life and his determination to overcome so many obstacles.

Unfortunately, as carers, we can't save every bird but we will do our utmost to save every one that comes into care while realising that sometimes our utmost isn't enough.



Dodger (22 Sept 2019)

## P7's progress

Readers may remember P7 (found in the middle of the day hiding in some seaweed, looking for someone to feed her) and her heavy infestation of ticks, fleas, lice and round worms.

P7 is not yet releasable as she will not be technically waterproof until she moults, hopefully early in the new year. However, she has managed to waterproof her down under her sparse feather coverage. This is because she is determined to swim, and she remains exceptionally difficult to get out of the pool. Even in the coldest months of winter with her feet becoming mottled as she chilled, she was extremely reluctant to be removed from the pool.

She remains a small bird but is extremely determined and intelligent and quite a diva. She learnt from P1, our first inmate, how to express her displeasure by regurgitating her feed. She has continued this whenever she is unhappy with arrangements and she continues to regurgitate until her carer works out just what the issue is.

She has learned from each of the birds in care but until recently she hasn't learned how "to penguin" as she hasn't ever been part



P7 as a young chick

of a colony. This made it very difficult for her when we had a sudden influx of penguin chicks who came in as survivors of a dog attack (see story below). Being the main resident all year, P7 had become very territorial, although she was content to share with individual penguins as they came into her therapy area. All previous birds that she'd had contact with were birds older than her so she was content to learn from and follow them.

However, when the penguin chicks arrived they saw her (older than they) as the leader, which confused and distressed her after a short period (old enough to be a baby sitter but not old enough to be a mummy?). Initially she became a bit of a bully, chasing them from each of the burrows in the enclosure, demonstrating strong territorial behaviour. The chicks were then moved to a separate aviary, however P7 then decided that *that* aviary should be her special territory and became distressed by them being in there. With her in continual distress and regurgitating about half of her meals, P7 lost weight and had to be brought back inside to calm her down and allow her to keep food down and regain some of the weight she'd lost.

Want to sponsor  
P7 while she  
remains in care?  
[Click here.](#)

On being returned to the enclosure P7 was placed in a small aviary and was fine for 24 hours. However, the next night the birds were very noisy as some very complex conversations emanated from the enclosure, particularly between P7 and the two eldest chicks. Whilst P7 had been separated from the others, the two eldest penguin chicks had become co-leaders of the mini colony. The next morning P7 ate breakfast and as soon as she was on the ground it was regurgitated but this time, instead of looking angry/defiant, she looked depressed and sad.

Not knowing what else to do, her carer took her out to the main enclosure while the remaining penguins were fed, and witnessed the result of the previous night's conversations. The carer observed an interesting display (using only peripheral vision, as all activity ceased if she looked at them directly). One of the eldest chicks stood with his back to P7, head half turned and flippers raised. P7 approached him in a submissive pose, head and shoulders down and forward, went under his flipper and then stood upright next to him. He then turned his head towards her and they gently stroked beaks, signifying her acceptance into the mini colony.

After her acceptance into the colony she was found in the company of the younger chicks as one of the group, not the leader. Best of all - no more regurgitating her food. Once part of the group, P7 quickly rose in the hierarchy and would take charge of the young chicks and protect them from the 'horrible, nasty human' who came in to feed them. Her role in the mini colony also included taking penguins newly introduced to the enclosure and welcoming them to the group and looking after them. This welcoming behaviour involved similar actions to the gentle stroking of beaks.

She would lead these chicks away from the human at feed time, sneaking away around the pool and doubling back to a burrow that had previously been checked and found empty. On one occasion, it took more than half an hour to find them.

Basically, this all means that she has now learned 'to penguin' and knows how to be part of a colony. As a result, she's a happier penguin, albeit not happy with humans - a proper penguin attitude.

## Orphan penguin chicks

In the last week of August, as many may be aware, there were 45 confirmed penguin deaths from yet another dog attack here in Tasmania. As well as the direct deaths from a dog attack there



would also be a number of secondary deaths, of unknown numbers. This was the first time a rescue of penguin chicks had been attempted after a dog attack and although we knew the birds would be traumatised, we had no idea of the extent of that trauma and what that would entail from a caring perspective. Under natural conditions most of these chicks were not far off fledging and going to sea by themselves, however the trauma of the attack destroyed their self confidence and made them extremely panicky. Their stay in care was a lot longer than originally anticipated - almost 2 months for most of the birds.

Our carer, along with 3 volunteers, Parks & Wildlife rangers and a Wynyard local, retrieved 10 orphaned penguin chicks from the Doctors Rocks Conservation Area. Unfortunately one of the chicks was so stressed and dehydrated it was not able to survive the night. 8 of the remaining 9 chicks went on to progressively rehabilitate from intensive care to swimming in the therapy pool over a long and exhausting 8 weeks. One chick had to be euthanased as it was shown to have a shoulder injury, probably from the dog attack, that prevented it from being able to survive in the wild.

For the first 2 weeks they were utterly savage and the carer had to invest in several pairs of cut-proof gloves to save her hands. Because of their high stress levels they were one-carer birds. This meant the burden of care could not be shared. Thankfully, a large number of community members and group volunteers (see separate article below) were able to lend a helping hand. Our carer was up for 42 hours straight initially and was then putting in 19 hour days. This level of care was only able to be maintained through the assistance of many volunteers and community members (and our carer's bloody mindedness!).

For most of the chicks it took several tries before they were able to cope with being in the outside enclosure. They would go out for short periods and then have to be returned to the inside area. Inside they were separated in boxes so that they had a sense of security, but this causes social isolation. They treated the boxes as burrows where they could hide from the rest of the world. Once they were confident enough to be in the outside enclosure, the 8 chicks plus the long term resident formed a small mini colony and the group structure helped to further their self confidence.

The carer observed the following behaviours:

- The two oldest chicks became co-leaders and there was a separate "nursery area" where the youngest chicks stayed, largely supervised by P7 and mostly ignored by the leaders. As the chicks matured they would be taken off individually and after some one-on-one time in a burrow with one of the leaders, they would then join the older chicks.
- P7 had taken on the role of "sergeant major" and would organise all of the chicks to hide from the "nasty human" (actually the carer) at feed time. She would lead them in a little train line around the pool to hide them in various burrows and then she would stand guard and try to protect them.



- The youngest of the chicks had not quite "got their wild on" and although they followed the disappearing train of birds around the pool they would look around at the carer, who was setting up for the feed, and gradually lag behind the penguin train. Once the penguin train was out of sight around the other side of the pool, the younger ones would return to the carer and watch hungrily as she prepared the food. Once fed, the younger ones returned to pretending they were grown up, wild birds.
- A total of 9 penguins in the pool at the one time meant that it was like a game of dodgem cars instead of the desired swimming and diving behaviours. This meant that they had to be swimming in split shifts.
- Once a couple of them regained their confidence in the water they also began to develop predator awareness. This showed in their behaviour when startled by a loud noise or a dog barking. Instead of going into a blind panic they stopped, looked around and then scurried into a burrow, thus showing proper penguin predator avoidance behaviour. The rest of the chicks followed pretty swiftly in developing these behaviours, indicating that they were ready for release.

Seven chicks were released at first light on Wednesday, October 23rd. Many thanks to Meg Powell of The Advocate for her photos of the release.

One chick, the youngest of the group, remained in care a bit longer as it had taken him much longer to be able to cope with being out in the enclosure. He was successfully released before first light on Monday 4th November.

## A message from the seabird carer and president

### A COMMUNITY ENDEAVOUR

Many, many thanks to everyone who helped out over the last 2 months. I (Kathy Grieveson, that is) couldn't have done it without you all. From feeding the carer, flowers on the window sill, washing and drying towels, raking sand and pool cleaning, scrubbing boxes and hosing off towels, washing up, running errands, giving Bogart lots of love because his mum has been neglecting him.... to keeping the outside world up to date through Facebook, website, media interviews and - of course - all the fundraising (and innumerable other things). Donations of towels, bleach and money. Everything you have done has helped to get those penguins back into the wild.

THANK YOU!!

The support of people not directly involved has helped us to carry through a very exhausting and intensive 2 months. Phone calls, Facebook messages, emails and personal messages all helped to bolster spirits. The rehab facility would not be able to function without the volunteers who have assisted (and continue to do so), not just when an emergency arises, but from the inception of the facility.

## Calling all volunteers!

The last two months have shown that Penguin Rehab & Release really needs to extend our volunteer program! So we'll be holding a **Volunteer Program Information Evening** on

Thursday, 21st November (5.30 - 7.00pm) at Cradle Coast NRM, 1-3 Spring St, Burnie. Please indicate your intention to attend using the event on our Facebook page.

Those who attend the information evening will be invited to attend a training day to be held at the Penguin Rehab & Release facility (in Burnie) on Saturday, 23rd November.

Our Volunteer Program is designed to provide on-site support, particularly during hectic periods (usually through Summer and Autumn) and emergencies. This mainly involves enclosure care (see below) and cleaning. However, it can also include other jobs such as fundraising, community education and outreach, and assisting with training and events.

Keep in mind that much of the on-site work is dirty and physical (such as hosing soiled towels and hospital boxes, raking the enclosure sand, removing faeces from enclosure sand and the therapy pool, and helping with laundry). There will also be little direct contact with the penguins as we must ensure they remain wild. If you remain undaunted and think this is something you might be interested in, please complete our online form [here](#).

## What can you do?

It is imperative that dogs are kept out of areas where penguins have colonies and nest, and this is everyone's responsibility.

If you see a dog running loose outside of a designated dog exercise area, call your local council **AND** Parks and Wildlife (see the phone numbers below). If you see a dog off leash (even if it is accompanied by an owner) don't approach the owner. Instead ring your council **AND** Parks and Wildlife to report the incident to them. It is important to call **BOTH**, and to name the location and time of day.

Numbers to call are below. (We suggest you save the relevant numbers in your phone contacts so they are handy when you need them.)

Parks & Wildlife	Local Councils	
Toll-free: 1300 135 513	Circular Head Council	(03) 6452 4800
Hobart (03) 6233 6191	Waratah-Wynyard Council	(03) 6443 8333
Ulverstone (03) 6464 3008	Burnie Council	(03) 6430 5700
Smithton (03) 6457 1225.	Devonport Council	(03) 6424 0511
	Central Coast Council	1300 463 954
		(03) 6429 8999
		(03) 6429 8900

## Seabird rescue training

A seabird rescue training day was held on 28 July in Burnie. Some of the content covered, such as emergency contacts and how to safely transport a seabird are now available on the website at the link [here](#). A second training day is likely to be organised next year. If interested in attending, please complete our online form [here](#).

## A big thank you to our newest supporters

A big thank you to **Spirit of Tasmania** and **Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary** for their generous donation of prizes for our recent fundraising raffle. Winners are listed on our website.



Thanks also to: Burnie's **North West Regional Hospital** and **St John's Ambulance** for supplying a variety of medical/surgical items which would otherwise be disposed of; Andrew Byrne (Chief Veterinarian and CEO of **RSPCA Tasmania**) and **Animal Rescue Freecycle Tasmania** for donating essential, hard-to-source medical items; Andrew Keen at **Healthglo** who donated matting for transport boxes; the **Stamping Bug** and **Nuts About Mutts** who are donating funds from their business proceeds; our anonymous donor from Launceston who donated a brand new tumble dryer as well as making a \$500 donation; **Begents** in Burnie who knocked \$150 off the price of the tumble dryer and **Two Men and a Truck** who donated the delivery fee (\$50); **City Mission** in Burnie and Wynyard who donated much-needed towels; **Pental** who donated two boxes of White King bleach; generous donations from **Friends of Lilico Penguins**, **Emu Bay Lions Club**, **Landcare Wynyard**, students studying at the **Menzies Institute for Medical Research** who arranged group fundraising; **Wynyard Veterinary Clinic** for syringes, **Judy Synnott** and **Wildlife Rescue & Rehab** who donated 60ml syringes used for feeding and many other very useful items; **Steve & Judy Charles (& the Save a Buck Markets stallholders)** who donated stall space for 10 days of fundraising and selling raffle tickets; the wonderful members of the public who donated towels and assisted with laundry (we salute you, Laundry Warriors!)

We send our heartfelt thanks to these donors who responded during our time of urgent need.

Sincere thanks also to our first corporate sponsor, **Mancell Financial Group**, who have committed to making an annual donation.

## Looking for the perfect Christmas present?

Calendars and other items depicting some of our penguin patients are for sale online. Profits are used to cover the costs of caring for penguins. Visit our [website store](#) for details.

## Scrounge-fest!

If you have 100% cotton sheets, we want them! They may be a little faded, or marked, but are perfect for protecting our sensitive rescued penguins. The sheets are used as covers for the intensive care hospital boxes. Cotton reduces the temperature inside the box while the penguins can feel safe in the dark.

## 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.

To report multiple dead seabirds, contact Marine Conservation immediately on: 0427 942 537.

## Thanks to our supporters!

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

A very special thank you to all our volunteers, **Lesley Kurek (friend, mentor and seabird carer extraordinaire)**, **Fish Frenzy** (Burnie), **Kyeema Seafoods** and **Smithton Veterinary Clinic**, in addition to the following generous supporters:

- Landcare
- Wildcare
- Burnie City Council
- Friends of Burnie Penguins
- Friends of Lillico Penguins
- Mancell Financial Group.