

Burnie rehab centre gets injured birds back into the wild

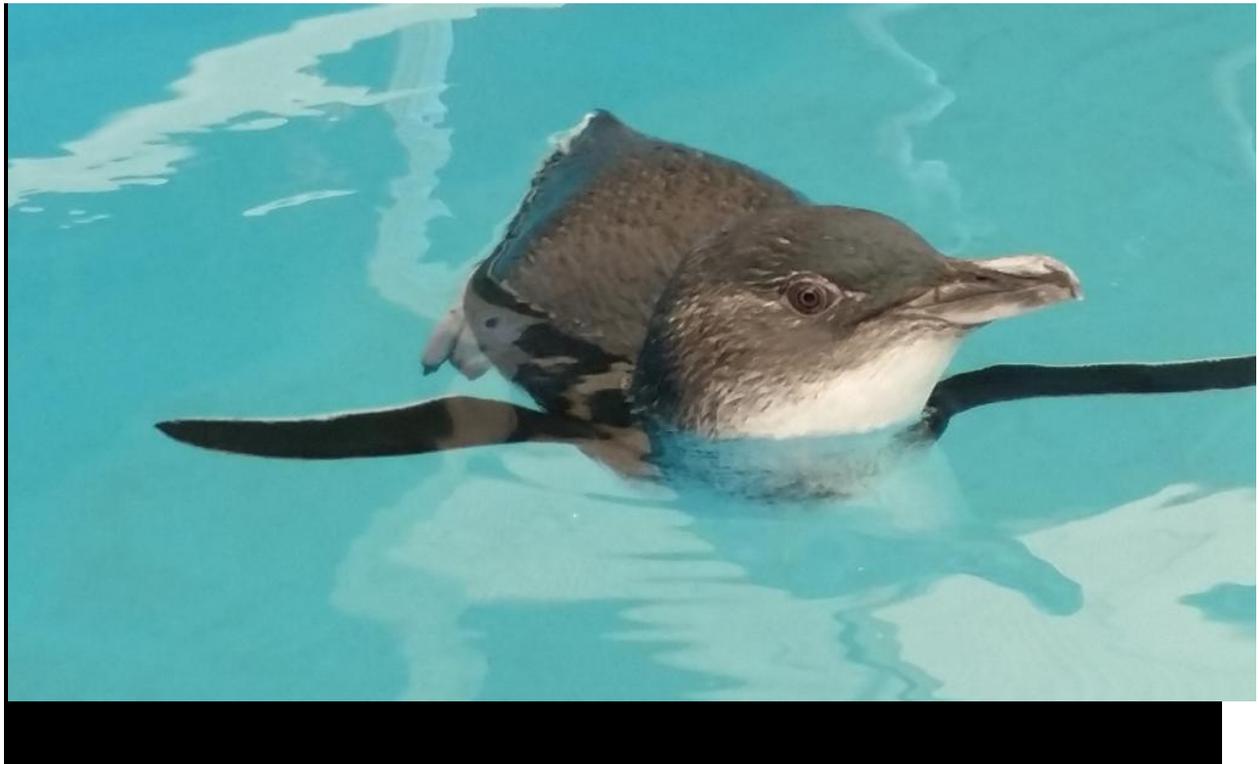
A new Tasmanian penguin rehabilitation centre has opened and it has a few luxury features even humans would envy.

HELEN KEMPTON, Mercury

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IT sounds like a luxury resort for little penguins — a 55 sq m enclosure complete with above-ground pool, bath house and herring served on demand.

There are currently two little penguins staying at the Penguin Rehabilitation Facility, in Burnie, the first facility of its kind in Tasmania's North-West.

But they are not there for a holiday.

Instead, they are recuperating from injury or recovering from illness.

One came into the facility Kathy Grieveson runs from her home in suburban Burnie with a severe head injury, the other as a malnourished chick.

“The one with the head injury was found on rocks and is learning to swim and dive again,” Ms Grieveson said.

“The other needs to be here until it moults and is weatherproof again.”

The little birds need the pool for hydro therapy to build up their strength before being released back into the wild.

The bath house is in a separate area and used by little penguins under quarantine.

Until the Burnie centre was established in 2018, injured and sick birds needed to travel to the state’s South for care, then travel back to the North-West for release when healed.

“It put extra stress on the birds so it is great to be able to provide this service here,” she said.

Since the centre opened in November last year, 16 penguins have been admitted.

Nine have been released. two are still in care and sadly the others — one which was injured by a boat — did not make it.

Ms Grieveson said 100 per cent of little penguins she saw that had been injured in a dog attack died.

Ms Grieveson said she is mentored by experienced seabird carer Leslie Kurek and aided by a band of volunteers who help her collect seawater, transport injured and healed birds, clean out the facility and wash lots and lots of towels.

Volunteer Sue Kole started during the working bees held to build the facility and said she did so because she loves all wildlife and volunteering itself.

Jacinta Lang is studying conservation and land management and is getting hands-on experience with seabirds at the facility and Sarah Facey, who has been a little penguin guide at the Burnie colony since 2017, says she is there “almost every day”.

The rehabilitation centre is always looking for financial sponsors and donations of towels and small herring to feed the little penguins.

People who can help can visit **penguinrehab.org**.