

# Little blue penguins



## Stat attack

The success of the carefully managed Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony is reflected in its statistics: penguin numbers have risen from just 14 breeding pairs in 1992, to over 120 in 2007. Peak numbers of penguins returning from sea have also risen from 42 to 203.



## Local nuggets

Little blue penguins can find themselves in very strange places in their search for a good nest site. Some have found their way into the cafeteria at the Taiaroa Head Albatross Colony, having journeyed up the hill from Pilot's Beach. According to staff, one Little blue even made it into the kitchen where he spent a dark and lonely night before being discovered the next morning!



## Linnaeus says...

Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Sphenisciformes  
Family: Spheniscidae  
Genus: *Eudyptula*  
Species: *E. minor*



## What the...?!

While at sea, Little blue penguins can 'cat nap' by floating on the surface of the water like ducks.

What's blue and white, weighs only 1kg, and is just 25cm tall? Our very own Little blue penguin (*kororā*) – the world's smallest penguin species! These tiny seabirds can be sighted at various spots along the Otago coast, but there is no better place to view them than at the Blue Penguin Colony at Oamaru.

Located in an old quarry at the edge of Oamaru Harbour, the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony was formed in 1992, after concern was expressed for the welfare and safety of the penguins that were naturally nesting in the area. Due in large part to the efforts of hard-working volunteers, the quarry was cleaned up, and the whole area has since been developed into a penguin haven. Purpose-built nest boxes have been installed within small mounds of earth and the colony is surrounded by native vegetation and predator traps.

Unlike other penguin species, Little blues are true 'home-bodies', never travelling far from their colony. They spend their days out at sea in search of fish, and return to their burrows after dark.

Visitors to the Oamaru colony can view these little penguins in their natural environment as they waddle ashore just after dusk under 'penguin-friendly' sodium lighting. This type of lighting allows people to see the penguins, but does not affect the penguins themselves. The penguins at this colony are continually monitored to assess the effects of tourism. The results of this have indicated, however, that the birds seem to be relishing the limelight, as the Oamaru colony has the most successful breeding rate of any in the country.



A Little blue penguin chick in a nest box



Aerial view of the Oamaru Blue Penguin Colony

