

Current Little Penguin Research

From 2006-2009, researchers from Murdoch University and University of NSW will be working on several projects to help conserve our important colony of Little Penguins in the Perth metropolitan area. One of the projects involves attaching satellite tags to Little Penguins from both Penguin and Garden islands to work out where their feeding grounds are and the routes they use to get there.



In a previous radio-tracking study, penguins from Penguin Island were found in Warnbro Sound and Comet Bay, particularly when raising chicks.

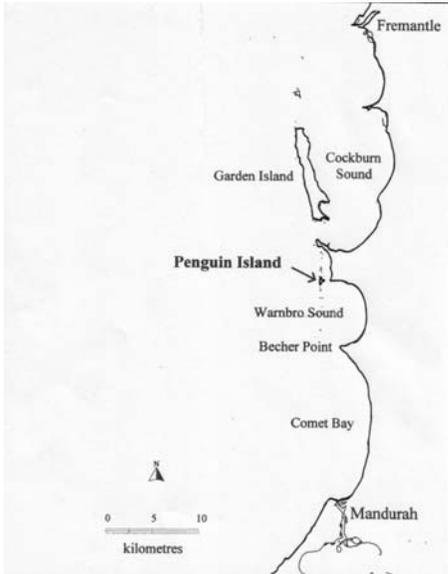
From the satellite tagging project, researchers will determine if the penguins from Penguin Island use the same areas in different years, and if the penguins from Garden Island feed in Cockburn Sound.

Another part of the project involves marking individual penguins with small microchips, just like those used on pet dogs and cats. By catching marked and unmarked penguins, the researchers will be able to work out the survival rate of the penguins, and eventually the number of penguins living on Penguin Island.

Genetic information from the penguins here and from colonies in the south west will be used to determine the likelihood of penguins moving from one colony to another, and whether the penguins on Penguin Island are genetically distinct, i.e. a subspecies, from those elsewhere in Australia.

The researchers are also interested in the causes of penguin deaths. Most penguins die at sea and will never be found, but the occasional penguin is washed ashore. Autopsies are performed on dead penguins wherever possible. The location of dead penguins also tells the researchers how far the penguins may travel. One penguin banded on Penguin Island was recently found at Eagle Bay!

If you would like to stay fit and look for penguins at the same time along the beaches of Cockburn Sound, Warnbro Sound or Comet Bay, please leave your details at the Penguin Experience or contact our Penguin Hotline on 0405 397 913. Dr Belinda Cannell will then contact you and arrange the most convenient walking area for you.



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