

Recovery of Breeding Little Penguin

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The Penguin Study Group (PSG) within the Victorian Ornithological Research Group has been in operation for nearly nine years. We have found that few Little Penguins *Eudyptula minor* banded* as pulli, in or near the study area on Phillip Island, Victoria, have returned there to breed.

Then, in 1973, Warrnambool bander V. H. Yeoman founded a banded bird moulting at the Twelve Apostles, Port Campbell National Park (Anon. 1974). It had been banded on Phillip Island as a pullus 16 months previously. This recovery led us to think that perhaps some pulli might breed in other than their natal colonies.

In October-November 1976, PSG members Ron Thoday, Di Britton and I spent ten days searching through penguin colonies in western Victoria and into South Australia.

On 2 November, at London Bridge in the Port Campbell National Park, we found a female Little Penguin NA3** incubating two eggs (see Recovery Round-up). It had been banded as a pullus by Dr Ann Hodgson at Bruny Island, near Hobart, Tasmania, on 12 December 1959 and had not been seen since 19 December 1959.

Previously, three birds banded by Dr Hodgson had been recovered on the western Victorian and adjoining South Australian coasts, one of them alive (Phillips 1960, Guiler 1962, Hodgson 1975). One bird from Phillip Island had been recovered from north-west Tasmania (Anon. 1971); and another from King Island (Anon. 1971). The recovery of this bird (band NA3), therefore, suggests that trans-Bass Strait movement may not be uncommon.

With this recovery we have established four facts:

- Bass Strait does not form a barrier between Little Penguin colonies.
- Little Penguins will breed in other than their natal colonies.
- Though longevity up to 16 years had been inferred (Hodgson 1975), at 17 this is the oldest Little Penguin on record.
- Little Penguins can still breed at 17 years of age.

References

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- Anon. (1974), Recovery Round-up, *Aust. Bird Bander*, 12:41.
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- Hodgson, A. (1975), 'Some Aspects of the Ecology of the Fairy Penguin *Eudyptula minor novaeollandiae* (Forster) in Southern Tasmania', University of Tasmania, Hobart, pp. 170-174.
- Phillips, A. (1960), 'A Note on the Ecology of the Fairy Penguin *Eudyptula minor novaeollandiae* (Forster 1781) in Southern Tasmania', The Papers and Proc. of the Royal Society of Tasmania, 94:63-72.

* Bands used were provided by the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO.

**University of Hobart, Tasmania, band.

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