

THE POPULATION STATUS OF THE KELP GULL *Larus dominicanus* IN VICTORIA

PETER DANN

Phillip Island Nature Park, P.O. Box 97, Cowes, Phillip Island, Victoria, 3922. E-mail: pdann@penguins.org.au

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Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus* were first reported in Victoria in 1953 in Port Phillip Bay and currently occur around Port Fairy and Lady Julia Percy Island in western Victoria, Phillip Island and Port Phillip Bay in central Victoria and Wilsons Promontory and Lakes Entrance in eastern Victoria. Breeding of Kelp Gulls was first recorded in Victoria at Seal Rocks, near Phillip Island, in January 1971 and by December/January 2002–03, the breeding population in Victoria was c. 84 birds at three sites; 29 at Lady Julia Percy Island, 51 at Seal Rocks and four at Phillip Island. The overall rate of increase between 1970 and 2003 is estimated at 10.3 percent per annum. The implications of the expansion of Kelp Gulls in Victoria for the maintenance of local populations of Pacific Gull *L. pacificus* are unknown and require attention.