



Fast Facts



Other Names: Fairy Penguin, Blue Penguin

Scientific Name:
Eudyptula minor newzealandiae

Conservation Status: Least Concern



Body Length: 27-43 cm

Weight: 1-1.2 kg

Incubation: 36 days

Number of eggs: 1-3

Habitat: Cool, temperate, coastal and offshore waters

Distribution: Southern Australia and New Zealand



Little Penguin

Description

Little Penguins are the smallest of all penguins and the only species to live permanently in Australian waters. The Little Penguin has a streamlined body, small wings modified as flippers and a tail that acts as a rudder. The feathers provide excellent waterproofing and insulation. They have a grey face, dark blue back, and white chest and abdomen. Their feet are dull yellow and they have a black bill.

Diet

Little Penguins are carnivores and eat fish including anchovies, pilchards, whiting and squid.

In the wild

Little Penguins spend a lot of time preening themselves with a wax-like oil from a gland near the base of the tail. If there are any fleas in the plumage, they can lose their oil when preening, which can be fatal. Penguins come ashore in the evening and also to breed and moult. When ashore they live in colonies ranging in size from a few pairs to thousands. Their natural predators include sharks and seals.

Threats

Disturbance to their ocean and beach habitats affects both the survival and breeding of Little Penguins. Ocean threats include overfishing (especially of pilchards, whiting and squid), the use of gill nets, disturbance from boating, oil spills and related pollution. On land, predation by cats, dogs and foxes, as well as careless recreational use of beaches, seriously threaten the survival of Little Penguins.

At Perth Zoo

In 1999, Perth Zoo opened a Little Penguin exhibit, the Penguin Plunge. This exhibit is part of the Zoo's Australian Bushabout and includes a 50,000 litre outdoor pool with limestone reefs and beach areas with coastal vegetation. The whole exhibit is enveloped by a soft net which contains fringed ferns that conceal the penguins. Perth Zoo also breeds Little Penguins. Come for the penguin feed at 11:00 am every day.

DID YOU KNOW?

Penguins have an annual moult, which takes about fifteen days. During this time they are unable to go to sea because they have lost their waterproofing. This is a very stressful time for a penguin, during which they retire to their burrows or shelters and don't eat.