

# Be Penguin Aware

Little Penguins - Big Future



## THE LITTLE PENGUIN RECOVERY PLAN - ACTIONS FOR LITTLE PENGUIN CONSERVATION

### Plan Development

- A Little Penguin Steering Committee was formed in April 1991 following local community concern regarding the continued survival of Little Penguins in Manly. The Steering Committee produced the Management Plan for Little Penguins- North Sydney Harbour (1996).
- The Little Penguin population at Manly was listed as endangered on Part 2 of Schedule 1 of the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act* 1995 (TSC Act) on 31 January 1997.
- The Little Penguin Recovery Team was convened in February 1998 to oversee the initial investigations and guide NPWS in the preparation of the recovery plan of the Little Penguin population.
- As required by the TSC Act the Little Penguin Recovery Team prepared a recovery plan for the population - the Endangered Population of Little Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) at Manly Recovery Plan.
- The plan was approved and signed by Bob Debus, the Minister for the Environment.

### Plan Implementation

- The Little Penguin Recovery Team is now implementing the Recovery Plan. The team includes representatives from NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Manly Council, Manly Environment Centre, Taronga Zoo, Charles Sturt University, NSW Fisheries, Waterways Authority, the Environment Protection Authority and the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association.

### Monitoring

Since 1997, the NPWS has monitored nest sites. They also conduct annual penguin landing site counts. The Manly Environment Centre has recorded local Little Penguin recollections as well as current sighting and mortality information through 'Penguin Watch'.



This project has been funded by Manly Council's Environmental Levy. This project has been funded by Coastcare—a cooperative Commonwealth/State/Local Government program supporting communities caring for our coast.

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### • Biology and Research

Charles Sturt University in conjunction with the NPWS conducts research on the Little Penguins and records sightings by the community via a web-site. Taronga Zoo has kept banding records of Little Penguins since 1987. Sick and injured penguins have been taken care of by NPWS, Taronga Zoo's Wildlife Clinic and volunteers with WIRES (Wildlife Information and Rescue Service) and the Sydney Metropolitan Wildlife Services.

### • Community Education

#### Manly Council

The Manly Environment Centre has worked with local residents on activities such as Penguin Watch, soil erosion mitigation, population counts and the production of an information brochure.

Manly Council is coordinating the Little Penguin Aware Community Education and Awareness Project to raise awareness in the Manly community of how to minimise impacts on the Little Penguins.

#### NPWS

NPWS Rangers have educated, surveyed and consulted with residents and visitors about the Little Penguins. The National Parks Foundation raised funds for the penguins' conservation with a 'Save the Fairy Penguin Appeal' in 1998.

### • Habitat Management

#### Manly Council

Manly Council are identifying and designating in consultation with the community Wildlife Protection Areas, under the Companion Animals Act 1998. Dogs and cats will be prohibited in these areas.

Bush regeneration has been carried out by Manly Council and the Manly Environment Centre near penguin habitat.

#### NPWS

Regular pest control is undertaken by the NPWS within Sydney Harbour National Park.

### • Identification of Critical Habitat

The NPWS, in conjunction with the Little Penguin Recovery Team is currently working to identify critical habitat for the population.

### • Council Policy Review

Council continually reviews their policies and procedures to ensure they are consistent with the objectives of the Recovery Plan.



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### LITTLE PENGUIN LIFESTYLE

#### Daily routine

- Little Penguins leave in the morning to go to sea about 1-2 hours before sunrise.
- Just after sunset, Little Penguins come ashore in groups called 'rafts'. 'Rafting' protects them from natural predators by making them appear as one large animal instead of many small penguins!

#### What do Little Penguins eat?

- Little Penguins eat small, quickly moving fish such as anchovies and pilchards. They can also eat squid, krill and other crustaceans.
- They eat up to 500g a day and usually fish alone.

#### How do Little Penguins swim?

- Their heavy bones counteract a buoyant layer of blubber, so, like a scuba diver using a weight-belt and wetsuit, they maintain 'neutral buoyancy' and can 'fly' through the water with ease.
- Little Penguins 'waddle' on land, but can use their feet as rudders to steer when swimming.
- A thick coat of short, stiff feathers, spread through with wax from an oil gland at the base of the tail by preening, keeps them warm and dry in the water. It works just like a 'Drizabone' raincoat!

#### How far and fast do Little Penguins travel to find food?

- Little Penguins pursue their prey in shallow depths up to about 15 metres deep and dive for about 23 seconds. However, Little Penguins have been known to dive to 70m and hold their breath underwater for about 55 seconds!
- They swim 2-4 km/hr on average (about a human adult walking speed) but can swim up to about 6.4km/hr (about a human adult jogging speed).
- During the breeding season they usually take short trips, staying within a 8-15km radius from the burrow and travelling about 15-50km at sea every day (more than twice the City to Surf!) for about 12-18 hours.



Artwork: Richard Ling

#### How do they communicate?

- Little Penguins growl, whoop, meow and bray while in their burrows and give a sharp snorting yell when disturbed. A short sharp bark is used at sea, while fishing near shore or when moving around near burrows.
- They communicate aggression with a direct look, a zigzag approach and often make contact. If they are really serious, they may even bite another penguin on the neck and hit it with a flipper. Little Penguins are one of the most aggressive species of penguins!
- Little penguins may also brush and clean each other. This behaviour is called 'allopreening' and is common in lots of bird and mammal species.



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