

Be Penguin Aware

Little Penguins - Big Future



LITTLE PENGUIN 'FAQ's

Frequently asked questions about Manly's Little Penguins

CONSERVATION

Q: Why are they endangered?

A: In recent years human-related activities have threatened the Manly population of Little Penguins and their habitat, mainly through:

1. Habitat loss from development and removal of vegetation,
2. Predation by dogs, cats and foxes
3. Disturbance from human activity

As a result, the number of Little Penguin deaths has been more than the number of births and the population has declined. There is estimated to be only about 74 breeding pairs of Little Penguins remaining at Manly. This is a critical condition, especially as the Little Penguin colony is the last remaining colony on mainland NSW and is situated so close to a major urban centre.

Q: How many are there at Manly?

A: A recent survey of the colony during the 2000/01 breeding season estimated around 74 breeding pairs.

Q: Are they the only penguins in Australia?

A: They are the only penguins to breed on the Australian mainland. Rockhopper and Royal penguins breed on sub-Antarctic Australian islands.

Q: Are there problems with feral dogs or cats?

A: Yes. Dogs which roam freely on the foreshore can kill many penguins at once. In April 2001, one dog killed 8 penguins. Dogs have been known to come ashore from boats and kill penguins and any breed of dog can be a threat

Q: Where do the colony at Manly nest?

A: As the population of Little Penguins at Manly is endangered, its location must be kept a secret, to minimise disturbance from people.

Q: Who are Little Penguins' natural predators?

A: Little Penguins' natural hazards are as sharks, birds of prey, seals, rough weather and food shortages.

BIOLOGY

Q: What type of animal is a penguin?

A: Penguins are birds. They have a beak and feathers. They have modified wings, called flippers, that help them to swim in the ocean.

DAILY CYCLE

Q: When do Little Penguins leave in the morning?

A: About 1-2 hours before sunrise

Q: Why do they come ashore in groups at sunset?

A: For protection from predators. In a group they appear as one large animal rather than many small penguins!

Q: Do they arrive in pairs or family groups?

A: No, unlikely.



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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LITTLE PENGUIN 'FAQ's continued...

FEEDING

Q: What do they eat?

A: Mainly small fish such as pilchards and anchovies, some squid.

Q: How much do they eat?

A: In captivity when they are not exercising, they eat 150g per day. At sea, they would probably eat up to 500g per day.

Q: Do parents feed each other?

A: No

Q: How deep do they dive?

A: Generally less than 10m. They can dive to depths of 70m.

Q: Where are their main feeding areas?

A: The Little Penguins at Manly are likely to feed throughout Sydney Harbour, especially around seagrass beds and amongst the seaweed called kelp near the shore.

Q: How long can they hold their breath underwater?

A: Usually 4-45 seconds, a maximum of 65 seconds has been recorded.

Q: How fast can they swim?

A: 2-4 km/hr on average (maximum 6.4 km/hr)

Q: How far do they travel at sea each day?

A: 15-50 km.

BREEDING

Q: When is the breeding season?

A: Usually July through March

Q: How many eggs are laid?

A: 2 in a clutch, sometimes 2 clutches in one breeding season, if plenty of food is available.

Q: How long is the incubation period?

A: 35 days

Q: Does the male or female incubate eggs?

A: Both. They take it in turns.

Q: What do chicks eat and how?

A: Both parents feed chicks by regurgitating fish caught at sea.

Q: What happens to the chick if parents fail to return for a few days?

A: It dies of starvation.

Q: How do chicks know their parents?

A: It is thought that chicks do not know their parents. The parents recognise the chick by its voice and position near the burrow.

Q: At what age do chicks go to sea?

A: About 5-8 weeks after hatching.

Q: Are they taught to swim by their parents?

A: No. They know how to swim and catch food instinctively.

Q: Do they have the same mate each year?

A: Most renew the pair bond each season. If a partner dies, they will usually find a new mate.

Q: How far have fledgling (young) penguins travelled?

A: The longest distance swimming recorded is 2000kms from home.



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Threats to Manly's Little Penguins

HABITAT LOSS

On Land

Threat:

- The removal of vegetation near the foreshore, even weeds, can deprive Little Penguins of nesting habitat and materials.

You can help

- Contact NPWS or Council for advice before tidying or removing any vegetation near the foreshore, including weeds.
- Only remove vegetation from within your property boundary.
- Replace any weeds removed with native species such as Gahnia spp. or Lomandra spp. Contact NPWS or Council for a list of species.

Threat:

- Disposal of vegetation over cliffs may cover Little Penguins' burrows or block access to them.

You can help:

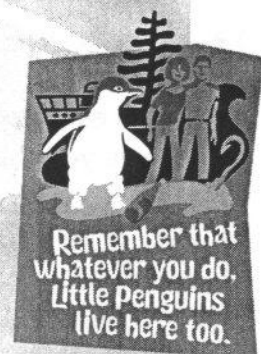
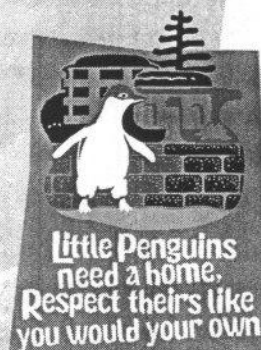
- Dispose of your vegetation through Council's monthly Vegetation Clean-Up. Check your zone clean up calendar for specific dates.
- Compost waste from your garden or use it as mulch

Threat:

- Construction materials from the renovation of homes near the foreshore can temporarily block access to burrows or cover them completely.
- Noise, light & vibrations from construction can make nearby burrows unsuitable to live in.

You can help

- Adhere to your development consent. An '8 Part Test' must be carried out in accordance with Section 5A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act if the site is a known potential habitat for Little Penguins.
- Minimise the amount of noise, light and vibration on to the foreshore and out to sea from your construction.



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