

Every little helps.

Early December is a really important time for the penguins because their chicks have said goodbye and just left the nest at just 8 weeks old! The adults are beginning to moult which means they lose all their feathers and replace them with new ones!

During this time they are in more danger than usual from the wild West Coast weather and predators like dogs, this is because they are not waterproof and do not have an escape plan if they are attacked.

Soo.. it is really important for the penguins to have a really safe place to recover from their moulting and a warm, insulated house to keep their eggs nice and toasty before they hatch into chicks later in the year.

We here at Lincoln University are very jealous that you guys have Little Blue penguins almost in your very own backyard! We think it's an awesome idea to be able to know what you can do to help their colonies grow and thrive on the West Coast. It is great to know what interesting things live around you so you can explain to other locals or visitors what you've learnt and pass on all the penguin knowledge you have learnt!!

Why do the penguins need our help?

Being the world's smallest penguins come with some pretty big problems, they don't have a shield of armour or a giant bodyguard to protect them from predators such as cats or dogs. They can't walk on land very quickly with those webbed feet or have the best



street smart so are in danger of being run over by cars on coastal roads especially near Punakaiki.

Their populations are not rapidly decreasing like some species in the world such as rhino or lions in Africa but they aren't exactly getting bigger like some birds as they only have two chicks per year! So they need all the help they can get just in case anything goes dramatically wrong and this iconic species gets into trouble.



Help us help our Little Blues !!

The world's smallest species of penguin.



Our mission.

What Lincoln University hopes to understand from the study and investigation into these wee, elusive penguins includes;

- How big the colony of penguins is and how many breeding pairs there may be ?
- What time they come back to their nests to swap over incubation duties, see their chicks and have a bit of a sleep in from the sea where they have been eating fish, squid and crustaceans like crabs all day long?
- What time they go back out to sea before the sunrise to eat some more fish?
- Where their nests and burrows are hiding out in the bush? Which can seem like a bit of a jungle to the smallest breed of penguin in the entire world.!
- How do YOU think we can change their artificial houses better so we can look inside without upsetting the penguins too much? Maybe a secret entrance for a camera to peek through?



What we've already discovered.

Well...we now know that the penguins come in from their dinner and swimming time between 10 and 12:30 at night, making them a 'nocturnal' species meaning they are active during the night time. This is when they feed the chicks or catch some well earned Zzzz.

Because... we also know that the penguins are very early risers! Probably even earlier than you guys! They get up between 3 and 5 in the morning to go back out to sea!! Just like the wee cutie in the picture below



We have been looking for penguins in a pretty specific place, down a track that leads straight to the beach from some native trees so we know from capturing some sneaky night vision photos that there are about 4 or 5 penguins using the track to get back to their burrows. But we don't know yet if they are boys or girls.

We tried looking for the burrows a couple of times, but the penguins are so small and the bush so thick they could be hiding anywhere!

How you can lend a helping flipper!!

We challenge you to help the penguins (and us) with inventing a house design so we can build them this year and install them before the penguins start looking for a new place to build their nests in June.

The house should be created so that we, other scientists and rangers can look into the nesting boxes with minimum disturbance to the penguins inside!

This can be done by using a roof lid that can be moved around or including a secret camera compartment . It's up to you!!! Maybe you could make them as sustainable as possible and made out of recyclable materials like the examples below .

