

## Media Release

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For immediate release



### RECORD NUMBERS OF KORORĀ AT ŌAMARU BLUE PENGUIN COLONY

Every evening rafts of kororā (little blue penguins) swim ashore at the Ōamaru Blue Penguin Colony (OBPC), with peak season (August-February) traditionally seeing over 200 penguins coming back to the habitat. Last week the previous record of 390 penguins in one night was broken four times over with the new record sitting at 432.

The colony, where conservation is married with tourism in a unique visitor experience, attributes the increase to sea swells in June that disrupted the breeding penguins. Six weeks on from the sea swells, the birds started laying the eggs at the same time, which collectively saw the kororā reaching the post guard phase of chick rearing (where both parents leave the chick unattended) in larger numbers.

Dr. Philippa Agnew, the on staff environmental scientist, was optimistic about the season ahead, “It is really great that the penguins have recovered so well.”

When the Ōamaru Blue Penguin Colony was established in 1992, five minutes away from the township of Ōamaru, the mission was clear: to protect the penguins. Dr. Agnew feeds vital information into a world-wide science community, dedicated to saving penguin species.

Across the colony and the Ōamaru Creek Reserve a record-breaking 1206 eggs were laid and 914 chicks fledged during the 2020 breeding season. The overall growing numbers of penguins is a result of the research and conservation work done at the colony to reduce predators, eliminate human disturbance and provide nesting habitats. The breeding success of the world’s smallest penguins here is amongst the highest recorded for the species.

The OBPC is a key attraction that entices visitors into the Waitaki District, and due to the evening arrival of the penguins, the colony has encouraged overnight stays. Without the 90% that makes up international visitation, the colony was able to maintain an operation in 2020 with support from STAAP. The attraction was then scaled-back to operate in a model which was co-supported by MBIE and domestic visitors.

The rebound of domestic travellers after lockdowns and during holiday periods proved to be stronger than first thought. The OBPC remains a highlight for many travellers who spend the night in Oamaru, and importantly these same customers bring in additional revenue for local accommodation and the hospitality industry.

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