

WARRNAMBOOL COASTCARE LANDCARE Group Inc.



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MIDDLE ISLAND PENGUIN MONITORING PROGRAM VOLUNTEER GUIDE 2014 – 2015

RELEVANT CONTACTS

Program Coordinator: Jess Bouchier – 0438 671 356
WCLG Middle Island Officer: Kristie King – 0458 747 043
WCLG Leader: Bruce Campbell – 0431 057 741

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Emergency (Ambulance, Police, Fire Authority) – 000 or 112 from mobiles
Warrnambool Police – 55 601333
South West Healthcare (Warrnambool Base Hospital) – 55 631666
Warrnambool Surf Life Saving Club – 55 611790

THE MIDDLE ISLAND LITTLE PENGUIN COLONY

Thanks for volunteering your time to help monitor the Little Penguins of Middle Island. During the penguin breeding season, adult birds return to land under the cover of dark to maintain burrows, attract mates, lay and incubate eggs and raise chicks. Counting the arriving penguins over the breeding season allows us to monitor the colony's recovery following several years of severe fox predation.

PREPARATION

Expect to get wet on your way over and back. Arrive wearing gear that can get wet (e.g. boardies, bathers, old clothes) and bring a set of warm clothes to change into when you get to the island, particularly a jumper or wind-proof jacket. There may be concealed hazards in the water and boxthorn on the island so please bring footwear for i) the water crossings (e.g. wetsuit shoes, old runners) and ii) while on the island. **Volunteers without appropriate footwear and clothing will not be allowed to participate. Please note smoking is not permitted while on the island.**

WHAT TO BRING

- A waterproof tub, container or bag for gear;
- Footwear for water crossings and also while on the island;
- A towel;
- A warm change of clothes, especially a wind-proof jacket and beanie;
- A bottle of water;

- A mobile phone in a waterproof covering (e.g. Tupperware container, zip-lock bag);
- Any medications you may need.

COUNT SCHEDULE 2014-2015

Count dates have been selected to coincide with times of low tide and are conducted fortnightly from October to March. Meeting times will vary depending on expected sunset times and daylight savings. If you cannot attend a count you have volunteered for please let Kristie know as soon as you can.

Day	Date	Meeting time	Expected finish time
Tuesday	11 November	8:00 PM	10:15 PM
Wednesday	26 November	8:15 PM	10:30 PM
Wednesday	10 December	8:30 PM	10:45 PM
Tuesday	23 December	8:30 PM	10:45 PM
Wednesday	7 January	8:30 PM	10:45 PM
Thursday	22 January	8:15 PM	10:30 PM
Thursday	5 February	8:00 PM	10:15 PM
Thursday	19 February	7:45 PM	10:00 PM
Thursday	5 March	7:30 PM	9:45 PM

CROSSING TO THE ISLAND

Please arrive at the Stingray Bay carpark by the meeting time as late volunteers will not be admitted once we have crossed. You will need to sign in, provide an emergency contact number, receive a Personal Flotation Device (PFD), and be briefed on count procedures before we head off as a group. Though counts are conducted at times of low tide, accessing the island involves crossing a channel of variable width and depth that runs parallel to the Middle Island beach. This channel may be up to 1.2m deep and 4.0m wide depending on tide and ocean conditions, however there will be an experienced person there to guide you through. It is asked that volunteers follow the leader's directions, travel behind the guide in single file and keep an eye out for each other during crossings. The count will not be conducted during rough weather or turbulent ocean conditions.

THE COUNT

Once on the island, volunteers will be stationed at one of five penguin entrance points in groups of two or three and provided with a torch (covered with red cellophane to reduce disturbance to penguins), a walkie-talkie, a few munchies, a hand-counter and insect repellent. Penguins start to arrive about 40 minutes after sunset. Counts begin when the first penguin is sighted and finish one hour after this. If you see a penguin and haven't already been notified of the first arrival, use the walkie-talkie to let everyone else know that the count has begun. As Little Penguins are easily disturbed, please stay still and quiet during counts, setting walkie-talkies to a low volume and mobiles to silent.

If visibility is poor and there are few arriving, use your torch intermittently to check for penguins. If visibility is poor and there is a continuous stream of birds, shine a single beam across the penguins' path and leave it on. This will help you count them accurately. If you are in close proximity, try not to shine the torch light directly

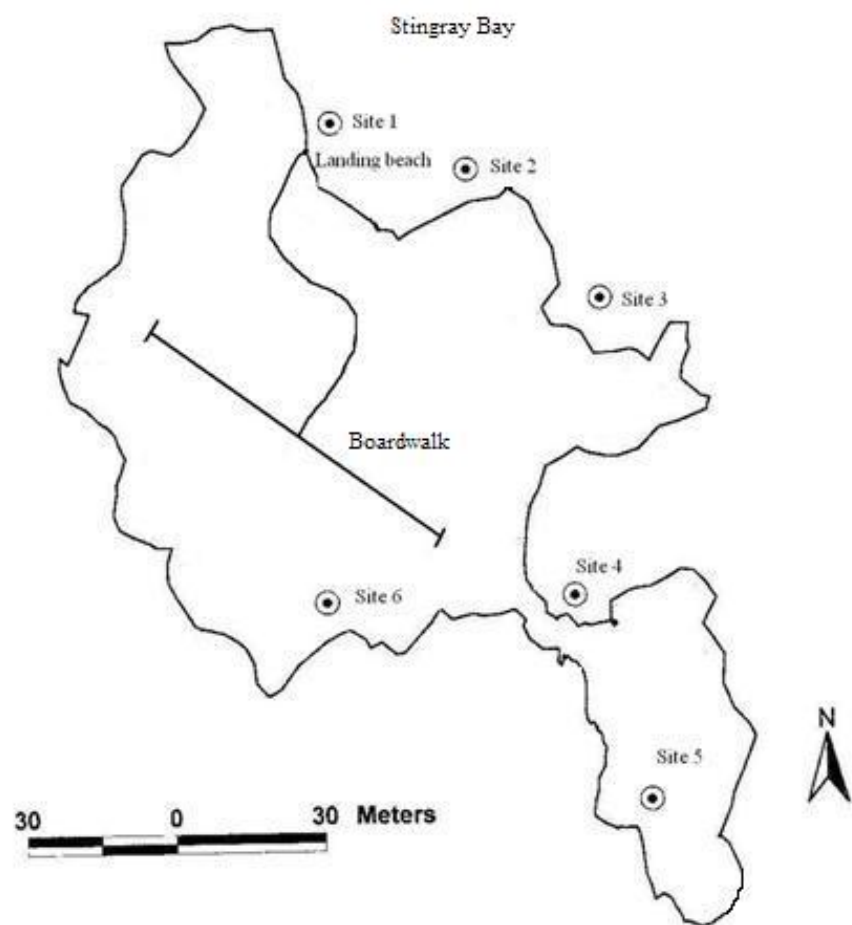
at birds. Press the hand-counter each time you count an arriving bird. The end of the count will be announced over walkie-talkie. If you are on the island's top section, move to the boardwalk to meet up with the rest of the group when the count concludes. If you are on the beach or the reef, move to the bottom of the staircase.

CROSSING BACK TO THE MAINLAND

A head count will be conducted before we leave the island as a group. During the night crossing it is important that we leave the island efficiently and safely. You may want to change back into wet gear and place your property in a waterproof container. Move in single file and look out for your fellow volunteers. At the carpark a final head count is conducted and volunteers sign-off. Any incidents should now be reported to the coordinator.

MAREMMA GUARDIAN DOGS

You may have heard that there are Maremma guardian dogs on Middle Island to help protect the penguins from fox predation. Caring for the dogs is the responsibility of the Warrnambool City Council and the appointed Maremma handlers. The Council advises visitors not to approach the dogs or encourage affection. We do not want the dogs to become too tame and follow someone off the island. The dogs will bark on arrival but will not bite. They may also try to follow and sniff you; please ignore this behaviour and recognise it as them accepting us.



WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE MIDDLE ISLAND'S AMAZING LITTLE PENGUIN COLONY UP CLOSE. THANKS FOR YOUR TIME!