



Set net ban to save penguins

THE BELEAGUERED YELLOW-EYED PENGUIN will be assisted in its struggle for survival by the imposition of a set net ban around the southern half of the Moeraki Peninsula in Otago. This is the country's first set net ban imposed specifically to protect a bird.

The ban, to apply year round, will also protect the recreational salmon fishery in the area.

At least eight yellow-eyed penguins have drowned near the peninsula in recent years; six of them died within three days. No doubt many others have drowned in set nets but were not reported.

With a mainland population of only 130 pairs, the impact of set nets on the species is devastating. Over the total mainland range of the penguin, at least 50 are known to have died in set nets. Yet Otago Museum penguin expert John Darby believes this is only a small proportion of those killed.

As more knowledge comes to light, it is apparent that many of our inshore diving birds are seriously threatened by set nets. The frequent drownings of pied shags in Panmure Basin, Auckland, is a well documented case. Other anecdotal reports about birds caught in set nets are building up a clear picture of how widespread the problem is. In two separate incidents a gill netter killed a total of 600 shearwaters in Southland's Te Wae Wae Bay. Other birds frequently drowned are Hutton's and fluttering shearwaters, spotted shags and little blue penguins.

There is now a compelling case for a total ban on all set netting in New Zealand. Our marine ecosystems and our recreational and commercial fisheries would be better off without them.

If you have any detailed information about birds drowning in set nets, please send it to Alan Tennyson, Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, PO Box 631, Wellington.

Alan Tennyson

Moeraki lighthouse keeper and honorary ranger Janice Jones is a longtime campaigner against set netting. This 1986 photo shows her feeding a yellow-eyed penguin chick while an adult looks at two less fortunate penguins killed in set nets.

Photo: Otago Daily Times.



Kokako to benefit from book

IF ALL 2000 COPIES of a new rare birds book are sold, the kokako recovery programme will receive a financial injection of \$180,000.

The book, *The Fifty Rarest Birds of the World*, comprises paintings by Auckland artist Blake Twigden, and was launched recently by Conservation Minister Denis Marshall.

Two of the species featured are New Zealand ones – the kokako and the kakapo.

The text was written by the deputy director of the International Council for Bird Protection, Dr Nigel Collar and one of his colleagues, Mark Cocker.

The book is limited to 2000 copies and costs \$2700 plus GST. Publishers are Osborne Editions International of Auckland.

The kakapo, as depicted by Blake Twigden in his new book.

