



Title: *“Penguin Welcome”*

Description: Yellow-eyed penguins, Otago Peninsula

Photographer: Paul Sorrell

Where, when: Otago Peninsula, May 2007

Sustainability? This uplifting scene – yellow-eyed penguins announcing their evening return from a fishing expedition on an Otago Peninsula beach – has become an uncommon sight. Here, the yellow-eyed penguin (hoiho) is fighting to survive, at least on the South Island (Te Waipounamu) mainland. These feisty seabirds are facing a barrage of threats. Strenuous efforts by conservation groups, volunteers, tourist operators and the Department of Conservation are minimising the predation of eggs and chicks by stoats, ferrets, cats and dogs. However, even with predation being controlled, hoiho numbers continue to sink. Avian disease, starvation as a consequence of reduced fish stocks and damaging fishing practices such as set netting and bottom-trawling may be involved, perhaps exacerbated by ocean warming. So rapidly are their numbers declining that one authority has predicted that hoiho could disappear from the New Zealand mainland in less than a decade.

An allied species, the Fiordland crested penguin – rivalling hoiho for the title of “the world’s rarest penguin” – is also in trouble. Conservation biology is not helped by well-meaning competition to be the rarest, the smallest, the cutest, or the one that flies the longest distance. All species are important in their own right and biodiversity underwrites the resilience of future ecosystems. Ecological risk should drive investment and funding priorities and both yellow-eyed and Fiordland crested penguins need our help.

In 2007, when I took this shot, a fellow wildlife photographer and I would often visit this spot, hunkering down on a low headland where returning penguins were almost guaranteed to be seen making landfall on the rocky beach below, before trudging uphill to their nesting sites with a crop full of fish for their young. These days I often don’t find them on my coastal forays.

Photo notes: *Camera:* Canon EOS 20D. *Lens:* EF400mm f/5.6L USM. *Settings:* 400mm f/8 1/160 sec ISO 400.

Digital specs: 3504 × 2336 pixels (24.6 MB).

Key words: Birds, penguin, seabird, yellow-eyed penguin, hoiho, *Megadyptes antipodes*, Otago Peninsula, marine ecology, environmental threats, biodiversity, Paul Sorrell, Aotearoa, New Zealand, sustainability

Price: \$200 (incl. GST) for use of the digital image.

Visit www.ecosystemsphotography/sales for details & to order, and to get a quote if you want a high-quality print.

Donation: The price includes a \$100 donation to a sustainability organisation or project of your choice, or otherwise for the *Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust*.

I recommend that the donation goes to the *Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust*, a long-established non-governmental organisation with a specific focus on the conservation of hoiho across its range. The Trust works to ensure the species' survival by managing birds and their habitat, and by addressing impacts in the marine and terrestrial environments.

Image Ref: PS#003 (Please refer to this reference in orders and correspondence).

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