



FIORDLAND

Eudyptes pachyrhynchus

Background Information

The Fiordland penguin is easily confused with the Snares Island penguin and the Erect-crested penguin. A few key features, however, will enable you to identify them while they are on land, at least. Fiordland crested penguins and Snares Island penguins have similar crests, but Snares Island penguins typically have pink skin patches directly behind the bill; Fiordland penguins do not. Unlike the Erect-crested penguin, only the most dorsal portions of the Fiordland crests appear erect, similar to the Snares Island penguin crests. Fiordland penguins also have white patches directly inferior to their eyes. Fiordland penguins weight about 3.5 kilograms and are about 50 cm tall.

Fiordland crested penguins are seclusive like the Yellow-eyed penguin, but they can be found on the Southwestern coast of South Island, Stewart Island and along the coasts of New Zealand.

Fiordland-crested penguins breed from July to November; the female nearly lays two normal eggs which hatch in sequence. Sequential hatching is sometimes a problem in avian species, especially when the hatching has a large temporal spacing. Most birds feed their chicks based on which one screams the loudest. In most cases, these are the chicks that hatch early. In the case of the Fiordland, the second chick often dies since it is unable to compete with its older sibling for the attention of the parent. The dead chick usually ends up as food for skuas and Wekas. This is an evolutionarily developed genetic program of Fiordland-crested penguins.

Fiordland-crested penguins are vulnerable; there are only about 2,500 breeding pairs, and this might well be due to the introduction of the Weka, another vulnerable species. In addition to Wekas, fur seals and larger predatory fish prey upon Fiordland-crested penguins as well.

Author Bernard Stonehouse

Fiordland penguins *Eudyptes pachyrhynchus* breed among the wet coastal rainforests of southern and southwestern New Zealand, and on Stewart Island and neighboring islets. The busy yellow crests of this species originate close to the bill plates and sweep back like eyebrows; the black cheek feathers often part to expose their blue pale bases, giving a striped or mottled effect. Fiordland penguins nest in loose communities under bushes and among tree roots, close to but out of sight of each other. Breeding birds are active on land after dark, but seldom seen during the day. Warham's recent studies of the species form the first comprehensive account of a retiring though far from inaccessible species.



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