

03/03/2016

Feedback on the Draft 2016/17 CSP Programme from the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust

Dear CSP team

I am writing in response to the CSP research advisory group meeting last week (25 February) on behalf of the Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust to give feedback on the initial prioritisation of projects for 2016/17.

The Trust are obviously very keen to see research on yellow-eyed penguins funded, in particular work in the marine environment which is of current concern. The minimum number of breeding yellow-eyed penguin pairs around mainland New Zealand this summer is estimated to be <190, which is the lowest number since 1990.

It is likely that there are many factors at play which are leading to this decline only some of which are known. Over the past few years, avian diphtheria, an unknown toxic agent, and fatal injuries likely from barracouta, have all been implicated. Our current understanding of the changes and drivers in the marine environment and their impact on penguins is limited. It is likely that ecosystem wide fluctuations (e.g. El Nino) and other more localised events such as modification of habitat have an influence on the marine food web and thus the penguins' prey. Our insight into the impacts of commercial fishing on yellow-eyed penguins are also poorly understood. The direct impact of commercial fishing on penguin is somewhat easier to measure than indirect effects but this does not mean that we should ignore indirect impacts.

Any research which sheds light on either foraging of penguins in the marine environment or the effects of fishing would be very well received. Both of the research projects listed for yellow-eyed penguins for 2016/17 (Interaction project, INT-5, "Indirect effects of commercial fishing on yellow-eyed penguins" and population project, POP-7, "Yellow-eyed penguin foraging distribution") are complementary and would increase the available knowledge critical for the management of this species.

I am very keen to hear about how the funds for next year are allocated and how the CSP Annual Plan develops.

Regards,

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Yellow-eyed Penguin Trust