



Media Release

3 April 2009

Derwent Estuary Program

Experts Share Knowledge of Living with Little Penguins

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY: *The Little Penguin forum is on today in Hobart from 9.00 am to 5.30 pm at the CCAMLR building in the Wombat Room, 181 Macquarie St, Hobart. Fiona Wells from the Derwent Estuary Program (DEP) is available to speak to the media at 10.30am. For more information or to arrange an interview, contact Michelle Nichols on 0418 583 373*

A forum in Hobart is discussing ways to co-exist with little penguins in urban environments.

Little penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) are small, flightless birds standing about 30 cm tall. They come ashore after dark and return to the sea before first light.

Derwent Estuary Program Coordinator, Fiona Wells says experts from Tasmania and interstate are sharing their knowledge about little penguins at today's forum and discussing new management guidelines.

"The forum and guidelines have been organised as part of the Derwent Estuary Program Penguin Project," Ms Wells

"It can be a challenge to share our foreshore with little penguins but with careful planning and management it is possible for us to live side by side."

"Our aim now is to transfer the knowledge we have learned over the years to other penguin managers in Tasmania."

The new guidelines, called 'Co-existing with Little Penguins in the Derwent Estuary', have been prepared to assist planners, land managers, bush-care officers and coast care organisations.

The Derwent Estuary Little Penguin Project is a collaborative effort between state and local governments, industry, business and the community to ensure the survival of little penguins in the Derwent. The Project is funded by the Australian Government and coordinated by the Derwent Estuary Program (DEP).

"Little penguins once thrived along the Derwent Estuary but numbers declined as a result of habitat loss and attacks from roaming cats and dogs," Ms Wells said.

"After three years of collaborative effort from government, industry and the community, the plight of little penguins in the Derwent has improved.

Monitoring has shown that little penguin numbers have increased in the Derwent from 98 breeding pairs in 2005 to more than 190 breeding pairs in 2008.

"That's really encouraging news and steps such as installing new burrows, improving vegetation and educating dog owners have all made a big difference," Ms Wells said.

"By providing little penguin management information to land managers across Tasmania, we are hopeful of this trend continuing."

Additional support has been provided by the Biodiversity Conservation Branch in the Department of Primary Industries and Water, the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, the Tarooma Environment Network, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Birds Tasmania, the Understorey Network, Hobart City Council, Kingborough Council and Clarence City Council.

For more information about little penguins and to view a copy of the new management guidelines, visit www.derwentestuary.org.au/