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Fiordland crested penguin: pp 72-73.



FIORDLAND CRESTED PENGUIN

Family Spheniscidae

Species *Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*

Common name Fiordland Crested Penguin

Status Endemic

Abundance Rare

Size 710 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Blue Penguin 400 mm)

Habitat Coastal waters of southern New Zealand.

New Zealand range The Fiordland Crested Penguin is found along the South Westland coast, the Fiordland coast with concentrations in Dusky Sound, the western Southland coast and around Stewart Island.

Closely related species Closely related to the other crested penguins of the southern New Zealand coastline and offshore islands. These are the Erect-crested Penguin (*E. sclateri*) which breeds well to the south on the Bounty and Antipodes Islands, and the Snares Crested Penguin (*E. robustus*) which breeds on Snares Island. The Fiordland Crested Penguin is the mainland breeder of the three.

Description

Head Glossy black to under throat. **Eyebrow** A yellow band goes from above the eye to back of head. **Crest** Yellow and slightly drooping down the neck. **Upperparts** Soft black. **Underparts** White from throat down. **Flippers** Soft black with a faint white trailing edge. **Bill** Reddish-brown.

Conspicuous features

- Yellow crest.
- Head cannot be confused with the yellow-tinged head of the Yellow-eyed Penguin.
- All white underparts.
- Lacks the fleshy coloured gape of the Snares Crested Penguin.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Often sits on rocks in the sun on the vegetation line during the day in the breeding season.
- Give themselves away with vocal displays of grunting, mewing and growling near the nesting sites, heard more during morning hours.

Call A loud braying sound.

Breeding season Birds return to nesting areas in July. Two white eggs are laid in early August and birds fledge at the end of November. Nests are in cavities and under vegetation near the shoreline. Birds are isolated nesters but nests are usually within calling distance of other pairs. Fiordland Crested Penguins nest about two months earlier than Snares Crested Penguins.

Moult Birds return to their nesting grounds to moult over the months of January and February.

Differences between Fiordland Crested Penguin, Erect-crested Penguin and Snares Crested Penguin

- Fiordland Crested lacks the more erect tufted-type crest of the other two species. Its crest is broad but not tufted and turns downwards behind the eye.
- Fiordland Crested lacks the fleshy gape marking of Snares Crested.
- Fiordland Crested has a finer bill and head.
- Fiordland Crested has slightly lighter cheek colouration when compared with the black of the other two species.

Where to find – South Island

South Canterbury – The breakwater at Oamaru sometimes has visiting birds. P. 357.

Fiordland – The coastline and seas around Fiordland below Jacksons Bay. P. 372.

Fiordland, Milford Sound – During the June to November breeding months it can easily be seen either on the rocks, sheltering in cavities, or resting among the vegetation of the coastline. From late December and into January birds are not so regularly seen but it is still possible to see them from the tourist launches until the end of January. Often tourist boats will take the time to show their passengers birds if they see one. P. 371.

Southland – Catlins coast sometimes has birds. P. 371.

Westland – Monro Beach and Knights Point near Lake Moeraki. P. 372.

Where to find – Stewart Island

Paterson Inlet – Often seen here from tourist boats. P. P. 367.

Stewart Island – In any of the coastal waters around the island. P. 367.