

Protecting St Kilda Pier's Little Penguins

St Kilda Pier Redevelopment Project – July 2022

St Kilda Pier's breakwater is home to a colony of Little Penguins. Protection of the area's marine life including penguins and Rakali is critical to the success of the pier redevelopment project.

Protected as part of a Wildlife Management Cooperative Area, St Kilda Pier's breakwater is home to a colony of approximately 1,300 Little Penguins. Given its ease of access to people living or holidaying in Melbourne, over the past ten years, we've observed an extraordinary increase in visitor numbers to view the penguins. This is despite no active promotion or provision of dedicated facilities. The pier redevelopment provides the opportunity to improve environmental protection and enhance visitor experience.



Image 1 Little Penguin

Will pier construction have impacts on the penguin?

Of the 650-metre-long rock breakwater, on which penguins nest, only a small section is within the pier reconstruction project area. However, construction projects of this scale still have the potential to impact penguins and other local marine life. The protection of Little Penguins and Rakali is critical for this project and is a fundamental consideration during the entire project.

A Wildlife Management Plan has been prepared to reduce any impacts on the penguins. This involved

bringing together a team of experts from Parks Victoria, EarthCare St Kilda, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Phillip Island Nature Parks and Zoos Victoria.

With management measures in place, there will be very few negative impacts to penguins and local marine habitats. There will be a significant improvement to penguin habitat once the project is completed, due to the extra breakwater protection and visitor exclusion areas.

The team of experts were also pleased to note that during previous works at St Kilda Pier in 2012, penguins and Rakali were largely protected by the mitigation and relocation measures implemented during construction. The breeding colony of penguins has continued to grow since this work.



Image 2 - Parks Victoria and Earthcare inspecting nesting sites prior to pile driving near the breakwater

Managing impacts

Penguins tend to depart the breakwater shortly after sunrise and return just before sunset. Construction work will occur between 7am and 6pm, with pile driving in the breakwater habitat area scheduled to avoid the penguin's annual breeding season which typically begins in June/July.

During construction, Parks Victoria rangers and dedicated volunteers from Earthcare St Kilda will regularly access the breakwater to monitor the penguins and to inspect penguin health. We'll also monitor penguins using CCTV and infrared camera footage.

Onshore, we are using additional fencing to prevent penguin access into the construction compound to avoid them sheltering among materials and machinery.

Improving life for the penguins

The new pier design will see habitat improvements for penguins by separating visitors from sensitive nesting sites. This will result in 140m of additional protected wildlife habitat adding to the existing 500m of undisturbed habitat on the breakwater.

The most popular time of year for people to view penguins at St Kilda Pier is in summer, which can see hundreds of people each night and almost no space left on the breakwater for penguins to move. Summer also coincides with the period when adult penguins are trying to reach chicks in their nests. While most people visiting the Little Penguins are respectful and keep their distance, the lack of fencing and barriers means penguins were walking on the same path as humans. This unfortunately resulted in some people poking cameras and sticks in nests and interfering with the penguins.

As part of the pier redevelopment project, we've designed a new raised viewing platform allowing penguins to move across the site more freely with reduced interference from people. Locals and tourists will also benefit with an enhanced viewing area to watch the Little Penguins as they waddle back to their nests after sunset.

- Watch a video to hear how we are managing the penguins that live on St Kilda Pier's breakwater - <https://youtu.be/VDBVelwVUVo>
- Parks Victoria works closely with [Earthcare St Kilda](#) in the protection and management of the Little Penguins. Interested volunteers can find out more at www.parkconnect.vic.gov.au.
- Access to the penguin area and penguin tours is closed during the construction period.



Image 3 and 4 - Top image of existing/old penguin boardwalk fixed to the breakwater habitat. Above artists impression of new penguin boardwalk which will provide an undisturbed breakwater habitat.

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<https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/projects/st-kilda-pier-redevelopment>