

## SHORT NOTE

### Interactions with Hooker's sea lions on Otago Peninsula

Hooker's sea lions (*Phocarctos hookeri*) haul out in small numbers on sandy beaches along the Otago coast, especially at Papanui Beach on Otago Peninsula (Hawke 1986). Given the significance of coastal Otago to various sea and shore birds, interactions with these highly territorial seals are of considerable interest.

During 40 1-2 hour and 12 day-long observations of Hooker's sea lions at Papanui Beach between January 1984 and May 1987, the following events were observed:

*12 July 1985:* A subadult male chased an unidentified gull, before entering the sea at 1300 h NZST.

*21 November 1985:* A subadult male walking along the beach at around 1200 h NZST encountered a Variable Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*) incubating on its nest. The bird uttered a high-pitched warning cry; the sea lion halted, and after 15 s moved away from the nest. On 8 January 1986, an adult pair of oystercatchers with two young was observed on the beach.

*3 April 1986:* A Yellow-eyed Penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*) coming ashore at 1820 h NZST landed close to a group of five active male sea lions. The penguin returned to the sea.

*2 May 1986:* A subadult male arriving from the sea at a favoured sea lion haul-out location among rocks at 1300 h NZST encountered an immature Yellow-eyed Penguin. The sea lion gave an open mouth threat, as did the penguin. After two repeat cycles, the sea lion briefly lay down adjacent to the penguin, which did not move off. The sea lion then moved off 1-2 m, where it remained inactive for the remainder of the day.

The interactions described here suggest that birds using the beach area coexist with hauled-out Hooker's sea lions. That the sea lions are not a threat on land is confirmed by the apparent breeding success of the Variable Oystercatcher pair. Further, Papanui Beach hosts a significant Yellow-eyed Penguin population (30 were counted coming ashore late on 7 February 1984). The penguins often walked close to inactive sea lions to reach their roosting areas.

#### LITERATURE CITED

HAWKE, D.J. 1986. Observations of Hooker's sea lion *Phocarctos hookeri* at a hauling ground on Otago Peninsula, New Zealand. NZ J. Mar. Freshw. Res. 20:333-337.

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