

ROCKHOPPER PENGUINS

Rockhopper Penguins were once again found on beaches along Geographe Bay. Every summer, small numbers of these birds are "rescued" by well meaning people who find them hidden under bushes just behind the first line of sand dunes. Fortunately there is nothing wrong with the penguins—they are undergoing their annual moulting. This process is essential to the birds as it replaces all their old and worn out feathers with new ones.

Rockhopper penguins are normally found in the Antarctic regions but the south west corner of the state appears to be a favourite spot where they can find quiet beaches to carry out their moulting.

Moulting does leave the birds exposed to dangers, as they are unable to escape from their enemies by taking to the sea, but otherwise they are quite healthy and require no assistance. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife advises that anyone finding a penguin on the beach should leave it where it is. Only if the bird is obviously injured or is likely to be disturbed by dogs or other animals (including man) does the Department ask that it be taken to a more secluded beach area. If a penguin is found in need of help, it can also be taken to either the Bunbury or Busselton offices of the Department.