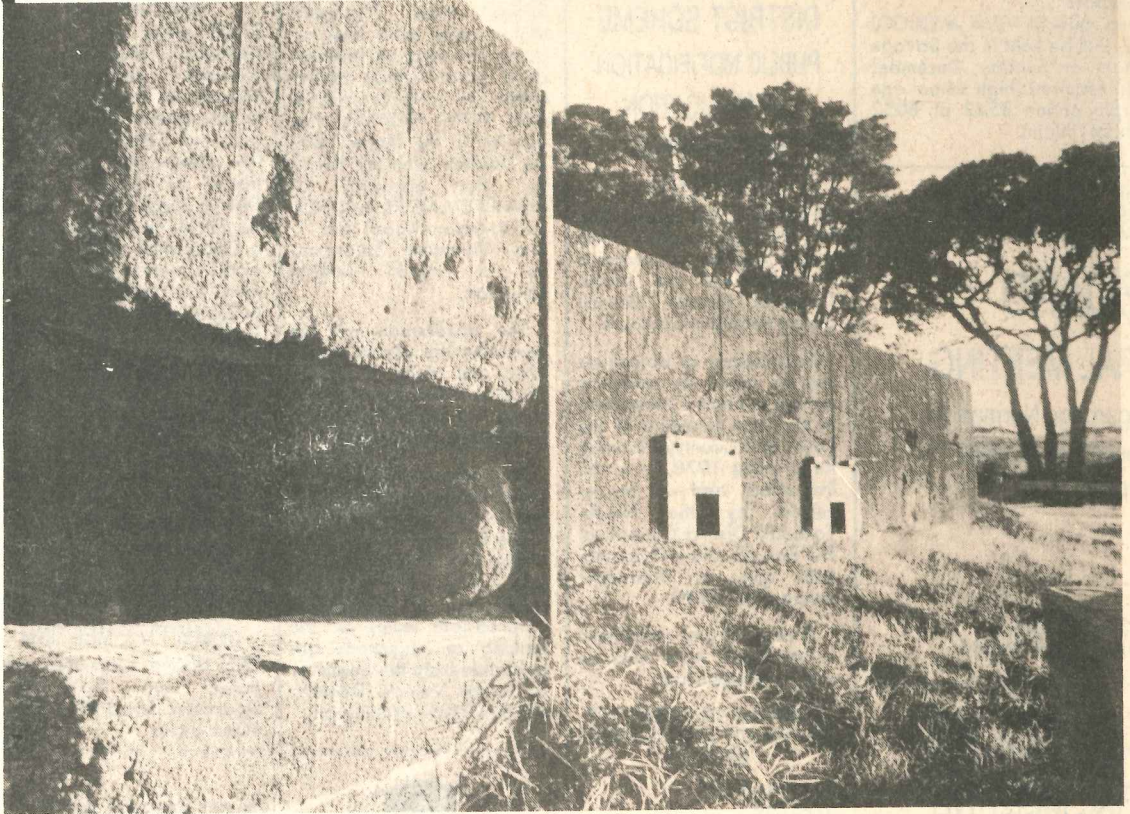


LOCATION - BUILDINGS - WWII Bunkers
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Bunker homes for blue penguins?



This wartime bunker at Port Taranaki's Ngamotu Beach could be the home for little blue penguins after the recent removal of baches on Ocean View Parade robbed them of their traditional nesting-places.

The proposed reclamation at Ngamotu Beach could serve an unexpected conservation purpose as a home for little blue penguins.

The suggestion has come from Department of Conservation and Taranaki Museum representatives after a meeting to discuss the plight of the penguins, which were left without a roosting site after old baches were removed from the beach.

The Royal Forest and Bird Society had started to fill in a World War II bunker there as an alternative roost when the museum objected, because of the bunker's historic value and classification.

However, the reclamation would provide an ideal long-term solution, said the museum's deputy director, Mr Roger Fyfe. Roosting sites could be incorporated by using drainpipes in a way similar to that set up for penguins at Phillip Is, near Melbourne.

The Department of Conservation office in Wellington was already investigating the same sort of method for penguins in Seatoun, said Mr Fyfe. In the meantime, the meeting had agreed that the penguins could stay in the bunker while Mr Fyfe investigated other known sites in the area.

"There are two I know of in Waitara. I'm going to go around and visit all those known sites and see whether the bunkers still exist.

"If there is one like that at Ngamotu where people can walk in and have a look around and it's in good condition, it's not going to be worthwhile doing anything more with the one at the beach."

Mr Fyfe said that after he had investigated the sites, he would come back with some specific proposals about the relative potential of them, and further decisions could also be made about the penguins.