

Washed rockhoppers get ready for release

Title

Sunday afternoon - the construction of a 'release pool' was completed after three days' intensive work. All washed penguins will be brought here to be swum and fed before they are to be released back into the wild. "It has been a logistical challenge getting this facility up and running," reported SANCCOBs Logistical Manager Mariëtte Hopley. "We wanted it close to the rehab shed but the ground was too uneven, so we had to relocate them."

The pools are designed to have an area with pebbles so that the washed penguins can dry off and preen in between swimming and feeding. All of the 400 plus rockhoppers now at the release pool were brought down from the rehab centre by tractor and trailer. It was a humid, hot day on Tristan and the penguins took to the water with visible relief at being able to cool down and swim in the spacious pools. The strongest penguins were darting and diving underwater and washed vigorously for a good ten minutes before clambering out on the pool ramps.

To date 3,718 penguins have been admitted to the rehab centre, 2,378 have died at the centre and 24 penguins have been released. It is hoped that up to 200 penguins will be released back into the wild in the next few days. The experts from SANCCOB are scheduled to leave on 23 April on the 'Ivan Papanin'. With more than 1,300 penguins still remaining at the rehab centre, SANCCOB have submitted a Plan of Action to the Tristan Administration for the management of the rehab operation until it is completed. The first 69 to be washed will

hopefully be able to join the 24 individuals so far released back to wild.



The RSPB (BirdLife in the UK) have started the Nightingale Island disaster fighting fund. Your donation will be used to help the penguins and other wildlife affected by the oil. Your support will also be used to fund follow-up monitoring and to assess the full impact of this disaster.