WORLD PENGUIN AWARENESS DAY
25 APRIL

This special day celebrates all the penguins in the world and raises awareness for the endangered status of many penguin species.

HOW DID WORLD PENGUIN DAY START?

World Penguin Awareness Day takes place during the annual northern migration of Adelie penguins, a species of penguin that lives in the Antarctic. The Adelie penguins individually migrate north to have better access to food during the winter months and then during the summer, return to the coastal beaches on Antarctica to build their nests. The day was first proposed at McMurdo Station, an American research centre on Ross Island. Researchers noticed that the Adelie penguins began their migration specifically on this day, so they decided that the 25 April was a good day for Penguin Awareness Day.

ABOUT PENGUINS

Penguins are flightless aquatic birds.

There are 18 species worldwide.

**Largest**

Emperor penguin

*Aptenodytes forsteri*

1.1m high

Weighs up to 40kg

**Smallest**

Little blue/Fairy penguin

*Eudyptula minor*

less than 33cm high

Weighs 1kg

Penguins live exclusively in the southern hemisphere, from Antarctica to temperate areas. One exception is the Galapagos penguin

*Spheniscus mendiculus*

that lives near the equator.
Penguins spend roughly half their lives in water searching for food and the other half on land.

Penguins feed on a range of:
- fish
- squid
- krill

The African penguin *Spheniscus demersus* is endemic to southern Africa.

**ADAPTATIONS TO AQUATIC LIFE**

The wings have evolved to become flippers.

**Royal penguin** *Eudyptes schlegeli*

Smooth feathers with a layer of trapped air aids buoyancy and provides insulation from the cold.

**Gentoo penguin** *Pygoscelis papua*

They waddle on their feet and slide on their bellies - this is called tobogganing.

**Magellanic penguin** *Spheniscus magellanicus*

**Snares penguin** *Eudyptes robustus*

Countershading - light underneath and dark above confuses predators.
Chinstrap penguin
*Pygoscelis antarcticus*

They have the ability to **control** blood flow to their feet to prevent frostbite.

Fiordland crested penguin
*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*

**CONSERVATION STATUS**

According to the Red List of Threatened Species from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the following species are **ENDANGERED**:

- Northern rockhopper penguin
  *Eudyptes chrysocome*
  Photo: Brian Gratwicke

- Erect-crested penguin
  *Eudyptes sclateri*
  Photo: Co03ch

- Yellow-eyed penguin
  *Megadyptes antipodes*
  Photo: Bernard Spragg

- African penguin
  *Spheniscus demersus*

- Galapagos penguin
  *Spheniscus mendiculus*
  Photo: Mike's Birds

Most of the other species of penguins are listed as vulnerable or threatened.

**THREATS TO PENGUINS**

- **HISTORICALLY**
  - Seafarers harvested their eggs.
  - Guano was removed from breeding sites to use as fertilizer.
  - Hunters killed them for oil, feathers and their skin.
**THREATS TO PENGUINS TODAY**

- Climate change
- Decreasing supply of food
- Loss of nesting sites
- Predation
- Marine pollution: oil from oil spills
- Marine pollution: plastic pollution

**HOW CAN WE HELP PENGUINS?**

- Reduce use of and recycle plastic
- Support scientists studying penguins
- Only eat seafood from a well managed resource.
- Reduce your carbon footprint
- Lobby politicians to create MPAs where penguins can be protected
- Take part in or organise a beach cleanup
- Visit a penguin colony or watch penguin webcams

*Macaroni penguin*  
*Eudyptes chrysolophus*

Photo: Liam Quinn
**FUN PENGUIN FACTS**

Fossil remains tell us that there were once penguins as big as humans.

**Humboldt penguin**
*Spheniscus humboldti*

They can reach speeds of up to **32 km per hour** underwater.

And dive to a depth of **563m** and stay underwater for **22 minutes**.

**King penguin**
*Aptenodytes patagonicus*

Penguins drink seawater. The salt is expelled by a supraorbital gland through the nose or by sneezing.

Penguins usually mate or life.