

# African Penguin

**Scientific Name:** *Spheniscus demersus*

**Class:** Aves

**Order:** Sphenisciformes

**Family:** Spheniscidae



African Penguins, like all species of penguins, are unable to fly. However, their torpedo-shaped bodies, webbed feet and flipper like wings are ideal for swimming; allowing them to fly through the water with great speed and maneuverability. A penguin's distinct black and white coloring serves as camouflage from predators. The black coloration on their backs allows them to blend in with the dark depths of the ocean, while their white stomachs conversely allow them to blend in with the brighter surface of the ocean. The color pattern of the African Penguins is characterized by their black backs and a downward facing U-shape stripe of black on their white stomachs.

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## Range

Coastal Namibia and South Africa, and surrounding islands

## Habitat

Marine, rocky coastlines, sandy inlands

## Gestation

Average time to hatching 40 days

## Litter

2

## Behavior

African Penguins are the only species of penguin to inhabit the African continent. Although temperatures along the coastline of Africa are relatively warm, the ocean currents the penguins inhabit are cold. These penguins have layers of fat and water-proof feathers that help keep them warm and insulated in the water. To stay cool on land, the penguins pant and raise their wings away from their sides to help release heat from their bodies. African Penguins regularly preen themselves, rearranging their feathers to clean off dirt, ticks and parasites, preening also distributes natural oils to ensure insulation and a water-proof quality

## Reproduction

African Penguins are monogamous. On average the female will lay 2 eggs per season, which both parents will care for over a period of 40 days. African Penguins have a bare patch of skin on their lower bellies called a brood patch. The brood patch helps keep the eggs warm and protected while they are incubating. The chicks are born with fluffy down-like feathers and are unable to hunt for food for themselves. Parents will continue care for the chicks for another 30 days, watching over them and alternately hunting for fish and feeding them by regurgitating the food into the chick's mouths.

## Wild Diet

Pelagic fish, including sardines, anchovies, herring, mackerel; squid, crustaceans