

# AFRICAN PENGUINS

**U**ndeniably cute. Comically awkward on land. Marvelously graceful under water. Give your heart to The Maritime Aquarium's newest residents: a small colony of African penguins! You'll find these little birds irresistibly adorable as they waddle and swim in a new outdoor exhibit, offering views above and below the water.

African penguins are a wonderful complement to the Aquarium's other current special exhibit, "African Underwater Safari," which displays some of Africa's lesser-known (but equally fascinating) aquatic animals. See colorful cichlids, air-breathing lungfish, electric catfish and - appropriately for Africa - elephantnose fish and giraffe catfish. Plus, stop on the island of Madagascar to see some really big boa snakes! The exhibit's message about species protection and environmental conservation is as pertinent to Africa as it is to our own Long Island Sound.

**Open daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**



For more information about Maritime Aquarium exhibits, programs, study cruises or IMAX movies - or to purchase advance tickets - go to [MaritimeAquarium.org](http://MaritimeAquarium.org) / (203) 852-0700.



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## Get the Facts!

### AFRICAN PENGUINS (*Spheniscus demersus*):

- Yes, these are penguins that live in Africa, NOT frigid Antarctica. In fact, they're the only penguin species that breeds in Africa. They're found on the continent's southwestern coast, between the Namibia border and Port Elizabeth, South Africa. Their native climate is more moderate than Norwalk's.
- African penguins have evolved shorter feathers because, unlike Antarctic species, they do not face extremely cold environments. And, if they get too warm, the featherless patch in front of each eye turns pink as the penguin sends more blood to that region to help dissipate body heat. Other ways to cool off: go for a swim, and they also will pant like a dog.
- African penguins are also known as the black-footed penguin. Because their call sounds like a donkey braying, they also were once called jackass penguins.
- They're about 2 feet tall and weigh 4 to 11 pounds. Males are larger than the females and have larger beaks.
- In the wild, African penguins have an average lifespan of 10 to 12 years. They live much longer in zoos & aquariums.
- They eat small fish, such as sardines, herring and anchovies, and small crustaceans and squid.
- They swim at an average speed of 4 mph, with a top speed of 12 mph, and can stay submerged for 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. And, of course, they cannot fly.
- Since 1930, the African penguin population has dropped from an estimated 1 million birds down to 150,000 today. Why? People used to gather their eggs for food and disrupt their habitat by harvesting the penguins' guano, for use as fertilizer. That's no longer allowed. But threats remain: oil spills (they live along a major shipping route) and a declining food source in the ocean as they compete with commercial fisheries.
- Their predators in the ocean include sharks, cape fur seals and, on occasion, orcas. Land-based enemies include mongooses, domestic cats and dogs, and gulls, which prey on their eggs and newborn chicks.



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