



Male and female Adélie penguins share egg incubation and chick-raising duties by alternating shifts protecting their young.¹

Protecting Adélie Penguins

Adélie penguins (*Pygoscelis adeliae*) are named after Adélie Pepin, the wife of French explorer Jules Sébastien César Dumont D'Urville, who discovered the birds on an expedition to Antarctica in 1840.² They have the familiar black and white appearance of other penguin species but are distinguished by their black beaks and brown eyes surrounded by white feathers.³

About Adélie penguins

There are 2.37 million breeding pairs⁴ of Adélie penguins found throughout Antarctica and in some sub-Antarctic islands. Their main breeding populations can be found in the Ross Sea region, the Antarctic Peninsula, the Scotia Arc, and East Antarctica.⁵

The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists Adélie penguins as Near Threatened with extinction.⁶ Climate change is a major concern for this species. Sea ice changes could affect their annual migration, and increased snowfall may reduce the stability of their nesting habitat. In addition, contact with humans can disturb colonies, and increased krill fishing may contribute to food and population declines.⁷

Did You Know?

- Adélie penguins are very social and can communicate through various displays and postures, as well as unique calls that help them identify their mates.⁸
- Adélie penguins migrate an average of 13,000 kilometers (8,077 miles) each year.⁹

Habitat and threats

Adélie penguins can be found throughout Antarctic waters. Their yearly migrations take them from breeding colonies out to sea to forage for food and back again. Evidence suggests that latitude and local sea-ice conditions affect when and where they will go.¹⁰

These penguins were dubbed “bellwethers of climate change” by David Ainley, a scientist and penguin expert. They are among the species that could be harmed by the shifts in weather and sea ice that hallmark our warming planet.

According to a 2014 study, Adélie penguins consume more krill than had been presumed. Although their global population is growing, the colonies around the Antarctic Peninsula are rapidly declining.¹¹ Increased industrial fishing for Antarctic krill in the region, combined with climate change, could be depriving these penguins of their main source of food.

What we can do

Adélie penguins depend on ocean patterns and plentiful protein to survive. Establishing protections now could improve their long-term health and stability. The Pew Charitable Trusts recommends:

- Creation of marine reserves to protect Adélie penguin food sources and foraging areas.
- Precautionary management of the Antarctic krill fishery.

The consensus-based Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR) is composed of 24 countries and the European Union and has the authority to create large-scale, fully protected marine reserves in the Southern Ocean. Action by CCAMLR is needed to help to alleviate pressure on these penguins and protect them.



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John B. Weller

Where Adélie Penguins Live



Threats:
Climate change

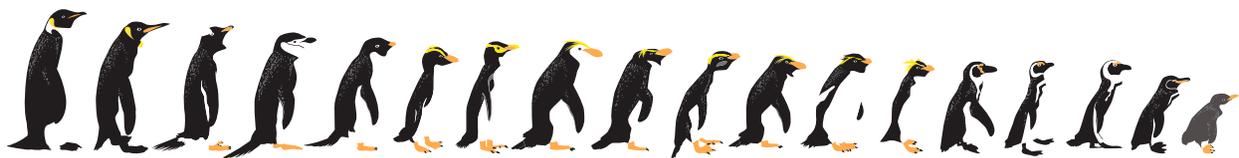
Population:
2.37 million breeding pairs

IUCN status:
Near Threatened

There are more than 2 million breeding pairs of Adélie penguins found predominantly throughout Antarctic waters.

Endnotes

- 1 Phil N. Trathan and Grant Ballard, "Adélie Penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*)," in *Penguins: Natural History and Conservation*, eds. Pablo Garcia Borboroglu and P. Dee Boersma (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 42-43.
- 2 Ibid., 37.
- 3 Australia Department of the Environment, Antarctic Division, "Adélie Penguins," accessed Aug. 6, 2014, <http://www.antarctica.gov.au/about-antarctica/wildlife/animals/penguins/adelie-penguins>.
- 4 International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species, "*Pygoscelis adeliae*," accessed Aug. 6, 2014, <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22697758/0>.
- 5 Trathan and Ballard, "Adélie Penguin," 39.
- 6 International Union for Conservation of Nature, "*Pygoscelis adeliae*."
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 University of Michigan Museum of Zoology, "*Pygoscelis adeliae*," accessed Aug. 7, 2014, http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/accounts/Pygoscelis_adeliae.
- 9 Peter Rejcek, "On the Move," U.S. Antarctic Program, Aug. 13, 2010, <http://antarcticsun.usap.gov/science/contenthandler.cfm?id=2230>.
- 10 Trathan and Ballard, "Adélie Penguin," 42.
- 11 Michelle A. LaRue et al., "A Method for Estimating Colony Sizes of Adélie Penguins Using Remote Sensing Imagery," *Polar Biology* 37, no. 4 (2014): 508, doi: 10.1007/s00300-014-1451-8.



Find out how you can help Adélie penguins:

pewtrusts.org/penguins

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