

African Penguin – a globally endangered species

In 1956 the population numbered about 147,000 breeding pairs and just over fifty years later, in 2010, the population was down to some 21,000 pairs – a decrease of more than 100,000 pairs. This massive population decline led to the species classification as *endangered* by the World Conservation Union. Competition with commercial fisheries for pelagic fish, changes in prey distribution and availability, habitat degradation, oiling and predation contributed to the decline.

Dyer Island

Dyer Island is a critically important breeding colony – one of the largest remaining in South Africa – but African penguin numbers are rapidly declining. In 1979 Dyer Island had a penguin population of about 23,000 breeding pairs. This dropped to 1,200 pairs in 2010 – a more than 90% drop in numbers in 30 years. Today, Dyer Island is a protected area but during the

last century (in fact as late as the 1980s) the island was stripped of all its guano, centuries of accumulated bird droppings. In addition, commercial exploitation of eggs drastically reduced African penguin numbers. Further threats come from disease, oiling and predation by Cape Fur Seals.



Historical threats

During the 19th and 20th centuries the island was stripped of guano for use as an agricultural fertilizer. This has had devastating effects on the penguins. The safest place for penguins to breed is in burrows, which they used to dig into the soft guano enabling the birds to make their nests and sheltering them from the heat of the sun.

The problem

When guano was removed, penguins were forced to nest in the open on the rocky island surface. Here they are at the mercy of the elements and of predators. On hot days adults incubating in the open overheat and often leave their nests to go down to the sea. As soon as eggs and small chicks are left

unattended on the surface, they too can overheat and die, or more likely fall prey to the everwatchful Kelp Gulls.

The solution

The Dyer Island Conservation Trust, in partnership with CapeNature, has embarked on a programme to introduce artificial nests providing vitally important shelter for breeding penguins. Fibreglass nests were specially designed to mimic natural guano burrows.



The nests minimise exposure to predators and the elements. They also facilitate research and monitoring that would otherwise not be possible on surface nesting birds.

The way ahead

The nesting project has been expanded to other breeding colonies where penguins are forced to nest on the surface, including Stony Point, Bird Island, Boulders Beach, Robben Island and Ichaboe Island (Namibia).



**Sponsor an Endangered
African Penguin Family a New
Home Now!**

**Only ZAR400 buys and installs
a nest as well as supporting
research.**

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Dyer Island Conservation Trust objectives:

This Trust has been established for the conservation, rehabilitation and protection of the natural environment, including flora, fauna and the biosphere, the care of wild animals, the promotion of, and the conducting of educational and training programmes relating to environmental awareness, greening and clean-up projects, and conservation research. Donations towards this Trust are administered specifically for conservation at Dyer Island and its surroundings.

The Trust promotes awareness of the plight of the African penguin both locally and internationally and generates support for the African penguin and marine research.

What can you do? ... Sponsor a penguin nest!

Cost: ZAR400 (towards nest manufacture, transport and placement, conservation, monitoring and penguin research). Receive: Certificate of sponsorship, penguin information, name on online supporters list, access to website updates and newsletters.

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First National Bank, Hermanus
Branch code: 200412
Current Account
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Swift code: FIRNZAJJ

Investor status

1 House – Blue
5 Houses – Green
10 Houses – Bronze
15 Houses – Silver
20 Houses – Gold
35 Houses – Diamond
50 Houses – Platinum



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