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New penguin chicks highlight World Penguin Day

SEATTLE—World Penguin Day is today, April 25, a special day to celebrate all penguins on the planet and the recent hatching of three Humboldt penguins at Woodland Park Zoo.

The three chicks hatched to three different sets of parents at the end of March and the first week in April. Most penguins mate for life. Incubation for penguins takes 40 to 42 days, with both parents sharing incubation duties in the nest and day-to-day care for their chicks.

Woodland Park Zoo has one of the most successful Humboldt penguin breeding programs in North America with its new hatchlings bringing the total number of successful hatchings to 80 since the zoo's first breeding season in 2010, a year after the penguin habitat opened. The sex of the chicks is unknown until DNA testing can be conducted.

The chicks are off exhibit in nesting burrows where they are under the care of the parents. To ensure they are achieving growth milestones, staff routinely weigh them as they develop with minimal disturbance to the parents.

“All three chicks are thriving and experiencing great weight gains under the excellent care of their parents,” said Shawn Pedersen, an interim bird curator at Woodland Park Zoo. “These charismatic birds continue to be one of the most popular species at the zoo. Our new chicks and colony will continue to inspire action at home to help ensure Humboldt penguins survive into the future.”

Before the new chicks reach fledging age and go outdoors on exhibit, they will have round-the-clock access to a shallow pool where they can learn to swim in a more controlled and less crowded environment. New chicks join the colony in the outdoor habitat and spacious pool sometime in early summer.

The parents were paired under the Humboldt Penguin [Species Survival Plan](#), a cooperative, conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of penguins.

World Penguin Day pays tribute to one of the most unique and specialized bird families that live on the planet. There are 18 species of penguins, whose natural habitats are all in the southern hemisphere.

Woodland Park Zoo supports [Humboldt penguin conservation](#) in Punta San Juan, Peru, a marine reserve. Approximately half the entire Humboldt penguin population in Peru calls Punta San Juan home. It is one of the 10 most important breeding sites for other birds such as cormorants, terns, pelicans and boobies and is home to large populations of South American fur seals and sea lions, too. The program protects this critical coastal habitat, educates local communities and local Peruvian schools about marine conservation, provides safety for the breeding birds with a protective wall, and conducts ongoing research including the use of drone surveillance for population surveys.

Penguin particulars

- Unlike their ice and snow-dwelling Antarctic cousins, Humboldt penguins live among the hot, dry coastlines of Peru and Chile.
- Penguins are playful by nature and noisy. Their vocalizations sound much like a donkey braying!



- These birds are built to swim. Using their strong wings, they “fly” underwater, usually just below the surface, at speeds of up to 20 miles per hour, steering with their feet and tail.
- Humboldt penguins lose all their feathers each year and systematically replace them with new feathers in a process called molting, which can take up to a few weeks.

How to help penguins

- Every visit to the zoo supports conservation of animals in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. World Penguin Day is a reminder to learn more about these captivating, flightless birds and their environment, how important they are to the planet’s ecosystems and the threats they face.
- Penguins are environmental sentinels that can point to the health of the Earth’s oceans and coasts. Humboldt penguins are a vulnerable species with approximately 30,000 to 35,000 currently surviving in their habitat range.
- Choose sustainable seafood and make smart choices when eating seafood. Use the [Seafood Watch](#) guide and avoid fishes that are unsustainably harvested and therefore negatively impact ocean habitats and the animals, such as penguins, that depend on them.
- To celebrate the new penguin chicks, become a ZooParent! The [ZooParent](#) program supports the zoo’s animal care, education, and wildlife conservation in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

Woodland Park Zoo offers a safe, outdoor experience for all. Visit www.zoo.org for information. Zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. daily through April 30; 9:30 a.m.–6:00 p.m. daily starting May 1.

Information about accessibility and resources, one-to-one aides, sighted guides, mobility equipment rentals, and a sensory map and tools, can be found at www.zoo.org/access. For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact zooinfo@zoo.org.

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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