



PRESS RELEASE

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Press Contacts:

Julia McHugh 805 569-3303 or

juliapr@west.net

or Dean Noble 805 962-5339 or

dnoble@sbzoo.org

TWO HUMBOLDT PENGUIN CHICKS HATCHED AT SANTA BARBARA ZOO

- Two Eggs by Same Parents at Crawford Family Penguin House
- Raised by Foster Parents and Off-Exhibit Until They "Fledge" (Swim)
- Humboldt Penguins, from South America, Vulnerable in the Wild
- Bred as Part of Nationwide Zoo Species Survival Plan
- Naming Rights Available for One Chick
- **NOTE: NO PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE CHICKS UNTIL THEY FLEDGE & RETURN TO THEIR EXHIBIT**

Santa Barbara, CA (May 6, 2010) – Two Humboldt penguins have hatched at the Santa Barbara Zoo, one on March 16 and another on April 15. Both share the same parents and both are being raised by foster penguin parents. The chicks and foster parents are now housed off-exhibit until the chicks learn to swim. Humboldt penguins are IUCN-listed as vulnerable in their native habitat along the Pacific coast of South America, from Peru to Chile.

The first chick has been named Desi by Zoo supporters Bob and Desiree Covington; the second chick is available for naming (see below).

No photography is allowed of the chicks until they fledge and return to their exhibit, which could take several weeks. Media will be informed and are most welcome to photograph or tape the chicks at that time.

Breeding is Part of National Species Survival Plan

Only two of the Zoo's 15 adult Humboldt penguins have a recommendation to breed under the Species Survival Plan of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). This one pair produced the Zoo's first penguin chick last June, which was also foster reared. The rest of the flock's genes are well represented in the overall captive population; they will not reproduce.

“This pair has a history of challenges with chick rearing but they are valuable to the population as a whole,” says Alan Varsik, Assistant Zoo Director. “So we make sure the eggs hatch and the chicks have every opportunity for success. We only promote breeding for that pair which we need more representation from and not those which already have a lot of relatives in the population.”

After the first egg was laid the zookeepers removed it and placed it with another bonded penguin pair. They immediately began caring for it as if it was their own. The breeding pair later “double clutched” and produced a second egg, which was also cared for by foster penguin parents.

There are several other penguin pairs at the Zoo who spend all their time together and spend time in the nest cavity. Keepers sometimes give those pairs “dummy” eggs to keep them from laying their own. Those pairs are also used as foster parents.

Chicks Off-Exhibit Until They Learn to Swim

Animal Care staff has taken over care of the chicks for the next few weeks until they are old enough to swim. The chicks will be off-exhibit, behind-the-scenes until that time. Just as wild birds “fledge” and take their first flight, penguins take their first swim.

“This is the age when chicks would naturally begin to gain independence in the wild,” adds Sheri Horiszny, the Zoo’s Director of Animal Programs. “We want to make sure they grow waterproof feathers and can swim well before they have access to the big pool in the exhibit.”

About Humboldt Penguins

The Crawford Family Penguin House offers both above-ground and underwater viewing of these active birds and features a 5,670 cubic foot pool. There are 16 birds on view, but only one pair is recommended for breeding by the AZA.

This species like it “Chile, not chilly” as they hail from coastal desert regions along the Pacific Coast of South America from Peru to Chile. They considered vulnerable by the World Conservation Union, an international body of thousands of scientists who assess the status of the world’s plants and animals. The total world population of Humboldt penguins is around 12,000 breeding pairs and is currently in serious decline. The causes include over-fishing of their food supply, entanglement in fishing nets, commercial removal of the guano they use for burrows, and predation. There are worries that the species could become extinct within decades.

Name a Penguin!

Following a long philanthropic tradition, the Zoo is offering naming rights of the penguin chicks to donors. Gifts can be named in honor of the donor, another living person, or to establish a memorial in honor of a loved one. Please contact Elaine Mah Best, Development Director or Pieter van Meeuwen, Assistant Director of Development, at (805) 962-5339.

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The Santa Barbara Zoo is open daily from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.; general admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for children 2-12 and seniors 60+, and children under 2 are free. Parking is \$5.

The Santa Barbara Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA zoos are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great visitor experience, and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and is the public's link to helping animals in their native habitats.

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