

Press Release
For Immediate Release
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WADDLE you do this Long Weekend? Visit the NEW Endangered African Penguin Exhibit at the Toronto Zoo!

Friday, May 20, 2011: The swim, they dive, they waddle, and mostly they are sure to entertain zoo visitors of all ages. After an 18-year absence, African penguins are back, introducing zoo visitors to 12 playful and entertaining new friends. The new Endangered African Penguin Exhibit features an innovative design that includes a new penguin house with indoor pool, state-of-the-art underwater viewing area, and a large window for public viewing of the penguins if they are off exhibit due to cold temperatures. Although the exhibit will initially hold 12 penguins, there is room for up to 50 of these sea birds to live comfortably. Penguins aren't the only birds calling this new exhibit home. Great white and pink-backed pelicans, white-breasted cormorants and other water fowl will also be new additions to the Zoo this year. Visitors can catch a daily Keeper Talk and Feeding, take home a penguin souvenir from the retail kiosk and much more.

"The opening of this new exhibit supports the Zoo's vision in many ways, offering interaction, education, conservation and fun," says John Tracogna, Toronto Zoo CEO. "Being an endangered species, the Zoo is committed to the Species Survival Plan (SSP) for African penguins. We will offer keeper talks, events and programs to educate our visitors on this popular and interesting animal. We are certain this exhibit will be a real favourite for our visitors."

Fun facts about the African penguin:

- pairs mate for life
- while penguins cannot fly in the air, they do plenty of flying in the water
- life span is about 15 to 20 years
- may have up to 300 feathers per square inch on its body
- both males and females incubate the eggs
- population has dropped from millions to less than 60,000 since the 1800s

While natural predators such as seals, sharks and mongoose take their toll on the endangered African penguin population, humans are by far the greatest threat to these endangered birds. Loss of suitable breeding ground, competition from commercial fishing, egg collection and the other environmental factors such as oil spills have all contributed to a rapid decline in population. In order to help prevent further decline, the endangered African penguin will become the focus of a Species Survival Plan (SSP) at the Toronto Zoo.

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The Toronto Zoo is a member of CAZA (Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums). The AZA works to ensure a professional level of zoo operations with high standards of excellence. The AZA outlines the primary objectives for zoos and aquariums including conservation, research and education. Events are subject to change without notice.

The Zoo is located at Meadowvale Road and Hwy. 401, Exit 389 east and west bound. For general information, call (416) 392-5929. The Toronto Zoo is open year round (except December 25th).