

Introducing The Very Rare Yellow-Eyed Penguin

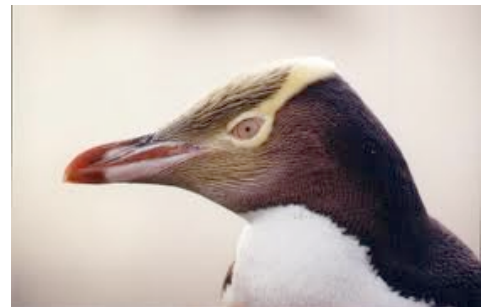
By Andrew Eastwick

How many different penguin species do you know about? Probably Emperors, Macaronis, and Africans. You might know about the Adèlie, the Chinstrap, the Gentoo, or the Little Blue. But what about the Snares, the White-Flipped, and the Erect-Crested? There are many penguin species not a lot of people know about. But none are as little known or rare as the Yellow-Eyed Penguin.



Physical Appearance, Habitat, and Diet

The Yellow-Eyed Penguin lives in eastern New Zealand. They are black with a white belly and yellow rings around their eyes that are connected by a yellow line that stretches over their head, making them look like they wear headphones over their eyes! Females are 2 feet tall while males are 3 feet and they can weigh up to 18 pounds, making them the third largest penguin in the world. (You've probably figured out males are bigger than females.) They usually live for 10-12 years but some live up to 20. 90% of their diet is made up of fish including the blue cod, red cod, opalfish, and New Zealand Blueback Sprat. The other 10% is made up of cephalopods (squid, cuttlefish, and octopi) such as the arrow squid.



Breeding & Nesting

Yellow-Eyed Penguins are the least social of all penguins, and nest out of sight of each other in forests. Nest sites are selected in August and usually two eggs are laid in September. The eggs take 39-51 days to hatch. For the first 6 weeks after hatching, the parents switch off guarding the nest while the other one goes foraging for food. The foraging parent returns at least daily to relieve the partner and to feed the chicks. After 6 weeks, both parents go foraging and fishing to feed the chicks. Chicks fledge in mid-February and are totally independent after on.



Penguins in Peril

These are the most endangered species of penguin, with only 1,600 left in the world. Their main predators are introduced animals (nonnative species brought to a new place) like stoats, rats and cats, which eat penguin eggs and chicks. Adults also get killed by introduced diseases and tourists stress them out a lot. The Yellow-Eyed Penguin Trust helps these endangered penguins by micro-chipping them and tracking them to help learn more about this mysterious animal. They also grow native plants to help increase the forests that they nest in. you can help by going to www.yellow-eyedpenguin.org Maybe one day we can bring these wonderful creatures from extinction.

