



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### CELEBRATE WORLD PENGUIN DAY - 25 APRIL

**Cape Town, 25 April** – World Penguin Day celebrates penguins wherever they are found; from the snow and ice of Antarctica to the sunshine of Africa. In the midst of the celebrations it also serves to remind people that many penguins are in danger of extinction and need our help.

While penguins are well-known from animated movies and loved because of their cute, almost human-like characteristics, they are less well-known as one of the most threatened groups of seabirds in the world. Competition with fisheries, mortality due to bycatch (primarily in gillnets), marine pollution, disease and climate change all threaten this iconic group of seabirds.

“This is why BirdLife International has launched a new global campaign to raise public awareness of the plight of penguins and funds for vital penguin conservation work across the globe. BirdLife South Africa endorses the campaign which we have helped develop” says Dr Taryn Morris, Coastal Seabird Conservation Manager at BirdLife South Africa. “We encourage everyone to visit the website <https://penguin.birdlife.org> and help #protectapenguin”.

BirdLife Partners, including BirdLife South Africa, are already working to tackle some of these threats, but the size of the challenge demands that efforts are redoubled. “We aim to improve the fortunes of penguins globally by tackling the major threats driving declines.” says Dr Morris. The African Penguin is under threat from a shortage of sardine and anchovy within reach of their breeding colonies. “Our work focuses on scientific and advocacy work to ensure more fish in the sea for penguins and an ambitious new project to establish new colonies of penguins in areas of high food availability” says Christina Hagen, the Pamela Isdell Fellow of Penguin Conservation at BirdLife South Africa.

World Penguin Day also coincides with BirdLife South Africa’s Annual General Meeting, which this year is taking place on a seabird watching cruise aboard the *MSC Sinfonia* giving rise to the catchy title of “Flock at Sea”. The birders on board will celebrate the day by dressing up as penguins for dinner, making “healthy ocean pledges”, and learning about the diversity of penguins and the threats they face.

**End**

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For more information on the BirdLife International Protect a Penguin campaign, contact Maggie Balaskas, [Maggie.Balaskas@birdlife.org](mailto:Maggie.Balaskas@birdlife.org)

**Notes for the editor:**

BirdLife South Africa

1. The mission of BirdLife South Africa is to promote the enjoyment, conservation, study and understanding of wild birds and their habitats.
2. BirdLife South Africa contact details: Isdell House, 17 Hume Road, Dunkeld West 2196, Gauteng  
Private Bag X5000, Parklands 2121, Johannesburg, Gauteng, South Africa, Tel. +27-11-7891122, Fax. +27-11-7895188, e-mail address: [info@birdlife.org.za](mailto:info@birdlife.org.za), website: [www.birdlife.org.za](http://www.birdlife.org.za)

Protect a Penguin Campaign

1. Website: [penguin.birdlife.org](http://penguin.birdlife.org)
2. Campaign Vision: A world where penguins are no longer threatened with extinction and their habitats are properly protected.
3. Aim and how we will achieve it: We aim to improve the fortunes of penguins globally by tackling the major threats driving declines. To achieve this, we will: identify the most important places at sea for penguins and advocate for their protection; work to tackle bycatch in fisheries; carry out scientific and advocacy work to improve fisheries management; protect important colonies through predator control, habitat restoration and enhancing biosecurity; establish new colonies where appropriate; monitor penguin populations to assess the effectiveness of conservation action.

Penguin Information

1. There are 18 species of penguins.
2. Penguins range in size and appearance from the largest of the species, the iconic Emperor Penguin standing around 122 cm tall to the petite Little Penguin reaching about 33 cm.
3. Penguins are the second most threatened group of seabirds in the world, after albatrosses.
4. More than half of all penguin species are threatened with extinction.
5. African Penguins are found in southern Africa only in South Africa and Namibia.
6. They are listed as Endangered, with only about 20 000 breeding pairs remaining.
7. Each individual African Penguin has a different pattern of black spots on its white chest and belly, which researchers can use to identify individual birds.