

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Spehnsiciformes
Scientific Name: *Eudyptula minor*

Family: Spehniscidae
Common Name: Little blue penguin

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other New Zealand also

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other polyphasic

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Little blue penguins eat a variety of fish and squid in the wild. The captive diets can include capelin, sardine, anchovy, squid sp, silversides, herring, pilchard and other commercially available species. See Penguin ACM for detailed nutritional information.

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Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: 7 yrs Females: 7 yrs

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: 8-15 yrs Females: 8-15 yrs

BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 2-3 yrs Females: 2-3 yrs

Courtship Displays: Vocalizations, mutual preening, duets, and exaggerated territorial displays to other penguins are part of the courtship displays.

Nest Site Description: In the wild, Little penguins will use burrows in sand dunes or among rocks, in sea caves and on headlands but will also nest under structures such as buildings. Their colonies loosely colonial. The typical nest consists of a tunnel with a nest bowl at the end. Large enough for penguins to stand up. Nesting material may include twigs, vegetation and other easily found beach debris. They are territorial and aggressively defend their nest.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: Two eggs are laid per clutch. Eggs are laid 1-4 days apart. Egg color is white when freshly laid but becomes stained with fecal material during incubation.

Incubation Period: 33 – 37 days

Fledging Period: Fledging occurs usually between 48-59 days.

Parental Care: Both parents will incubate, brood and feed the chicks.

Chick Development: Newly hatched chicks are semi altricial and require parental or human care for many weeks. Protoptile down is replaced within a week by mesoptyle down, which is then replaced with juvenile feathers starting at about 4 weeks old. The chicks grow very quickly and adult size and weight is attained at about 7-9 weeks of age. Juvenile plumage is indistinguishable for that of the adults.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Loosely colonial with pairs defending their nesting location.

Social Structure in Captivity: Colonially held. Little penguins are temperate birds and may be exhibited in indoor or outdoor displays depending on the location. Little penguins often roost in groups in captivity and prefer physical contact with conspecifics.

Minimum Group Size: 10 individuals

Maximum Group Size: N/A

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: No **Comments:** Has not been tried in US without the ability to separate this small species.

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Optimal Habitat Size: Enough space should be provided so they can walk, swim, and perch. Dedicated breeding areas, back of house support are needed. Birds need to be able to avoid or escape any territorial disputes especially during breeding season. Adequate pool space is also important. See Penguin Care Manual minimum standards for water and land size.

Management Challenges: Off exhibit holding space is recommended for managing molting or nesting penguins. This additional space can also be used for isolating newly recommended pairs. Disease and medical concerns include pododermatitis, abnormal molt, ingestion of foreign objects and Aspergillosis Due to their small size little penguins are less tolerant of cold exposure especially in water but also on land. These penguins also cannot tolerate prolonged exposure to high air temperatures. Off exhibit holding associated with outdoor exhibits is essential for relief in both situations. West Nile Virus and Avian malaria are issues in outside exhibits.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Due to their small size little penguins are less tolerant of cold exposure especially in water but also on land. These penguins also cannot tolerate prolonged exposure to high air temperatures. Off exhibit holding associated with outdoor exhibits is essential for relief in both situations.

REFERENCES:

Penguin Animal Care Manual

Stahel, C. & Gales, R. (1987) Little penguin: Fairy penguin in Australia. NSW University press.

ZAA Little penguin husbandry manual.

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