

# Species Fact Sheets

**Order:** Sphenisciformes  
**Scientific Name:** *Pygoscelis antarctica*

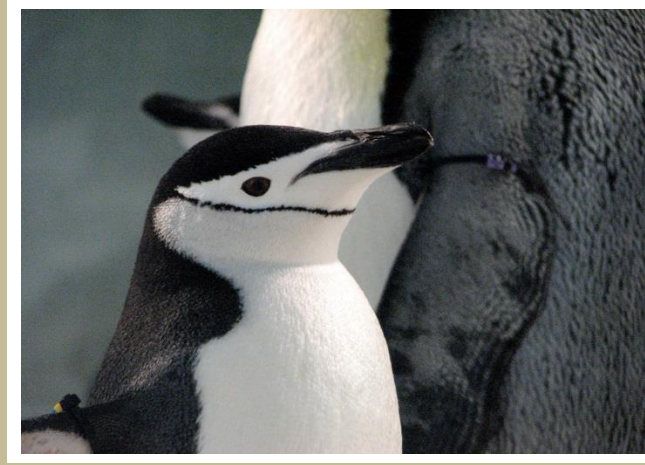
**Family:** Spheniscidae  
**Common Name:** CHINSTRAP PENGUIN

**AZA Management:**  Green  Yellow  Red  None

**Photo (Male):**



**Photo (Female):**



**NATURAL HISTORY:**

**Geographic Range:** Europe  Asia  North America  Neotropical   
 Africa  Australia  Other Sub-Antarctic; Antarctic peninsula

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

**Circadian Cycle:** Diurnal  Crepuscular  Nocturnal  Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

**Cold Tolerance:** To 70° F  To 60° F  To 50° F  To 40° F   
 To 30° F  To 20° F  Other Usually kept at 35-42 F

**Heat Tolerance:** To 30° F  To 50° F  To 70° F  To 90° F   
 To 110° F  Other no warmer than 102 F

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

**Captive Dietary Needs:**  
 Vitamin supplement necessary due to low nutrient value from freezing process of fish

**Life Expectancy in the Wild:** Males: 15-20 years Females: 15-20 years

**Life Expectancy in Captivity:** Males: 25+ years Females: 25+ years

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## BREEDING INFORMATION:

**Age at Sexual Maturity:** Males: 3-5 years Females: 3-5 years

**Courtship Displays:** Nuptial Displaying; Mutual Vocalization; Rock Presentation

**Nest Site Description:** Usually constructed with what is available. Rocks; grass; bones (wild). In many facilities, nest sites have been constructed of mortar and flat stones to build up areas that were not usable before. SWSA has been doing this for years and it has made a tremendous difference. If there are spots that are away from all other birds and somewhat secluded, they will go to those areas. Chinstraps prefer to nest at locations that are above and away from everyone else except their own. They do not seem to enjoy nesting on the ground or "rookery area" of the exhibit but will if they must and will try to be amongst each other if at all possible. They are a lot more tolerant of smaller species than larger. Gentoos will displace them almost every time. The SWSA theory for nesting space is if all ground nests are taken then go up! This is where making use of all space that is available and building nest sites everywhere you can to give a pair the opportunity to try and nest.

**Clutch Size, Egg Description:** 2 Eggs. All white and somewhat rounded. Up to 3 in. long and 2 in. wide.

**Incubation Period:** 35-39 Days

**Fledgling Period:** 8 Weeks

**Parental Care:** Shared/Mutual.

**Chick Development:** As penguin chicks go, chinstraps are some of the easier to raise. They almost always eat well and rarely are there issues with them as they grow. At about half way through their development (fledging), chicks will eat anything they can choke down. Feathers, rocks, and any item the parents bring back to the nest. If hand raised and on a rock substrate, they will also eat these as well. They like to "mouth" on the sides of corrals and holding areas and will pick at anything loose or available and try to eat it as well.

Chinstraps do well being raised along with other species and seem to get along without issues. Near fledging, they will begin to fight amongst each other. This species is also able to be fostered to other species parents without issue. They are fast learners with respect to eating on their own without hand feeding.

## CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

**Social Structure in the Wild:** Colonial

**Social Structure in Captivity:** Colonial

**Minimum Group Size:** 10

**Maximum Group Size:** No limit/appropriate space

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**Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits:** Varies      **Comments:** Breeding tends to be stifled by nest site competition with larger species (Gentoo).

**Optimal Habitat Size:** Ideal would be an exhibit with plenty of pool space as these birds do spend a lot of time in the water. As they get older they will drop back the time they spend in the pool and spend a lot of time on land, moving about the exhibit. For nesting, if at all possible, a lot of surface area, flat and elevated will behoove breeding this species especially if in a mixed species exhibit with a high number of individuals potentially competing for nest space during the breeding season. See Penguin ACM for minimum sizes.

**Management Challenges:** Temperature tolerances; mixed species issues

## ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

As a rule Chinstrap Penguins are quite the fickle and aloof species. They tend to stay to themselves and usually shy away from contact. SeaWorld San Antonio has worked with Chinstraps for over 26 years and had mixed success in breeding them until 2009. Normally chinstraps will breed readily when not competing with other species like the Gentoo, for nest sites, but they will shut down as far as breeding is concerned when under duress of nest site competition. In the past this has been the issue with SWSA breeding of CS and it may be possible that this is the same issue currently plaguing all facilities holding both species. A few years back SWSA decided to move most all of their gentoos out. The following breeding season, chinstrap propagation went out the roof and there was continued success for the next four years. In five breeding seasons after the gentoos were moved out, SWSA had 43 chicks survive to fledging.

Many facilities do not have the option of moving surplus birds out to make room for chinstrap breeding success however with careful planning with the PMC and the TAG Chair it may be possible to do this with a few facilities to see if this is indeed a viable solution for others to invigorate their chinstrap breeding success.

## REFERENCES:

AZA Penguin Animal Care Manual (ACM)

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## COMPLETED BY:

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