



ADELIE

Pygoscelis adeliae

Background Information

The Adelie penguin is a member of the genus *Pygoscelis*, which contains two other members. The Adelie is the "classic" penguin one thinks about since it most resembles that "little guy in a tuxedo." The color banding of the Adelie penguin is duotone black and white. It is quite easily distinguished from its two closest relatives.

Adelie penguins average around 8.5 pounds and are on the shorter end when compared to other penguins since they average around 15 inches. The male and the female can be distinguished only by behavioural and temporal cues during the mating season.

The ecology of the Adelie penguin is fairly restricted to the continent of Antarctica or at most the peripheral regions of the periantarctic islands. They remain in this locale during the entire year and return to seasonal breeding grounds. So, for all intents and purposes, the Adelies do migrate. It specifically inhabits and breeds around Balleny Islands, Peter I Oy, Shetland Islands, South Orkney Islands and the South Sandwich Islands.

The diet of the Adelie is unremarkable; it consists of small shoaling animals, small fish and various crustaceans. It is preyed upon by the McCormick skua (chicks, eggs), the sheathbill (chicks, eggs), the Giant petrel (chicks, eggs) and the leopard seal. Taking into consideration their feeding supply and predation, predicted population density is about 2.5 million breeding pairs making it a stable population.

Author Bernard Stonehouse

"Adelie penguins *Pygoscelis adeliae* breed on the shores of the Antarctic continent, Antarctic Peninsula and the southern islands of Scotia Arc, Peter I Oy, Scott Island and the Balleny Islands. Strongly colonial, they nest mainly on beaches raised by recent isostatic uplift following deglaciation, and many of their far southern colonies are likely to be of relatively recent origin. Colonies occur only where sea ice opens early in spring and can be relied upon to disperse locally in summer (Stonehouse, 1967b). Many colonies numbering tens of thousands of nests have been reported, and some islands of the Scotia Arc may have populations of several million Adelie penguins. Distinguished by their very dense plumage, short extremities and feathered bill, Adelies are far better equipped than other pygoscelid penguins for life in extreme cold. After wintering in the pack ice they return to the breeding grounds in October, usually before the spring thaw has started, and lay two eggs in pebble nests. Incubating through the cold conditions of early spring, they rear their chicks in the brief summer and release them, fully feathered but at less than 70 percent of adult weight (Stonehouse, 1970a), while the summer flush of plankton still remains. Despite their

remoteness from civilisation, Adelle penguins have probably received more attention from biologists than all other species of penguins combined; the proportion of Adelle papers in this volume does not exaggerate the research effort lavished upon this one species."



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