



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Zoo Reveals Gender of Penguin Chick Announcement was made on Penguin Awareness Day

It's a girl! Zoo keepers today revealed the gender of an endangered black-footed penguin chick that hatched at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo on November 24.

Zoo keepers made the "gender reveal" announcement and introduced the 8-week-old female chick on Penguin Awareness Day, January 20.

The chick's gender was determined by a blood test. This is the only way to determine the sex of a young penguin, because males and females look exactly alike. This is the first penguin to hatch at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo since 2012.

The baby penguin will be on exhibit with first-time parents Chunk and Flash (and the rest of the flock) when the zoo opens for the 2016 season on April 23.

It's not just the baby's "cute factor," that has the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo and the conservationist community excited about the new arrival.

"The zoo participates in the Penguin Species Survival Plan, a cooperative breeding program administered by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums that manages zoo-dwelling populations of rare animals," said Dr. Joe Smith, director of animal programs at the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo.

"The zoo supports conservation of wild penguin populations as well," Dr. Smith said. "We financially support SANCCOB, an organization in South Africa that conserves coastal birds in their native habitat."

Two Fort Wayne zoo keepers recently volunteered at the SANCCOB facility. Zoo keepers Britni Plummer and Maggie Sipe travelled to SANCCOB's headquarters in Cape Town, South Africa and spent two weeks rehabilitating and releasing wild black-footed penguins.

The choices we make at home also have an impact on wild coastal birds. By keeping rivers clean and demanding sustainably-harvested seafood, we can keep our oceans healthy and ensure that wild penguins can hunt, nest, breed, and thrive for generations.

Facts About African Black-Footed Penguins

- Black-footed penguins are the only penguin species native to Africa. The climate in their South African coastal habitat is similar to that of Indiana, with warm summers and cold winters.
- They are classified as Endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature with a decreasing population trend.
- Black-footed penguins eat fish. Unregulated fishing and oil spills in South African waters contribute to their decline in the wild.
- Chicks have different color patterns than adult penguins. Chicks' feathers are fluffy and gray. At 14-16 months old, their juvenile plumage begins a two-phase molting process and is eventually replaced by the familiar black and white pattern of adults.
- All 17 types of penguins (including the African black-footed) live south of the equator, so you'll never see penguins and polar bears (which live in the Northern Hemisphere) together.
- The African penguin can often be heard making a loud donkey-like braying noise, which is how they received the nickname "jackass penguin."

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About the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo: The Fort Wayne Children's Zoo's mission is to connect kids and animals, strengthen families, and inspire people to care. The zoo is northeast Indiana's largest tourist attraction, hosting more than 600,000 guests annually. The zoo received the **2015 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Award**, was voted **Indiana's #1 "Gotta-Do Summer Attraction,"** and was named the **#7 Zoo in the United States and #20 in the World by TripAdvisor** in 2015.

The zoo is a conservation leader, contributing more than \$90,000 annually to local, regional, and international efforts to protect wild animals and habitats, and participating in cooperative management programs for 91 endangered species and taxa. The zoo was named Northeast Indiana's **Sustainable Business of the Year** in 2014.

As a self-supporting facility, the Fort Wayne Children's Zoo receives no tax dollars for operations. The zoo's operations are funded entirely by earned revenue and donations.

The zoo will open for the 2016 season on April 23. Zoo hours are 9:00am-5:00pm, open until 7:00pm Memorial Day through Labor Day. The zoo will close for one day on Friday, August 19 for an annual fundraising event.

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