



AFRICAN PENGUIN CHICK BOLSTERING PROJECT

Founding Partners – SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds), Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation, Department of Environmental Affairs (Oceans and Coasts), Cape Nature, ADU University of Cape Town, Robben Island Museum, IFAW (International Fund for Animal Welfare)

AFRICAN PENGUIN CHICK BOLSTERING PROJECT REPORT

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Data supplied by Dr Nola Parsons (SANCCOB Researcher)

Report compiled by Margaret Roestorf and Francois Louw

Project partners and supporters:

The CBP is a collaboration between SANCCOB (project administrators), the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation, the Animal Demography Unit (UCT), DEA (Oceans and Coasts), CapeNature and Robben Island Museum and SANParks, and is supported by Allwetterzoo Münster; Artis Zoo; Banham Zoo; Basel Zoo; Bristol Zoo Gardens; Burger's Zoo; Cheyenne Mountain Zoo; Detroit Zoo; Dierenpark Amersfoort; Disney Rapid Relief Fund; Erlebnis Zoo Hannover; Florida Aquarium; Fort Wayne Kid's Zoo; Georgia Aquarium; International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW); Jenkinson's Aquarium; La Palmyre Zoo; Leiden Conservation Foundation; Leipzig Zoo; Le Pal Nature Foundation; Little Rock Zoo; Living Coasts; Memphis Zoo; Minnesota Zoo; Monterey Aquarium; National Aviary; Oceana; Océarium du Croisic; Old Mutual Staff Volunteer Fund Trust; Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium; Ripley's Aquarium in the Smokies; Riverbanks Conservation Fund; SASIX; Sea Research Foundation (Mystic Aquarium); SeaWorld Busch Garden Conservation Fund and the SeaWorld Animal Crisis Fund; Steinhardt Aquarium; Toledo Zoo; US Fish and Wildlife Service; Wallace Global Fund; ZOOM Torino.

African penguin chicks admitted to SANCCOB in 2013

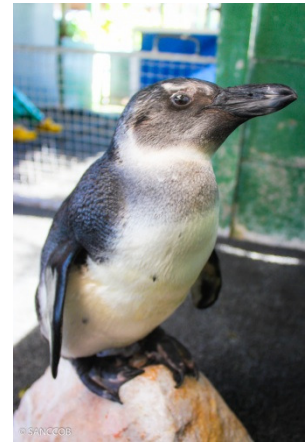


African penguin chicks are admitted to SANCCOB from the colonies for various reasons and the numbers fluctuate between years. In 2013, SANCCOB reared an above average number of chicks. Almost 800 chicks

were admitted to the Table View centre with approximately 300 admitted throughout the year (mostly removed from the Boulders colony) and approximately 500 admitted in November and December due to abandonment by moulting parents. In addition, 90 abandoned African penguin chicks were also admitted to the Cape St. Francis centre during 2013.

Conservation staff from SANParks, Overstrand Municipality and CapeNature identify underweight and ill chicks in the colonies and bring these to SANCCOB for rehabilitation. These activities form part of the Chick Bolstering Project, a collaboration between SANCCOB (project administrators), the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation, the Animal Demography Unit (UCT), DEA (Oceans and Coasts), CapeNature, Robben Island Museum and SANParks. Chicks are collected from colonies such as Boulders (TMNP), Robben Island and Stoney Point in the Western Cape and Bird Island in the Eastern Cape (part of the Addo Elephant National Park) and admitted to SANCCOB's rehabilitation centres in Table View and Cape St. Francis. Most of the chicks sent through from the Boulders (TMNP) colony are not abandoned but removed as a precautionary measure from areas where they are at risk from speeding motor vehicles or residents' pets.

Traditionally, numerous penguins are also abandoned at the end of the breeding season, just before the adults start their moulting cycle. During this three week process when they replace their 'tuxedo' with a brand new set of waterproof feathers, they are unable to hunt for fish and feed their young. The chicks that are not yet ready to fledge are abandoned and face starvation. *"It is believed that the number of chicks left in the colony at the end of the breeding season is directly linked to the breeding success and availability of food for the adults prior to, and throughout, the breeding season,"* says Venessa Strauss, SANCCOB's conservation director.



Once at SANCCOB's centres, the chicks are fed 'fish smoothies', allowed to swim and taken care of by the dedicated staff and volunteers who work round the clock to ensure that they get released back into the wild. Rehabilitation of these chicks can take anything from six weeks to three months depending on their size and condition. Once they are fledging age, the correct weight, in a healthy condition and their feathers are waterproof, they receive the final nod of approval from SANCCOB's veterinary team and are released back into the wild.

Research has proven that hand-reared chicks fare as well as naturally-reared chicks in the wild. With less than 18 000 breeding pairs left in the wild in South Africa, African penguins are an endangered species and it remains critical to save every individual possible to bolster the numbers in the wild. The hand-rearing of abandoned chicks is seen as a successful conservation intervention and is in line with the draft Biodiversity Management Plan for the African plan.