



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 31, 2018

TWO MORE PENGUIN CHICKS HATCH AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO

Four penguin chicks pass their physicals

Tacoma, Wash. – And then there were four. Two more Magellanic penguin chicks hatched this week at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, bringing the total number of chicks to four.

Magellanic penguin parents, “Yellow” and “Orange,” welcomed two chicks this week, one on Saturday and another on Monday. These new chicks join two chicks hatched last week by penguin parents, “Pink” and “Red.”

Magellanic penguins at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium are not named but rather are known by the colors of the identification bands on their wings.

Wednesday morning, zookeepers and a veterinarian carefully lifted the four small gray balls of fluff out of their two burrows – and very briefly away from their parents – to weigh the penguins and give them well-chick examinations.

The verdict: All of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium’s newest residents are healthy and appear to be thriving.

Zoo veterinarians carefully examined each chick for overall body condition and energy and hydration levels to assess their health.

“The newest chicks were quite robust and active during their exams,” said zoo Head Veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf. “They are endearingly plump and their parents are doing a great job caring for them,” said Wolf. The chick hatched Monday weighed 4.5 ounces and the chick hatched Saturday weighed 10 ounces.

“The two older chicks are continuing to thrive and are rapidly gaining weight,” said Wolf. They now weigh 14.9 and 17.7 ounces.

The two new families are on exhibit in the Penguin Point habitat at the zoo, but spotting the chicks will take patience. They’re safely hidden under one of the parents while they’re being kept warm during the day, coming out occasionally for feeding. The parents feed the chicks a slurry of regurgitated fish after the adults have eaten herring and capelin.

Parents incubate the eggs in shifts. They generally hatch between 38 and 42 days after they’re laid.

The hatchings are a result of a breeding recommendation through the Species Survival Plan® (SSP) for Magellanic penguins.

“Penguin breeding tends to be more successful as the size of the colony grows,” said Malia Somerville, zoo Curator of Marine Mammals and Birds. “So having a thriving and growing colony bodes well for the Magellanic penguins at Point Defiance Zoo and for the larger zoo-based population.”

Four of the nine other penguins at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium were rescued after washing ashore in South America, nursed back to health at a rehabilitation facility and found a home in Tacoma. Four penguins were hatched here and one was hatched at Blank Park Zoo in Iowa.

The medium-sized penguins, native to the South American shores of Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Brazil, are listed as near-threatened on the IUCN Red List, which the International Union for Conservation of Nature compiles to indicate the status of various species whose numbers are drastically dwindling in the wild

Penguins are threatened in the wild by a number of factors, including the proliferation of plastics in the ocean, spills of oil and other hazardous materials, and overfishing

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is open from 9:30 to 5 p.m. daily.

For more information about the zoo go to www.pdza.org.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world’s resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).

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