

FOCUS ON ENDANGERED SPECIES

ENDANGERED BIRDS

by Laura Stickney



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AT A GLANCE

- In 2021, almost 1,500 bird species were threatened with extinction. Pollution, habitat loss, climate change, and more put these birds at risk.
- California condors eat carrion. When hunters use lead bullets to shoot animals, condors can eat pieces of lead and get lead poisoning.
- Conservationists have raised many condors and released them back into the wild.
- The biggest threats to African penguins are overfishing and global warming.
- Conservationists help protect African penguins. They rehabilitate injured or sick penguins, lead oil spill rescues, and monitor penguin colonies.
- Kakapo are flightless parrots native to New Zealand. Early European settlers introduced invasive species such as rats, cats, and stoats into kakapo habitats. These predators ate kakapo eggs and chicks.



- Kakapo have low genetic diversity and don't breed often. Conservationists work to keep their population steady. They guard against predators, provide food, and do health checks.
- Lear's macaws live in the Caatinga region of northeastern Brazil. Poachers often capture them for the pet trade. Deforestation and land clearing also harm the macaws' habitat.
- Government protections and wildlife trade bans help protect Lear's macaws and their habitat.

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AFRICAN PENGUINS

African penguins live in colonies off Africa's southwestern coast. They're known for their donkey-like noises.

Waterproof feathers keep them warm while swimming. The penguins also have unique markings. Pink patches of skin above their eyes keep them cool. When penguins get

hot, blood flows to these patches to release body heat. African penguins live on rocky beaches. They hunt for fish offshore. The penguins are skilled swimmers. They can dive up to 400 feet (120 m).

African penguins mate for life. They form close bonds with their partners.



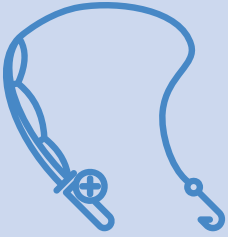
GREEDY FOR GUANO

In the 1800s, there were about 1.5 million African penguins. But the population quickly fell. Penguin eggs were a popular food. Between 1900 and 1930, people stole 13 million eggs from one colony. They also took guano from nesting sites. Guano is bird poop. It builds up in thick

WHITE GOLD

In the 1800s and 1900s, guano was a popular trade product. Human-made fertilizers hadn't been invented yet. But guano helped crops grow. So many people wanted guano that it became known as white gold. People mined it from penguin nesting sites. Today, guano collecting is illegal.

THREATS TO AFRICAN PENGUINS



Overfishing



Food Scarcity



Tourists & Human Disturbances



Global Warming



Oil Spills



Extreme Weather

African penguins face a variety of threats, including human disturbances, global warming, and oil spills. The biggest danger is overfishing.

the area's economy. Conservationists are working with fishing companies to find a solution.

GLOSSARY

captivity

when an animal is raised, kept, or bred in a zoo or other enclosure outside of the wild

climate change

long-term changes in global temperature and weather patterns

conservationists

people who work toward the protection and preservation of natural environments, plants, and wildlife

ecotourism

tourism that is focused on seeing wildlife and supporting conservation

invasive species

a species that isn't native to a specific environment

range

the geographic area or region where an animal can be found

rehabilitates

treats a sick or injured wild animal until it can be released back into the wild

wildlife trafficking

the illegal capture, trade, and sale of wild animals

SOURCE NOTES

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3. Quoted in Tamma Begum, “New Zealand’s Quirky Kakapo Are Pulled Back from the Edge of Extinction,” *Natural History Museum London*, n.d. www.nhm.ac.uk.

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FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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