

**AFRICA PENGUINS: ENVIRONMENT**

**NEWS:** 'Critically endangered' African penguins just want peace and food

**WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?**

African penguins are flightless birds endemic to Southern Africa, primarily found along the coasts of South Africa and Namibia. They are critically endangered due to climate change, habitat loss, and oil spills.

**African Penguins:**

**Scientific Name:** *Spheniscus demersus*

**Common Names:** Cape penguin, Jackass penguin (due to their donkey-like braying calls)

**Endemic to:**

- Southern Africa, specifically along the coasts of Namibia and South Africa.

**Physical Characteristics:**

- Flightless, with a streamlined body adapted for swimming.
- Wings are stiffened and flattened into flippers for efficient movement in water.
- Notable black stripe and a pattern of unique black spots on the chest.
- Pink glands above the eyes that become more pronounced in color as the penguin gets hotter.
- Males are larger than females and have larger beaks.

**Habitat and Distribution:**

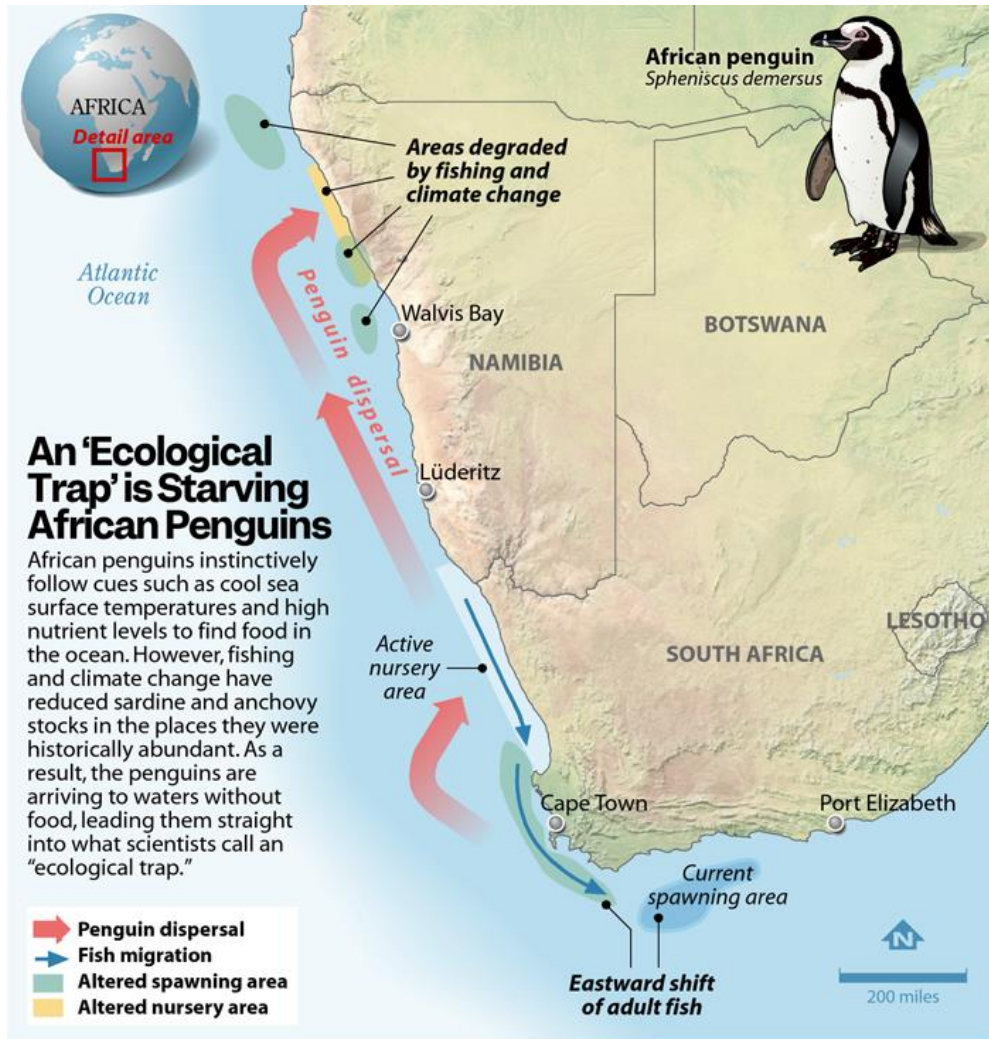
- Found within 40 km of the shore in various coastal habitats.
- Breeding, molting, and resting occur onshore.
- Largest colony is located on Dyer Island, South Africa.
- Their distribution spans from Hollams Bird Island in Namibia to Bird Island in Algoa Bay, South Africa.

**Diet:**

- Primarily feed on pelagic schooling fish, such as sardines and anchovies.

**Breeding:**

- Breed in burrows dug into guano (a natural fertilizer made from bird, bat, and seal excrement).
- Guano burrows protect their chicks from harsh winds and rain.
- African penguins prefer artificial nests over natural guano burrows for nesting.
- Monogamous; they have one partner for life and communicate with vocalizations and body language.



SOURCE: Richard B. Sherley et al., *Current Biology*

PAUL HORN / Inside Climate News

**Conservation Status:**

- Critically Endangered as per the IUCN Red List.

**Threats:**

- Climate change, which affects food availability and breeding conditions.
- Habitat loss due to coastal development.
- Oil spills that contaminate their feeding and breeding grounds.

**Prediction:**

- The BirdLife NGO predicts that African penguins could become extinct in the wild by 2035 if conservation measures are not implemented.