

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Endangered African Penguin Chick Hatches at Audubon Aquarium of the Americas

(New Orleans, La) - Audubon Aquarium of the Americas introduced Zion, the newest addition to the African penguin colony in a Facebook Live as part of the Virtual Community Connection Series today, March 24.

Audubon chose the name Zion in honor of New Orleans Pelicans rookie Zion Williamson. In this time of uncertainty, Zion embraced the community with a truly remarkable act of generosity by covering the salaries of the Smoothie King Center workers for 30 days after NBA season halted.

"Audubon values the long standing partnership we've had with the New Orleans Pelicans, and we're honored to name our newest addition to the Aquarium after this great athlete and, more importantly, great person, who is part of the NBA team," says Audubon Nature Institute President and CEO Ron Forman.

The chick hatched at Audubon Aquarium of the Americas on February 17, 2020, after a 39-day incubation period.

The chick is the offspring of penguin pair Hubig (mother) and Ocio (father). After spending approximately 11 days being raised with its parents, as sometimes happens, it needed to be removed and taken under human care. This is a very time-consuming process for animal care staff and is a testament to their dedication, especially right now as Audubon is closed, and only essential staff are on site taking such great care of the animals. The staff on site will be hand-rearing the chick for about two months behind the scenes before starting introduction processes to the colony.

"New Orleans is a resilient city, and we have had to overcome adversity before—together, we will make it through this. Knowing we have such dedicated staff during such a difficult time working hard to take care of this new chick, makes bringing you this good news even more rewarding," adds Forman.

African penguin chicks typically fledge—or leave the nest—70 to 80 days after hatching. The chick will retain its downy feathers until it molts into waterproof juvenile plumage. After one to two years, African penguins molt into their iconic tuxedo-like adult plumage.

This species is part of the [AZA Species Survival Plan](#), a collaborative conservation effort among the Association of Zoos and Aquariums institutions. Audubon Aquarium of the Americas works closely with the AZA's [Saving Animals From Extinction](#) (SAFE) program, which focuses the collective expertise within AZA-accredited facilities to save endangered species.

The African penguin is a SAFE priority species due to its decreasing population in the wild, which has gone from 141,000 breeding pairs in 1956 to only about 25,000 today. The African penguins at the Aquarium serve as ambassadors, teaching guests about the plight of this species in the wild due to human-wildlife conflict.

“Raising a chick is amazing and rewarding, and I commend our staff for the care and attention they have given to help our penguin chick flourish,” says Aquarium of the Americas Curator of Birds William Robles.” “We are proud to be able to contribute to the African Penguin Species Survival Plan, and we hope to continue our breeding success year after year.”

Keep up to date with the chick’s progress by checking Audubon Aquarium of the Americas social media pages for photos and videos.

Supporters can also help this endangered species by [Adopting an Audubon African Penguin](#). An animal adoption helps care for the more than 15,000 animals (including mammals, fish, birds, invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, and insects) in Audubon's care. Adoptions are symbolic. All adoptable animals may have many adoptive parents, and all adopt animals must remain in their Audubon homes. All adoption will be fulfilled when Audubon reopens.

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