

## TAXON SUMMARY

# King Penguin

1	Family	Spheniscidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i> Miller, 1788
3	Common name	King Penguin
4	Conservation status	Near Threatened: e

### 5 Reasons for listing

Although the Australian population is large and increasing, it is confined to two breeding locations (Vulnerable: D2). Heard I. has been recolonised after localised extinction, implying substantial genetic exchange. Since the global status is Least Concern, the Australian status has been downgraded (as per Gärdenfors *et al.*, 1999) to Near Threatened: e (genetic interchange beyond borders).

Australian breeding colonies	Estimate	Reliability
<i>Extent of occurrence</i>	5,000,000 km <sup>2</sup>	medium
<i>trend</i>	stable	high
<i>Area of occupancy</i>	40 km <sup>2</sup>	medium
<i>trend</i>	increasing	high
<i>No. of breeding birds</i>	141,200	medium
<i>trend</i>	increasing	high
<i>No. of sub-populations</i>	2	high
<i>Largest sub-population</i>	140,000	medium
<i>Generation time</i>	17 years	medium
<i>Global population share</i>	10 %	high
<i>Level of genetic exchange</i>	medium	medium

### 6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

### 7 Past range and abundance

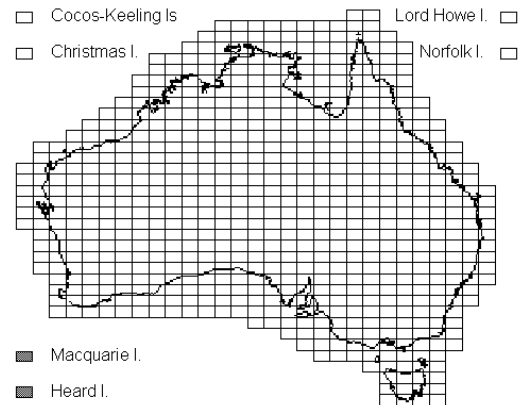
In Australian territory, breeding on Macquarie and Heard Is, although temporarily eliminated from the latter in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Extralimital sub-populations south of Indian and Atlantic Oceans. When not breeding, presumed to move widely across Southern Ocean. Vagrants reach Tasmania (Marchant and Higgins, 1990, E. Woehler).

### 8 Present range and abundance

Since returning to Heard I., increase averaged 15.1% per year from 1963 to 1980; most recent estimate 600 pairs. On Macquarie I., increased by 9.3% per year from 1930 to 1980; most recent estimate 70,000 pairs (Marchant and Higgins, 1990, Woehler, 1991).

### 9 Ecology

King Penguins nest on beaches, foraging deep in surrounding waters for fish and small cephalopods. A breeding cycle takes about 15 months, with at most two chicks per pair raised every three years (Marchant and Higgins, 1990).



### 10 Threats

King Penguins were formerly harvested for oil, and this led to their extirpation from Heard I. (Sparks and Soper, 1967). On land cats take some young (Ellis *et al.*, 1998) and ticks may kill some adults (Gauthier-Clerc *et al.*, 1998). Marine pollution, particularly plastics which are ingested, kills some birds. Also fishing around subantarctic islands may affect the species and should be monitored. The most likely long-term threats are climate change, with rising sea temperature having the potential to adversely affect food supply, and introduced disease (Ellis *et al.*, 1998).

### 11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Continue to monitor breeding population size and success opportunistically.
- 11.2 Continue feral animal control.

### 12 Bibliography

- Ellis, S., Croxall, J. P. and Cooper, J. (eds) 1998. *Penguin Conservation Assessment and Management Plan*. IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, Apple Valley.
- Gärdenfors, U., Rodríguez, J.P., Hilton-Taylor, C., Hyslop, C., Mace, G., Molur, S. and Poss, S. 1999. Draft guidelines for the Application of IUCN Red List Criteria at National and Regional Levels. *Species* 31-32:58-70.
- Gauthier-Clerc, M., Clerquin, Y. and Handrich, Y. 1998. Hyperinfestation by Ticks *Ixodes uriae*: a possible cause of death in adult King Penguins, a long-lived seabird. *Colonial Waterbirds* 21:229-233.

Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. J. (eds) 1990. *The Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Sparks, J. and Soper, T. 1967. *Penguins*. David and Charles, London.

Woehler, E. J. 1991. The status and conservation of seabirds of Heard Island and the McDonald Islands. Pp. 263-277 in *Seabird Status and Conservation*. ICBP Tech. Publ. No 11. J. P. Croxall (ed.). ICBP, Cambridge, U. K.

Comments received from

Barry Baker, Cindy Hull, Eric Woehler.