

# CHRISTMAS CUTENESS OVERLOAD: NEW GENTOO PENGUIN CHICK ARRIVES AT MOODY GARDENS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

12/21/2022

**GALVESTON, Texas (December 21, 2022)** – In the spirit of Christmas, an adorable fuzzy Gentoo penguin chick is the newest addition to the South Atlantic exhibit inside of the Aquarium Pyramid at Moody Gardens. Following two Macaroni that hatched earlier this season, this new Gentoo penguin joined the Moody Gardens family on December 12<sup>th</sup> and weighed in at 98 grams.

The proud penguin parents are Bigglesworth and Garfield. Being that these birds are so animated, it is not surprising that all of the Gentoo penguins at Moody Gardens are named after a cartoon character and soon, this new chick will also be named after a famous cartoon character. Bigglesworth and Garfield are not first-time parents, this gives the Aquarium Pyramid biologists confidence that the penguin parents are doing what is needed in order to raise healthy penguin chicks with little human intervention. The chick now weighs 372 grams. Visitors are invited to try to spot the chick on exhibit in person or on the Penguin Webcam at [www.moodygardens.org](http://www.moodygardens.org).

Adult Gentoo penguins have distinctive white patches above the eye area and white speckling in the adjacent black plumage around their heads. The main distinguishing feature is their yellow feet, this makes them unique among the other species in the South Atlantic exhibit. As they do in the wild, Gentoo penguin parents often build nests out of rocks, which can be spotted on exhibit at Moody Gardens. Their nests can reach up to three feet wide and several inches thick in order to protect the eggs from sudden floods and to keep them off of the cold ground that would be found in nature. Newly hatched Gentoo chicks are expected to become fully grown by about eight weeks old.

Gentoo penguins are listed as Least Concern by the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List and according to Curator Diane Olsen at Moody Gardens, “the Gentoo populations are actually stable and expanding in nature due to climate change because they prefer the warmer climate.” The biggest threats that Gentoo penguins face in nature are overfishing and limited resources. Having penguins on exhibit allows Moody Gardens to educate the public about the issues that these birds face in the wild.

“By having these birds in our collection and showing the public how important these issues are, we are able to share the many ways these populations can be helped in nature,” said Olsen.

Penguins play an influential role as ambassadors for wildlife conservation. Each successful hatch adds to Moody Gardens mission of education and conservation. Olsen notes, “Increasing the number of birds in our collection allows us to have greater diversity for breeding pairs in the future, and allows us to be able to send birds to other facilities to diversify their populations.” As a member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, Moody Gardens is dedicated to its mission of utilizing nature in the advancement of rehabilitation, conservation, rehabilitation, and research.

The Moody Gardens Aquarium Pyramid is one of the largest and most diverse aquariums in the U.S. In addition to the Gentoo penguins, five other species including Macaroni, Chinstrap, King, and Northern and Southern Rockhopper penguins live in the South Atlantic Exhibit. The warm-climate Humboldt penguins reside in the same facility next door to their chilly-aired friends. With over 1.5 million gallons of water, the Aquarium Pyramid houses marine life from five distinct environments. Not only does the collection include penguins, but they also have sting rays, sharks, seals, sea lions, and over 200 different species of fish.

For more information call 409-683-4200 or visit [www.moodygardens.org](http://www.moodygardens.org).

*Moody Gardens® is a public, non-profit, educational destination utilizing nature in the advancement of rehabilitation, conservation, recreation, and research.*

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**Contacts**

Maddie Collins  
Communications Specialist  
[pr@moodygardens.org](mailto:pr@moodygardens.org)  
Phone: 409-683-4256