

CHRISTMAS COMES EARLY TO MOODY GARDENS WITH NEW GENTOO PENGUIN CHICKS

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GALVESTON, Texas (December 9, 2020) – In the spirit of Christmas, there are two adorable additions to the South Atlantic exhibit inside of the Aquarium Pyramid at Moody Gardens. Following two Macaroni penguins that hatched earlier this season, there are now two baby Gentoo penguin chicks that have joined the Moody Gardens family. These chicks are siblings and they both hatched at different times during the day on November 28th. The chicks were the same weight when they hatched, at 98 grams.

The proud penguin parents are Ren and Wiley. All of the Gentoo penguins at Moody Gardens are named after cartoon characters and pretty soon, the new chicks will also be named after famous cartoon characters. Ren and Wiley are not first time parents, this gives the Aquarium Pyramid Biologists confidence that the penguin parents are doing what they need to in order to raise healthy penguin chicks and they are being taken care of by the parents on exhibit with little human intervention. The larger Gentoo chick now weighs 412 grams, while the smaller one weighs 372 grams. Try to spot them on exhibit in-person or on the Penguin Webcam, which can be found at MoodyGardens.com.

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. 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. 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 that 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 also 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 providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for visitors, and a better future for all living things.

The Moody Gardens Aquarium Pyramid is one of the largest and most diverse aquariums in the United States. In addition to the Gentoo penguins, five other species including Macaroni, Chinstrap, King, and Rockhopper penguins call the South Atlantic Exhibit home. The warm-climate Humboldt penguins live in an exhibit right next door to their chilly-aired friends. With over one 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 409-744-4673 or visit moodygardens.com.

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