



NEWS RELEASE

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JUST HATCHED! ***Aquarium Welcomes New Baby Penguin.***

RIVERHEAD, NY (March 25, 2010) – Just in time for a holiday that celebrates with eggs, Atlantis Marine World Aquarium is celebrating an egg – or one that recently hatched. The Aquarium happily announces its first successful baby penguin, born on December 14.

“It’s a girl!” reveals Aquarium curator, Joe Yaiullo, who recently confirmed the baby chick’s sex through a blood test. The penguin, which now weighs a healthy five-and-a-half pounds, is expected to top the scales at around six pounds.

But visitors to the Aquarium don’t have to wait long to see the baby. They can take a sneak peek when she makes her public debut during the upcoming school break week, scheduled for March 27 through April 6. Waddling out daily at the noon feedings at exhibit, Penguin Pavilion, she is also expected to make a very grand entrance at the Aquarium’s popular Penguin Family Brunch, now in its sixth year, scheduled for Saturday, April 3. The chick will then officially become one of the exhibit’s daily residents during summer 2010.

“We would love for the baby to become comfortable with humans so that we can include her in educational programs and other interactive activities,” explained Yaiullo. “So right now, we have her spending a lot of time with Aquarium staff, sitting and interacting with them, just to help socialize her to people.” In fact, the baby penguin spends much of its morning making rounds with the Aquarists as she follows them around before the Aquarium opens for the day.

Atlantis Marine World is home to 13 African penguins, part of the Penguin Pavilion exhibit which opened to the public in 2005. The year-round exhibit provides an Atlantis-themed home to African penguins (*Spheniscus demersus*), and its 800-square foot enclosure features representations of the ocean and beach, as well as burrows in the back that the penguins use for nesting. Visitors can view the penguins both above and below the water, and can even “pop in” through an observation bubble in the beach portion of the exhibit.

The Aquarium is part of a cooperative breeding program for African penguins known as the Species Survival Plan (SSP). The chick’s birth followed breeding recommendations that plan for the future of species living in captivity and determine which animals should be bred in order to maintain a genetically diverse and demographically stable captive population. This is the Aquarium’s first successful hatching since the exhibit opened nearly five years ago.

Fun Facts about the African Penguins that live at Penguin Pavilion:

- The African penguins exhibited here were captive-bred in South Africa and imported illegally into the US. They arrived at Atlantis Marine World in April 2004, when the US Fish and Wildlife Service contacted the Aquarium about providing the penguins with a new home.
- Their populations have declined dramatically in the wild over the last century. In the early 1900s, the population stood at 1.5 million penguins; today, just over 179,000 remain.
- Although the African penguin breeds throughout the year, the main breeding season starts in January. They are a monogamous species and the lifelong partners take turns to incubate their eggs and to feed their young.
- African penguins are comfortable in temperate regions like Long Island. They stay cool by swimming, resting in shady areas, and keeping their backs to the sun to shade their feet, flippers, and faces.
- The African penguin is also called the “jackass” penguin, because its call sounds like a donkey’s bray.
- While penguins can’t fly, they can reach speeds of up to 15 mph in the water.
- After studying each bird’s habits and traits, Atlantis Marine World Aquarists named all penguins in this exhibit after characters from the popular “Seinfeld” television show. Although a name has not been decided yet, you know “you gotta see the baby!”

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About Atlantis Marine World Aquarium

Atlantis Marine World (AMW) opened in Riverhead, NY on June 15, 2000, as the first large-scale Aquarium to open in New York State in more than 35 years. Situated on 3.2 acres along the Peconic River, AMW is open from 10:00am to 5:00pm daily (closed December 25). General Admission Rates are \$18.50 (plus tax) for Children 3 – 17 and Seniors 62+; \$21.50 (plus tax) for Adults 18 – 61; Children 2 and under are always free at AMW. AMW is also the home of The Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation, New York’s only authorized marine mammal and sea turtle rescue and rehabilitation center. Atlantis Marine World was recently ranked by *Parents Magazine* as one of the “Top Aquariums for Kids.” Additional information can be found at www.atlantismarineworld.com.