# General Characteristics Of Gentoo Penguins

Gentoo penguins have the ventral side white and the dorsal side black. These colors help them to protect for depredators while they swimming underwater; the white color being on the ventral side makes the predator to be confused with the sky, and on the contrary the black color makes them confuse with the deep sea.. (Rafferty J, 2017, Newtoff 2017)

Gentoos head features are mostly black but they two white wedges around their eyes and are connected in a line across the tops of their heads. Other characteristic features include a black throat, a brushtail that is larger than other penguin species, and a bill that is dark orange or red. (Newtoff, 2017)

Comparing with other penguins, gentoo penguins are third in body size behind emperor (Aptenodytes forsteri) and king penguins (A. patagonicus). Adults can measure 75 cm (about 30 inches) in length and weighs 5 kg (11 pounds). Also males normally weight 0.5 kg (1.1 pounds) more than females, both sexes are closely similar. (Newtoff 2017).

The world’s fastest underwater birds are Gentoo penguins. They reach speeds of up to 36 km (about 22 miles) per hour and can dive to depths of 170–200 meters (about 560–660 feet) and in this activity, they can reduce their heart rate from 80–100 beats per minute (bpm) down to 20 bpm. Their diet consist in small fish, cephalopods, and krill (Euphausia) and other crustaceans. Penguins are efficient hunters that enjoy staying in shallow or not so deep waters. (Seaworld park, Rafferty J, 2017).

Pygoscelis Papua, are found in the Southern Hemisphere, on the Antarctic Peninsula and on sub-Antarctic islands. The Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean is one of the common locations to find them. (Pistorius, et al., 2010; Quintana, 2001)

Since Gentoo penguins usually are located along the shoreline, they can quickly access food while remaining close to their nest. They prefer elevations close to 115 meters above sea level along the shore because don't have as much risk of flooding also the terrain is flat which helps to stabilize their nests. It is believed that they prefer north-facing locations for nesting by the absorption of solar radiation. (National Geographic)

Gentoo penguins form huge colonies of a hundred to over 2000 adults on flat areas of grass or rock adjacent to sandy beaches, ice-free. The largest groups are found in the breeding season. These penguins most of the time are monogamous and each year they build new nests made of stones, grasses, and debris.

At two years of age Gentoo penguins can begin breeding, however most of them start at three or four years old. Nests are built by the parents, at the beginning of the breeding season. Gentoo nests are spaced about a meter apart. The egg-laying season is from June to mid-August and usually finishes in late October to November. (Rafferty J, 2017, Newtoff 2017)

When the nest is ready, the female penguin lays her egg 5 days post-breeding. A second egg is laid three days later, have had rare cases where penguins have laid three eggs. Gentoo

penguins can lay a second set of eggs during the same breeding season if the first set of eggs is lost. These eggs are laid near the end of the breeding season when the female regains sufficient energy. The disadvantage to laid an egg late is that penguin expends more energy, causing a late moulting period and possibly lost the next breeding season. (National Geographic).

To the incubation period (34 – 37 days), both parents take turns. After the eggs hatch, both parents feed the young chicks, who remain in the nest for approximately one month. Then chicks form a group (crèche) with other chicks to protect themselves while their parents go out gathering food. The longevity of this species is around 13 years. (Penguins world)