

African Penguin Receives U.S. Endangered Species Act Protection

Title A species of penguin from Africa is now protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act), following the publication of a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service final listing determination in today's Federal Register. The African Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*, a species native to Namibia and South Africa, has been listed as endangered. The determination comes after a thorough review of best available scientific information, comments from the general public and peer reviewers, and any new information received during the public comment period following publication of the proposed rule to list this species. This rule implements the Federal protections provided by the Act for this species. The African Penguin population has declined 60.5% in the past 28 years due to food base declines and competition for food with the fishing industry and Cape fur seals. The population decline has been severely exacerbated by rapid ecosystem changes at the northern end of the penguin's distribution and by major shifts of prey resources to outside of the accessible foraging range of breeding penguins at the southern end of its distribution; habitat modification and destruction; predation; and oil spills. Climate change contributes to these threats through rising sea levels, increasing sea surface temperatures, declines in upwelling intensities, predicted increases in frequency and intensity of El Niño events in the Benguela marine ecosystem, and predicted increases in sulphide eruptions. Granting foreign species protection under the U.S. Endangered Species Act means that the import or export of any of the species, or their parts or products, as well as their sale in interstate or foreign commerce, is prohibited. Take of listed species, which includes harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or to attempt any of these, within the U.S. is also prohibited. Permits for these prohibited actions may be issued for specific purposes consistent with the Endangered Species Act. African Penguin's IUCN Red List Status recently changed from Vulnerable in the 2009 category to Endangered in 2010. African Penguins are currently the focus of extensive conservation action which is being conducted by a number of organizations in South Africa, and a concerted effort will be needed to lift this embattled penguin from its precipitous population decline. "Along the coast of Namibia and South Africa (the only current breeding sites for the species), only seven islands now support 80% of the global population which decreased from 141,000 pairs in 1956-1957 to an estimated 25,262 pairs today, representing a decline of 60.5% over three generations", explained Dr Ross Wanless, the Manager of BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Division. The final rule appeared in the September 28, 2010 Federal Register and will become effective on October 28, 2010. For more information visit the Service's website at www.fws.gov/endangered. African Penguin is one of the species benefitting from the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme. In June

2009, the Charl van der Merwe Trust became a Species Champion for African Penguin. The programme is spearheading greater conservation action, awareness and funding support for all of the world's most threatened birds. This news is brought to you by the BirdLife Species Champions and the British Birdwatching Fair ? official sponsor of the [BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme](#) Image credit: Kikki / Flickr