

# San Francisco Chronicle

African Penguins Move to Their New S.F. Home

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By David Perlman  
CHRONICLE SCIENCE EDITOR

Scientists threw a coming-home party Wednesday for 20 African penguins in their new rock-rimmed tank at the California Academy of Sciences in Golden Gate Park.

The birds represent the academy's part in a major international effort to restore the southern continent's vulnerable population, which has declined by 90 percent in the past century to a total of 179,000 birds. Oil spills and human settlement along the coasts of South Africa and Namibia, this tribe of penguins' natural habitat, are responsible for the damage.

The academy's 20 birds have

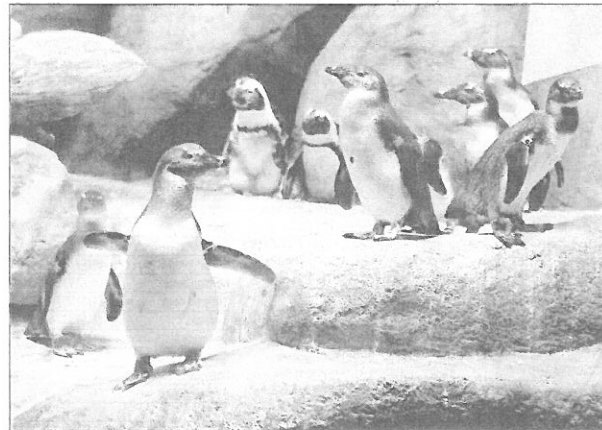
just moved in to Golden Gate Park after four years at their temporary home on Howard Street. On Wednesday, they were happily diving and swimming and scrambling around their rocks.

"They're already completely at home," senior aquatic biologist Pamela Schaller said, "and that's really reassuring to all of us."

The penguin display occupies one end of the new academy's restored African Hall, whose scenic dioramas are virtually replicas of the old ones so familiar to generations of visitors.

Opening day for the rebuilt academy is Sept. 27.

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CHRISTINA IZZO / The Chronicle

San Francisco's African penguins check out their rocky retreat in Golden Gate Park at the California Academy of Sciences, which is trying to restore the vulnerable species.

### Species can dive deep, swim fast — up to 15 mph

► Like all birds, African penguins are actually modern dinosaurs that evolved from unknown avian ancestors some 45 million to 50 million years ago.

► They're great divers — they typically descend 100 feet, and the deepest dive ever measured is 429 feet.

► They can hold their breath underwater for as long as 2½ minutes.

► They're swift swimmers — 3 to 5 mph ordinarily, but up to 15 mph when they're in a hurry.

► Sexually active at about 3 years, they spend 25 days on

elaborate courtship rituals before they mate.

► And after they do, the females lay two eggs up to 72 hours apart, and incubate the eggs for more than a month before they hatch.

► They are one of 17 species of penguins, all of which live in the Southern Hemisphere, ranging from Antarctica to the Galapagos Islands.