

THE GALAPAGOS PENGUIN IN CAPTIVITY.

BY CHAS. HASKINS TOWNSEND.

Plate XXVIII.

No sea bird exhibited at the New York Aquarium attracts more attention than the Galapagos Penguin (*Spheniscus humboldtii*). Our first specimen received in 1915, came from southern Chile. It adapted itself to the new conditions at once and gave every indication of enjoying life, swimming actively and feeding freely every day. A platform in the fifteen by thirty foot pool served as a resting place, as it does for the Galapagos Penguins now on exhibition. One of the latter was brought back by the Arcturus Expedition last year, the other was received in April of the present year, an involuntary passenger on Mr. W. K. Vanderbilt's yacht.

The Galapagos birds are sociable and except after feeding, are eager to walk a light narrow plank whenever the space between the platform and the coping of the pool is bridged for them. Then comes the joy of waddling around the smooth coping and looking at the visitors crowded along the railing. Unlike the Chilian Penguin they rather resent being carried. When turned loose they are inclined to follow the keeper about the floor, especially if he has some live minnows.

Fishes thrown into the water interest them even more than a chance to walk the plank. They promptly give an exhibition of what hungry Penguins can do under water, following the darting minnows at high speed until all are captured. When at ease on the surface the Penguin floats buoyantly, the bases of the wings being almost at the surface while the tips are thrust deep down. They often submerge the eyes looking for minnows that might have escaped them.

In slow paddling the tail is usually held slightly above the surface. In scratching the head while afloat the bird turns on its side, the head is submerged and turned sidewise so that the toes can reach it.

Swimming is done with the wings, the feet serving as rudders, the webs being spread and the soles turned up. When diving for minnows the motions are so rapid that it is difficult to deter-

mine the exact position of the feet. They are apparently used only for steering.

In walking up the plank the head is held low and the back humped. In waddling around the coping of the pool the body is nearly erect while the tip of the tail almost drags.

When the bird drops into the water from coping or platform there is no head-on dive, it strikes the water flat on the breast.

When one Penguin is placed on the floor, the other follows around the coping peering through the iron grill, each calling to the other with a soft "throaty" *whoo*, the bill benign turned up and the throat expanded. This call is the only sound made so far as we have observed. When widely separated either bird will follow the writer while he imitates the soft *whoo* call. Minnows thrown on the floor are seized and swallowed very quickly.

The Penguins and a Galapagos Booby, occupy the platform on entirely peaceable terms and all three are adepts at catching pieces of fresh fish thrown to them. One of the Penguins placed on the scales on March 12, 1926 weighed exactly six pounds, the birds being in good condition.

The moulting period lasts about three weeks, during which the Penguin is listless, feeds but little and seldom enters the water.

At the Aquarium the birds occupy a large salt-water pool. Their former companions, kept at the Zoological Park, did not live long, probably because they lacked sea-water. When the survivors were sent to the Aquarium their first movement was the drinking of sea-water. The Boobies acted similarly. Sea birds that do not naturally visit fresh waters as do Gulls, Cormorants and White Pelicans, cannot apparently survive long without sea water to drink. Those breeding about inland waters doubtless need the sea water and return to it annually when lakes and rivers are frozen. It is probable that such birds retained permanently in zoological gardens would live longer if provided with sea water. A tame Guillemot once kept by the writer on board the U. S. S. *Albatross* went into a decline, from which it quickly revived when given sea water to drink. We have observed Gulls in Lower California after a flight across the land, to alight and drink sea water exactly as domestic fowls drink.

Since the preceding was written one of the Penguins died as the

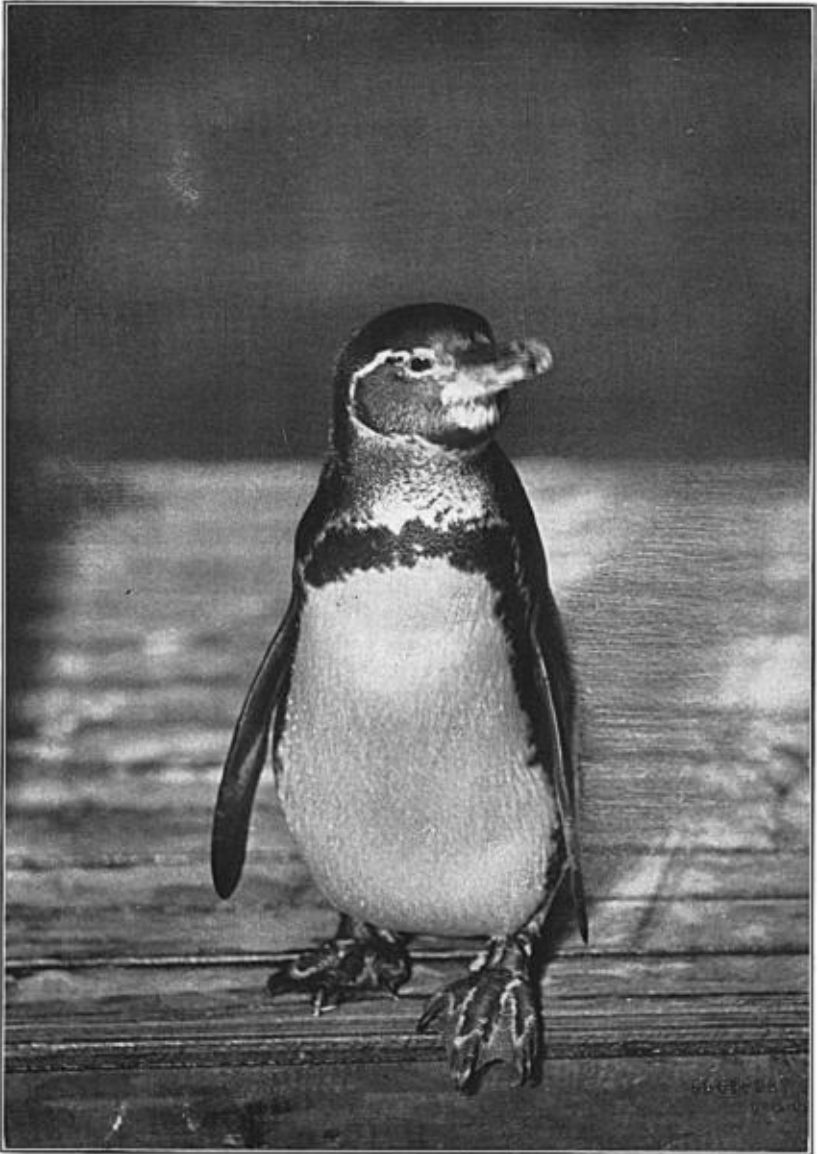


Photo by Florence Vandamm.

Courtesy of 'Vanity Fair'

THE GALAPAGOS PENGUIN (*SPHENISCUS MENDICULUS*) IN THE NEW YORK
AQUARIUM.

result of a fifteen foot fall. The birds were given an occasional airing on an enclosed part of the roof, from which one unfortunately escaped. The survivor was returned to the pool where the writer a few days later observed it pacing along the platform begging to be let out. It promptly walked up the plank and was there interested only in peering through the iron grill as though it sought its missing mate on the floor. It was then turned loose in the office, every part of which it explored restlessly for half an hour, but remained silent. We placed a large mirror against a radiator which the bird found immediately and did not desert. It touched the beak of the reflected Penguin, closed its eyes and rested a couple of minutes, when it began to plume its feathers. Then there followed several minutes of effort to get closer to its supposed companion. Finally, baffled by the glass, it went behind the radiator and utter its soft *whoo*. The Penguin then found its reflection in the glass door of a bookcase next to the radiator and made repeated attempts to get behind the case at each end, occasionally giving the call.

The bird spent the next hour either in front of the mirror or the glass door, frequently attempting to get behind one or the other. It could not have been merely seeking a hiding place as there were such nooks nearby. Thinking the bird was wearied by its efforts to solve the mirror problem, it was sent back to the pool.

In the evening when the building was deserted I placed the Penguin on the coping of the pool and concealing myself behind a pillar tried to imitate its call. The bird answered only while I kept out of sight.

On a subsequent visit to the office it remained close to the mirror and was much disturbed when the mirror was removed across the room, looking in all directions, peering into some low shelves and calling at intervals. It then devoted its attention to the glass door of the bookcase, but later discovered the mirror before which it remained. The Penguin answered our calls only when the mirror was taken away.

When the mirror was carried rapidly around the room the bird followed persistently as long as its reflected image could be seen.

When the Penguin was placed on a chair beside a small aquarium

it at once became interested in the occupants, making repeated attempts to seize the minnows and goldfishes that swam nearest the glass. Further experiments with this bird may present other aspects of Penguin behavior.

When the Booby died the Penguin was evidently lonesome and took to pacing the platform more restlessly than ever. It now has the company of a Chilian Penguin. The relations between the two birds are amicable and when sent to the roof both seek shelter in the same box.

New York Aquarium, Battery Park, N. Y. City.