

Klekowskii penguin takes size title away from emperor

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Palaeudyptes klekowskii. Credit: *Geobios*, doi:10.1016/j.geobios.2014.03.003

A new fossil discovery of bones makes the 90-pound emperor penguin, thought to be the largest of all penguins, rather puny. Penguin-watching has become all the more fascinating in light of new observations from researchers about the penguin past. RT [called](#) its headline The Big Kiekowskii, and New Scientist referred to the megapenguin. They were talking about the study that presents newly unearthed fossils.

The title of their study is "New giant penguin bones from Antarctica: Systematic and paleobiological significance," by Dr Carolina Acosta Hospitaleche and Marcelo Reguero. Antarctica was once home to the biggest species of penguin, ever—they were around 37 to 40 million years ago. Fossil deposits were excavated on Seymour Island, off the Antarctic peninsula. The researchers reckoned that this penguin was over six feet (2 meters) and

weighed over 250 pounds (115 kilograms). The species is known as *Palaeudyptes klekowskii*.

How did these researchers know the penguin was so huge? They knew by way of the bones they discovered, indicating the penguin was the tallest and heaviest ever to walk the Earth. Detailing Acosta Hospitaleche's work, New Scientist [said](#), "Now she has uncovered two bigger bones. One is part of a wing, and the other is a tarsometatarsus, formed by the fusion of ankle and foot bones. The tarsometatarsus measures a record 9.1 centimeters. Based on the relative sizes of bones in penguin skeletons, Acosta Hospitaleche estimates *P. klekowskii* was 2.01 meters long from beak tip to toes."

The larger the penguin, the deeper it can dive. Also, the large the penguin, the longer it can remain underwater. The researchers reckoned this heavyweight *P. klekowskii* could have stayed down for 40 minutes, which indicates it was able to enjoy more time to hunt fish,

Seymour Island is in the chain of islands around the tip of the Graham Land on the Antarctic Peninsula. Many fossils have been discovered on the island. According to The Guardian, the bones were found at the La Meseta formation, Seymour Island, which is part of the peninsula with a wide range and abundance of penguin bones. New Scientist noted that "This was a warmer region 40 million years ago, with a climate like that of present-day Tierra del Fuego, the islands at the southern tip of South America." According to Acosta Hospitaleche, added New Scientist, this was "a wonderful time for penguins, when 10 to 14 species lived together along the Antarctic coast."

More information: — New giant penguin bones from Antarctica: Systematic and paleobiological significance, *Comptes Rendus Palevol*, In Press, www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S163106831400058X

— *Palaeudyptes klekowskii*, the best-preserved penguin skeleton from the Eocene–Oligocene of Antarctica: Taxonomic and evolutionary remarks, *Geobios*, www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../S0016699514000291

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