

Cam captures penguin hatching at Pittsburgh aviary

December 16 2014, by Joe Mandak

A webcam captured images of the first of two African penguins hatching at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh.

Monday's birth brings to 17 the number of endangered African penguins in the aviary's Penguins Point exhibit. A second egg is expected to hatch this week, though spokeswoman Robin Weber said that was unlikely to occur Tuesday.

Scientists estimate fewer than 20,000 of the birds exist in the wild.

The public can monitor the penguins at www.penguinnestcam.org and see the parents, Sidney and Bette, sharing nesting duties. The father, Sidney, is named for Sidney Crosby, the star of the city's National Hockey League team, the Penguins.

Sidney and Bette successfully bred two previous sets of chicks, so aviary officials expect the new chicks to thrive. They'll be reared for three to four weeks by their parents in a cave that is part of the exhibit. After that, they'll be hand-reared by aviary staff.

Having the staff rear the penguins "will ensure they are ready to fulfill their future roles as ambassadors for their species in the National Aviary's educational and interactive programs," which will require the birds to be exposed to humans, the aviary said in a statement.

People who view the nesting penguins can expect to see the parents

taking turns incubating the unhatched egg and keeping the newborn—slightly larger than a golf ball—warm.

Penguin chicks are born with the yolk sack attached, which provides nutrition. When that's gone, the chick will beg for food and be fed partially digested fish by its parents.

The chicks won't be named until tests in a few weeks determine their gender. The aviary plans to name the chicks after prominent individuals.

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