



ZN/EDU/05/2010/MARCH

# KANCIL GAZETTE

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## Keeper Info

Akmal Hadi bin Samsudin felt blessed to be chosen as one of the penguins' keepers.



Despite his eight years working at the Bird House Section, he feels excited and thrilled when it comes to dealing with these flightless birds.

He loves especially seeing their mischievous behaviour and even marked it as one of his most precious moments in life.

## PENGUINS IN THE HOUSE



Jean- Jacques Rousseau once quoted "Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet". After tremendous of paper works for months, it is indeed a sweet moment for Zoo Negara when we received the eight Humboldt penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*) on 23 January 2010. These social birds came all the way from chilling Czech Republic's Zoo to the tropical rainforest of Zoo Negara as part of the animal captive breeding program.

Humboldt penguins are one of the 17 species of penguins found in the world. Unlike their cousin, the Emperor Penguins (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) which live in the freezing climate of Antarctica, The Humboldt penguins prefer the warmer climate of Peru and Chile. In order to ensure that these birds are well-adapted in Zoo Negara, we have adjusted the cooling system to maintain the temperature of 15 to 18 degree Celsius in their exhibit.



The Humboldt penguins' black and white feathers act as a camouflage when the birds hunt for fish in the sea. In Zoo Negara, you can observe these flightless birds 'flying' underwater using their strong flippers in search for food during their feeding time. Some times, the keepers will also pack the fish in ice blocks for the penguins to chase in the water as an enrichment program to ensure that they do not get bored easily.

Aside from feathers, Humboldt penguins have pink bare patches on their face, feet and underside of their wings to keep their body cool when the climate's temperature gets too hot. These birds share their name with the Humboldt Current at the coast of South America where they are named after the 18th century explorer, Alexander von Humboldt.

Penguins in Antarctica live in colonies for warmth. However, Humboldt penguins live in group for the protection against predators. These birds breed any time of the year depending on the food availability. Humboldt penguins' habitat is full of guano, a pile of accumulated seabirds' droppings and they use these materials to build their nest.

Sadly, Humboldt penguins are listed as 'Vulnerable' in the IUCN Red List due to destruction and disturbance of habitat where guano is harvested for fertilizer caused the birds' eggs to be exposed to their natural predators. Commercial fishing left little food for the birds and marine pollution are factors causing the decline numbers of the penguins.

Let us all join our hands together to educate people about conservation and saving these birds now before it is too late.

