

# LITTLE PENGUIN

## Description

Little Penguins are the smallest of all penguins and the only species to live permanently in Australian waters. The Little Penguin has a streamlined body, small wings modified as flippers and a tail that acts as a rudder. The feathers provide excellent waterproofing and insulation. They have a grey face, dark blue back, and white chest and abdomen. Their feet are dull yellow and they have a black bill.

## Diet

Little Penguins are **carnivores** and eat fish, including anchovies, pilchards, whitebait and squid.

## In the wild

Little Penguins spend a lot of time preening themselves with a wax-like oil from a gland near the base of the tail. If there are any flaws in the plumage, they can lose heat when swimming, which can be fatal. Penguins come ashore in the evening and also to breed and moult. When ashore they live in colonies ranging in size from a few pairs to thousands. Their natural predators include sharks and seals.

## Threats

Disturbance to their ocean and beach habitats affects both the survival and breeding of Little Penguins. Ocean threats include overfishing (especially of pilchards, whitebait and squid), the use of gill nets, disturbance from boating, oil spills and related pollution. On land, predation by cats, dogs and foxes, as well as careless recreational use of beaches, seriously threaten the survival of Little Penguins.

## At Perth Zoo

In 1999, Perth Zoo opened a Little Penguin exhibit, the **Penguin Plunge**. This exhibit is part of the Zoo's **Australian Walkabout** and includes a 50,000 litre saltwater pool with limestone reefs and beach areas with coastal vegetation. The whole exhibit is enveloped by a soft net which contains Marine Terns that coexist with the penguins. Perth Zoo also breeds Little Penguins. Come for the penguin feed at 11.00am every day.

## Did you know?

Penguins have an annual moult, which takes about fifteen days. During this time they are unable to go to sea because they have lost their waterproofing. This is a very stressful time for a penguin, during which they retire to their burrows or shelters and don't eat.



### Scientific Name

*Eudyptula minor novaehollandiae*

### Other Names

Fairy Penguin,  
Blue Penguin



**Body Length:** 37–43 cm

**Weight:** 1–1.2 kg

**Incubation:** 36 days

**Number of eggs:** 1–3



Distribution ■

**Distribution:** Southern Australia

**Habitat:** Cool, temperate, coastal and offshore waters

### Conservation Status

Extinct

Extinct in the Wild

Critically Endangered

Endangered

Vulnerable

Near-Threatened

Least Concern

Data Deficient

