

## Weighing the seasons

Caring for penguins requires a lot of work. Besides feeding and cleaning, one of the additional duties our staff perform are regular weigh-ins for each of the birds in the colony. There are several reasons this is important for maintaining their health- ensure proper diet consumption, understand changes in their life cycle, and detect any health issues that may arise.

Humboldt penguins have a few different phases within their year that will impact their weight during that time. In their natural environment, their usual breeding period is March-April and again in August-September, and they will molt, or shed and replace all their feathers, late in the year. When they live at aquariums, these seasons can shift somewhat due to the difference in hemispheres and conditions. Do you remember which hemisphere this species naturally occurs in?

### Activity: checking weights and their meanings

Using information about our penguins and their annual phases, see if you can determine what is happening with each of the birds when their weights were measured. The following descriptions will help determine which phase they may be in.

Breeding season – penguins are mating, defending burrows, and caring for young, which means they are spending less time in the water foraging. Females are also developing and laying up to two eggs. Weight is put on prior to this season to allow for loss during it. At the Aquarium of Niagara, this occurs March-April and sometimes again in November.

Molting season – all penguins will gain weight prior to molting. This will help them cope with being restricted to staying on land for 2-3 weeks, fasting, because they no longer have their insulating layer of feathers to protect them from the cold water. At the Aquarium of Niagara, molting occurs August-September.

Penguin Name	Sex	Average Weight (lbs.)	Weight (Date it was Taken)	Reason for Variation
Araya	Female	7.06 lbs.	7.65 lbs. (3/11/19)	
Desi	Male	13.42 lbs.	14.09 lbs. (7/31/2019)	
Lou	Male	11.20 lbs.	10.82 lbs. (4/25/19)	
Mario	Male	13.64 lbs.	12.36 lbs. (9/22/19)	
Montana	Female	10.78 lbs.	9.98 lbs. (4/2/20)	
Opus	Female	6.84 lbs.	7.02 lbs. (8/5/19)	
Tux	Male	10.41 lbs.	9.61 lbs. (1/10/20)	