

Science Finds the Penguin More Human than the Monkey



Newest Extraordinary Discoveries About the Funny Little Bird People Who "Own" the Antarctic, How They Count, Talk, Promenade, Hold Games and Even Keep Lent---Just Like Real Humans

Multitude of Penguins at the Rookery Gathered at the Ice-Foot, Where They March About and Hold Long Confabs Before Streaming into the Ocean for Food and to Clean Themselves.

The penguin, that amazingly human-like bird of Antarctic sea coasts, to gain the honor of wholly supplanting the monkey as holder among the animals of all the man-like records? In almost identical phrasology every Antarctic explorer-author describes the penguin as having a startling resemblance to "a short-legged, plump little gentleman in immaculate evening clothes." All agree that the social customs of Mr. and Mrs. Penguin, their morals, their etiquette, their energetic attention to business and their lively appreciation of sport give them human resemblances to a degree that is uncanny.

The latest biographer of Mr. and Mrs. Penguin and the millions of their race which congregate at the Cape Adare and other Antarctic rookeries during the mating season, beginning with the dawn of the Antarctic Spring about the middle of October adds quite astonishing human details to the many furnished by his predecessors. This sympathetic observer is Dr. G. Murray Levick, R. N., zoologist to the British Antarctic expedition of 1910-12.

The results of Dr. Levick's painstaking and scientific inquiry into the characters, manners, customs and habits of Mr. and Mrs. Penguin are contained in his recent book, "Antarctic Penguins," published by William Heinemann, London. The volume is profusely illustrated in the most satisfactory and scientific way—that is, with "snapshot" photographs. Thus you are able to see Mr. and Mrs. Penguin in the midst of their domestic activities, with the interesting preliminary of courtship, and to observe the political conference and social recreations of the penguin colony throughout the comministic breeding season.

Here is corroboration in many details of the growing scientific belief that this strange example of the bird species has social instincts, desires, emotions and mental capacities more closely allied to those of man than are exhibited by any other animal. For example, most animals play, after a fashion, particularly young animals, but their play is rarely more than a playful imitation of the serious acts which govern their lives.

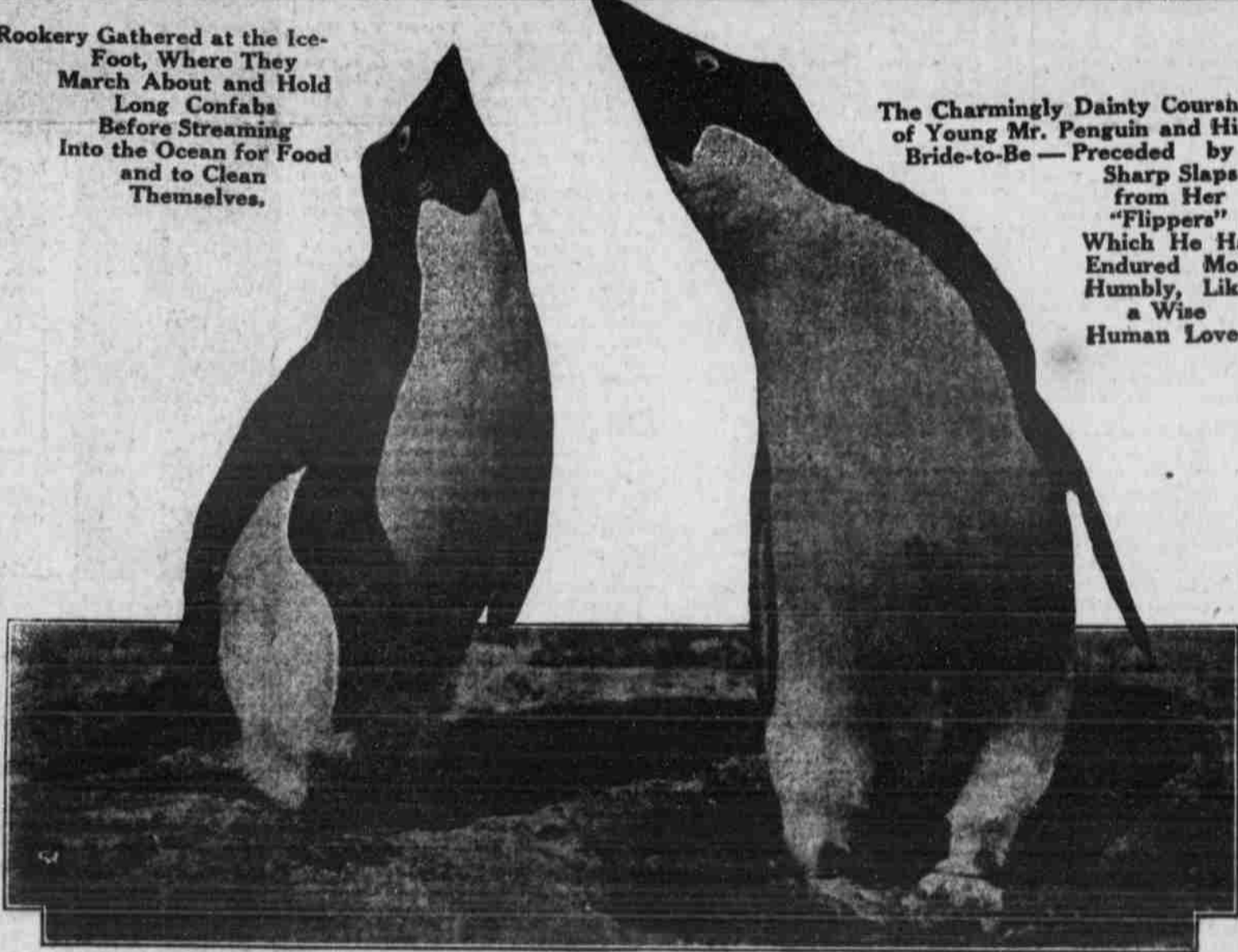
A cat plays with a ball of yarn just as it tantalizes the captured mouse which soon it will eat. Lambkins frolic with one another in infantile imitation of the grim battles between the rams of the flock. The play of dogs is of the same character. Even the mischievous monkey exhibits no invention, no constructiveness, in its antics. No familiar species of animal demonstrates any systematic plan for pure recreation.

So far as is known the penguin alone possesses this distinctive human attribute. Dr. Levick reports this striking instance:

"On leaving their nests the birds made their way down the ice-foot to the sea ice. Here they would generally wait about and join up with others until enough had gathered together to make up a decent little party, which would then set off gaily for the water. They were now in the greatest possible spirits, chattering loudly and frolicking with one another, and playfully chasing about, occasionally indulging in a little friendly sparring with their flippers.

"Arrived at the water's edge, almost always the same procedure was gone through. The object of every bird in the party seemed to be to get one of the others to enter the water first. They would crowd up to the very edge of the ice, dodging about and trying to push one another in. Sometimes those behind would nearly succeed in pushing the front rank in, who then would just recover themselves in time, and, rushing around to the rear, endeavor to turn the tables on the others.

The Charmingly Dainty Courship of Young Mr. Penguin and His Bride-to-Be—Preceded by Sharp Slaps from Her "Flippers" Which He Has Endured Most Humbly, Like a Wise Human Lover.



Occasionally one actually would get pushed in, only to turn quickly under water and bound out again onto the ice like a cork shot out of a bottle. Then for some time they would chase one another about, seemingly bent on having a good game, each bird intent on finding any excuse from being the first in. Sometimes this would last a few minutes, sometimes for the better part of an hour, until suddenly the whole band would change its tactics, and one of the number start to run at full tilt along the edge of the ice, the rest following closely on its heels, until at last he would take a clean header into the water. One after another the rest of the party followed him, all taking off exactly from the spot where he had entered, and following one another so quickly as to have the appearance of a lot of shot poured out of a bottle into the water.

"A dead alliance would ensue till a few seconds later, when they would all come to the surface some twenty or thirty yards out, and start rolling about and splashing in the water, cleaning themselves and making sounds exactly like a lot of boys calling out and chaffing one another.

"So extraordinary was the whole scene that on first witnessing it we were overcome with astonishment, and it seemed to us almost impossible that the little creatures whose antics we were watching were actually birds and not human beings.

Other Antarctic explorers have reported a penguin recreation conducted in a manner even more humanlike. Not only do these birds practise the sportsmanlike art of tobogganing but they construct their own toboggan slides in the most thorough and workmanlike manner.

The circumstances make it perfectly plain that their constructive efforts are for no other purpose than that of promoting a favorite recreation. The surveyors of the penguin tobogganing party will first select, with real engineering skill, the most adaptable location for the slide to be constructed—along the rising shore line where the gradient is sufficient and offering no serious natural obstacles. Then the whole party will march, chattering, to the top, where the engineer of the party will begin operations.

Dropping on his sturdy breast in the snow, kicking out behind with his short legs, and paddling with his flipper-like wings, he ploughs his way along in the downward direction already carefully surveyed. He is followed one by one by the others of the party, pursuing the same methods and leaving in their wake a smooth, well-packed slide. Often the slide thus painstakingly constructed is half a mile or more in length, winding here and there down the slope and ending on the flat beach or shore ice.

When the slide is finished there is a great confab and apparent exchange of opinions concerning its merits. Presently, led by Engineer Penguin, the party plod laboriously back to the top, where there is much excitement and another confab. Finally Engineer Penguin, accepting his responsibilities with all the grace and authority of his human confrere, launches himself and toboggans to the bottom. Seeing that he lands safely, all the rest of the party, chattering in evident delight, follow his example.

That the purpose of this is recreation, pure and simple, is now more than ever apparent. Again and again the whole penguin party waddles on its short legs to the top and seizes the brief but joyous pleasure of the downward rush. This keeps up until the birds are too tired to do any more uphill plodding.

Penguins do not mate until they gather at the rookeries in vast multitudes at the beginning of the breeding season. Singly

and in small groups they arrive from all directions, swimming for hundreds of miles and waddling on their short legs over long expanses of ice floe. They arrive at the rookeries tired, but fat and immaculate as to plumage.

Then the most strenuous month or six weeks period of their lives begins. Until they have mated and built their nests of pebbles, and Mrs. Penguin has laid her two eggs and the incubation period is well under way, no male or female penguin at the densely crowded rookery wastes time in sleeping or in seeking food. For more than three weeks their absolute fast is unbroken.

Pebbles forming the nests have to be constantly guarded against belated, "grafting" couples, and lively combats with beaks and whirling flippers never cease. Before this there have been innumerable duels between rival male penguins to decide which shall be the successful suitor for belles of the penguin colony. These young Miss Penguins show their inclination toward matrimony by immediately pre-empting an old nest and sitting in it. Suitors make their "proposals" by approaching with pebbles in their beaks and dropping them within the reach of the sitting charmer. She "accepts" by building these pebbles into her nest. The accepted husband proceeds immediately to share all the labors of nest building and keeping warm the two eggs during the month or so of incubation.

There are two eggs with white shells, through which the greenish contents are faintly seen. The temperature of these last days of October and the first of November is often below the freezing point. Mrs. Penguin carefully places the eggs in the nest so that the rear one will rest on her warm feet, while the other is buried in the feathers of her breast.

When her husband relieves her once a

day at this task she usually scolds him roundly to make him remember the correct position to keep both eggs warm. He takes his scolding meekly, and does his best. He has already, early in his courtship, felt the weight of the fair one's flippers, and is obedient, remembering her charming and dainty later acceptance of his wooings. Following are some paragraphs from Dr. Levick's book relating to the startlingly human actions of penguins:

"It was not unusual to see a strange cock paying court to a mated hen in the absence of her husband until he returned to drive away the interloper, but I do not think that this ever occurred after the eggs had come and the regular family life begun, couples after this being perfectly faithful to one another.

"While one of my companions was sitting quietly on some shingle near the ice-foot, a penguin approached him, and, after eyeing him for a little, walked right up to him and nibbled gently at one of the legs of his trousers. Then it walked away, picked up a pebble and came back with it, dropping it on the ground by his side. The only explanation of this occurrence seems to be that the tending of the stone was meant as an overture of friendship.

"Often a hen would join in when two cocks were fighting, occasionally going first for one and then the other, but I never saw a cock retaliate on a hen.

"I saw two cocks engaged in a very fierce fight. After a couple of minutes, during which each had the other down on the ground several times, three or four other penguins ran up and apparently tried to stop the fight. This is the only construction I can put on their behavior, as time after time they kept running in when the two combatants clinched, pushing their breast in between them, but making no attempt to fight themselves, while their more collected appearance and smooth feathers were in marked contrast to the angry attitudes of the combatants.

"As a band of spotless bathers returning to the rookery, their white breasts and black backs glistening with a fine metallic lustre in the sunlight, met a dirty and bedraggled party on its way out from the nesting ground, frequently both would stop, and the clean and the dirty would mingle together and chatter with one another for some minutes. If they were not speaking words in some language of their own, their whole appearance belied them; and as they stood, some in pairs, some in groups of three or more, chattering amicably together, it became evident that they were sociable animals, glad to meet one another, and, like many men, pleased with the excuse to forget for a while their duties at home, where their mates were waiting to be relieved for their own spell off the nests.

"I have said that the tide flowed past the rookery at the rate of some five or six knots. Small ice floes are continually drifting past, and as one of these arrived at the top of the ice-foot it would be boarded by a crowd of penguins, sometimes until it could hold no more. This 'excursion boat,' as we used to call it, would float its many occupants down the whole length of the ice-foot, and if it



Here Mrs. Penguin, About to Go for a Swim, is Scolding the Eggs in the Pebble Nest. He Must Rest the Rear of the Two Eggs on His Feet While the Forward One is Buried in the Feathers of His Breast.



Mother Penguin Giving Walking Lessons to Her Half-Grown Little One.



Mr. Penguin Carrying to Mrs. Penguin Large Pebbles in His Beak While She Builds Her Nest with Them.

passed close to the edge those that rodd on the floes would shout at the knots of penguins gathered along the ice-foot, who would shout at them in reply, so that a gay bantering seemed to accompany their passage past the rookery.

Similar instances are almost endless. You are left with the impression that Mr. and Mrs. Penguin, of Cape Adare and Mr. and Mrs. Human Being, of Anywhere, are really brothers and sisters, "under their skin."