



Last Call - The African Penguin's Fight for Survival

**In partnership with Marine Dynamics
and the Dyer Island Conservation Trust**

Manar El Kebir

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Episode 3: Future – Hope in Human Hands

Despite the devastation, hope is still at centers like the African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) in the coastal town of Gansbaai, South Africa operating under the Dyer Island Conservation Trust. Since its establishment in 2015, the facility has played a pivotal role in rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing seabirds—especially the endangered penguin.

Wilfred Chivell, Founder & CEO of Marine Dynamics:

“Hope alone is not enough. We must act—address overfishing, manage breeding islands, remove problem predators. This center isn’t a zoo—it’s a place to heal and release penguins back into the wild.”

The sanctuary covers a 250 km² zone, rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing seabirds. They respond to injuries caused by:

- Seals (most common)
- Gulls (especially on chicks)
- Fishing lines
- Boat collisions
- Shark bites

Anna-Marie APSS veterinarian :

“We fetch injured birds, treat them with fluids, food, antibiotics, and sometimes surgery. Our success rate is about 80%. Once healthy, they go back into the wild.”



*Anna Marie feeding a young penguin chick that was found abandoned on the shore, rescued and cradled.
Photo taken by Manar Elkebir*

“During breeding season, we find many abandoned chicks. One parent injured or killed at sea means the remaining one must leave to hunt, leaving chicks behind. Those are the ones we try to save.”

At APSS, each penguin’s diet is carefully tailored, with most requiring between 6 to 10 sardines per day

based on their weight. During the moulting season, their intake can increase to as many as 14 sardines daily. To support their recovery, the sardines are enriched with a rotating mix of supplements—Thiamine, Vitamin B complex, and a specialized Seal and Penguin multivitamin.

The Nesting Project:

The nesting project at the African Penguin and Seabird Sanctuary (APSS) specially designed artificial nests to replace natural burrows lost due to habitat degradation. These nests, made from a mix of concrete and recycled materials, were designed to mimic natural burrows once carved into thick layers of seabird guano. They offer protection from extreme weather and predators, giving chicks a safer environment to grow. By improving breeding success, the project directly supports population recovery and was introduced after field studies confirming their significant improvement in chick survival. It's a simple yet impactful step in safeguarding the future of the species.



An African penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*) waddles toward an artificial nest made at APSS.

Photo taken by Manar Elkebir

The African penguin's fate lies in our hands. From guano scraping to plastic oceans, human impact has pushed this iconic species to the edge. But through education, protection, and rehabilitation, a future is still possible.

This Darwin Leader project was made possible by:



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