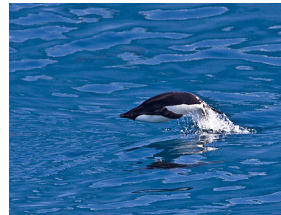


From the National Geographic Explorer in Antarctica



LEFT: Delightful Adélie penguins leaping into the sea

RIGHT TOP: "Flying" Adélie penguins returning to the nest

RIGHT BOTTOM: Porpoising Adélie penguin at sea

Paulet Island

We awoke to a second day of brilliant sunshine and blue sky on the eastern side of the Antarctic Peninsula. A second day in the Weddell Sea, what a treat! After spending an extraordinary day yesterday with the largest of all living penguin species, we today had the privilege of cavorting with the quintessential tuxedo-clad Adélie penguin. In her presentation on penguin biology Karen Copeland jokingly reminded us that there really are only two types of penguins; the black ones walking away from us, and the white ones walking towards us.

Paulet Island is a small volcanic cone rising majestically out of the northwestern Weddell Sea. It is home to an estimated 100,000 nesting pairs of the absolutely delightful Adélie penguin. To try and describe this sight to the uninitiated is a difficult task to say the least. Salt and pepper birds sprinkled all over the beach, all over the slopes, and all along the skyline. The cacophony of sound is almost deafening at times as penguins compete to be heard. Of course these are a rather odiferous bird, so the stench of penguin guano is an immediate and ever-present assault on olfactory organs. Indeed, Paulet Island can best be described as sensory overload.

As a photographer trying to make sense of all this chaos the challenge lies in capturing the essence of an Adélie penguin within the confines of a memory card. Just aiming the camera at a large group of Adélies does not do justice to the beauty of this swimming bird. The truly remarkable thing about penguins of course is that they live not in the air, but rather on land and in the sea. It is here, where the land and ice meet the ocean, that images can be made that best represent the only time penguins approximate flight by the act of leaping into the air.

Trying to capture a penguin as it returns to the sea from its nest, or returns to the nest after feeding at sea, requires an abundance of patience and perseverance. They make the transition from land to sea and back again in literally the blink of an eye, or more correctly, the click of a camera shutter. Bunching up along the shoreline before taking the plunge off the ice edge, or

popping out of the water like so much toast onto the ice from the sea, the range of activity affords a unique opportunity to capture these small penguins in one of their most graceful moments. Photographers and penguin watchers alike stood or sat in the snow all along the ocean's edge to capture this exact moment, much to the delight of all!

During the afternoon and evening the *National Geographic Explorer* worked her way north and west around the tip of the Antarctic Peninsula towards more adventure and exploration tomorrow along the western shore.

Michael Nolan, Photo Specialist

