

PENGUIN GENEALOGY

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The African penguin carries a unique pattern on its chest. The question is whether the nature of these patterns is hereditary. Some people who have spent a lot of time with the birds can identify them by looking at the patterns. Along with this they claim that ones originating from different regions have different characteristics inherent within the spots. In this project various methods of mathematical analysis of these chest markings were carried out in a search for a genetic link hidden within them. Existing techniques have been exhibited along with new ones, the results from the existing technique which incorporated the use of a piece of software found no specific link. The new methods were more conclusive and spotted a trend between the family tree data and the chest markings. This was all carried out on a population of penguins at Bristol Zoo that had previously not been studied in this way.

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