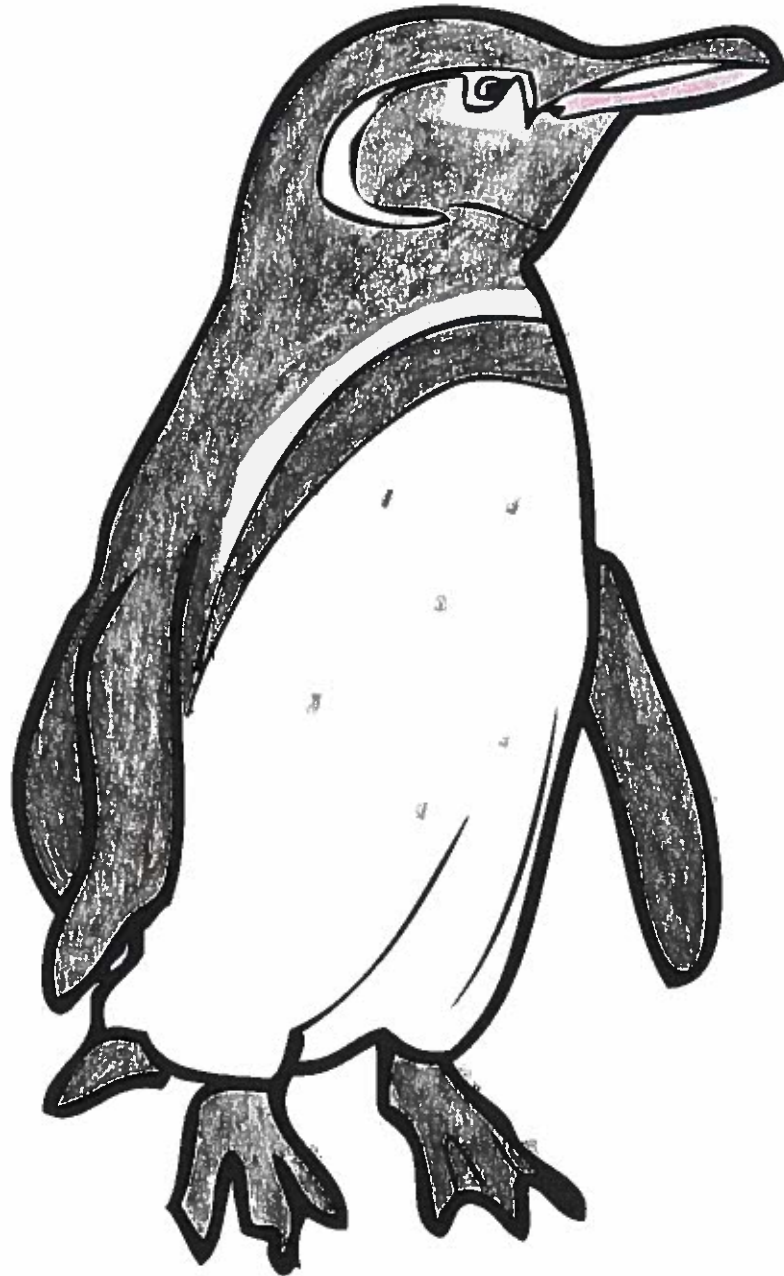
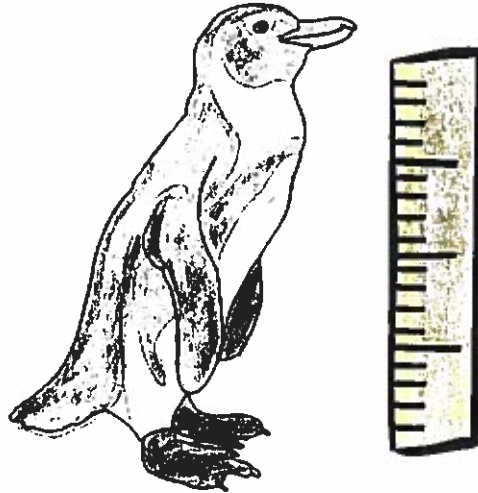


Gary the Galápagos Penguin



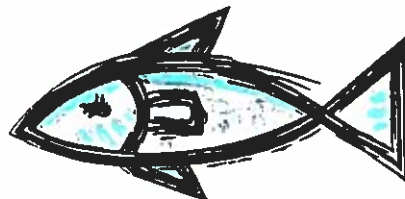
Corinne Stremmel

Gary is a Galápagos Penguin. His species is *Spheniscus mendiculus* and his genus is *Spheniscus*.

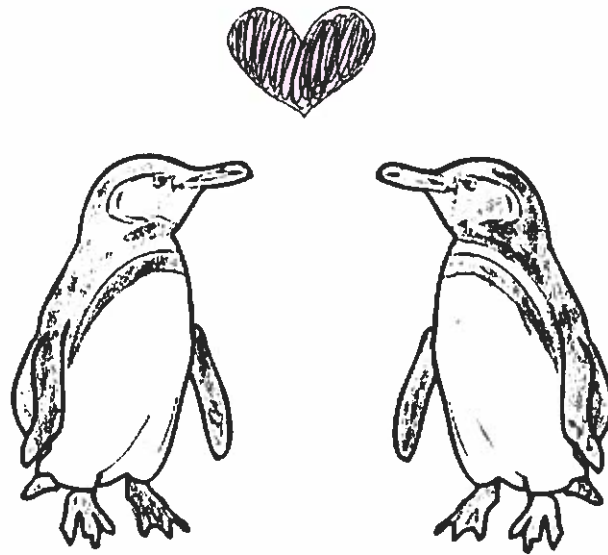


Gary is very small. He is only sixteen inches tall and weighs less than 5.5 pounds. He has a white belly with a black band around his chest, a black head and back, and a pink and black beak.

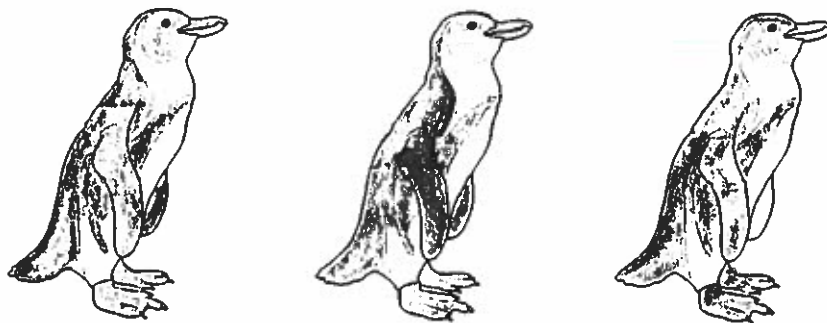
He and his penguin friends live in colonies in the Galápagos Archipelago and on the Isabella and Fernandina Islands. They don't migrate like other birds. Their homes are burrows in crevices of hardened lava.



Gary's favorite foods include mullet, anchovies, and sardines. He eats only seafood, so he's a carnivore.



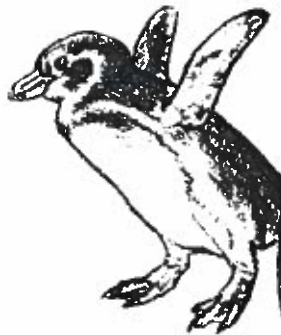
Gary and his mate, Mary, both take care of incubating the eggs. They make their nests in caves and crevices to protect their eggs from overheating. Once they hatch, the chicks will have fluffy brown and white feathers that protect them from the sun rather than keeping them warm.



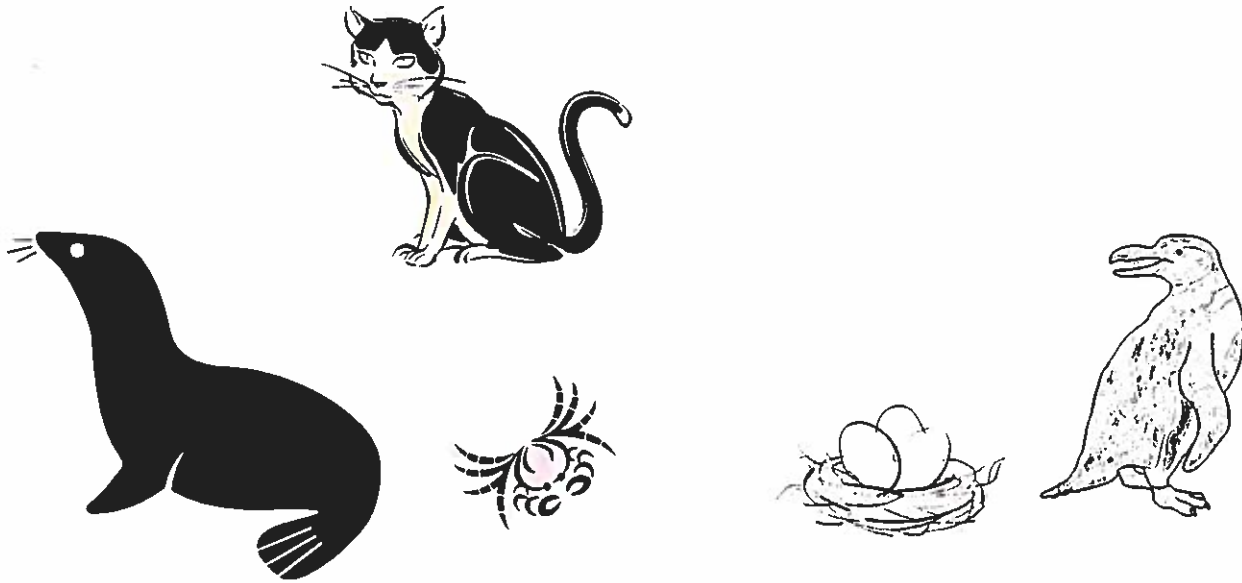
Gary and Mary may seem to have it all in their warm home, but they have a problem, Galápagos penguins like them are endangered. There are only about 2,000 of them left; they're considered the rarest species of penguin.



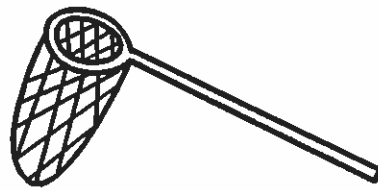
A main problem for them is El Niño or The Boy. El Niño is a natural event that refers to weak, warm currents replacing the cooler water. Over the past years El Niño currents have gotten warmer which has caused the fish to die, making the penguins starve. The penguins tend to put off breeding and sometimes will abandon their nest because of the lack of food.



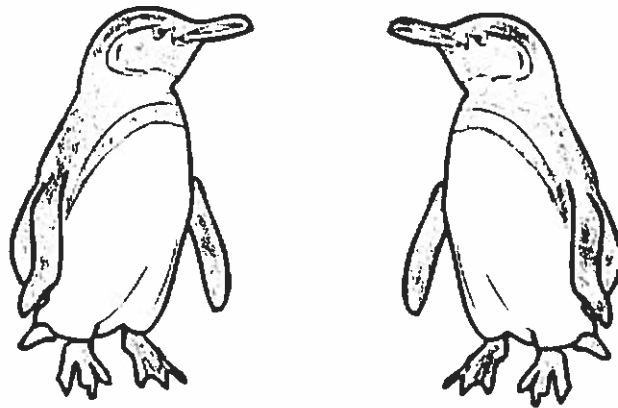
Galápagos penguins are the only penguins to live above the equator. During the day they stay in the cool Cromwell current and return to land by night. They have adapted to hot temperatures by creating new ways to keep cool such as spreading out their flippers to cover their feet. They also pant to cool their throat.



Because of their small size, Galápagos penguins naturally have many predators such as sharks, fur seals, sea lions, crabs, snakes, owls, rice rats, and hawks. Cats and dogs have been introduced to Isabella Island, a main breeding ground for Galápagos Penguins, and these animals attack the penguins and their nests.



Other dangers include illegal sea cucumber fishermen who come and chop down mangrove trees which disrupt the penguins' nests. Penguins are also mistakenly caught in fishermen's nets.



After a huge decline of Galápagos penguins in the 1980's they are slowly coming back, but unless there is a way to balance the effects of harmful human activity penguins like Gary and Mary could be driven to extinction. Careful management of these effects will be needed to save the Galápagos penguins.

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