



WATCH THE BIRDIE: A keeper at Perth Zoo shows Pierre some footage of penguins at Edinburgh Zoo, left, and Pingu the animated penguin, right, to help him feel less lonely

Rockhopper tunes into TV for company while recovering

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AFTER entertaining generations of the young and the young at heart, TV's Pingu now has his own VIP viewer in the form of a lonely real-life penguin called Pierre.

Bosses at Perth Zoo in Australia turned to episodes of the children's show as he recovers from the annual moult.

And they are also live-streaming the antics of his feathered cousins at Edinburgh Zoo in an effort to keep the lonely Northern Rockhopper stimulated.

Keepers Down Under turned to the hi-tech solution after Pierre was rescued and started shedding his feathers – meaning he cannot be released back into the wild until they all grow back.

Pierre, who is thought to be less than a year old, is currently recovering from a “record breaking” swim from the Indian or south Atlantic Ocean and washing ashore on Albany beach in southwest Australia.

Perth Zoo vet, Peter Ricci said: “Pierre is by himself in the vet department and does get a little bit lonely at times, and to help make his life a bit more enriching we've decided to get other rockhoppers online for him to watch.

“Pierre's been enjoying watching them and seeing them in their little habitats in their zoo.”

Northern rockhoppers are classed as endangered, with fewer than 240,300 breeding

Pingu helps to p-p-pep-up real life penguin pal Pierre

pairs thought to be left in the wild and Pierre the only one in Australia.

Over the past four decades, the population has dropped by 60 per cent but since they live and breed on remote islands, the cause for the decrease has not yet been fully researched and understood.

Pierre still needs to put weight on to help with his moult so staff are currently searching for another zoo where he might

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PETER RICCI, VET

be able to continue his rehabilitation and not be so lonely.

Edinburgh Zoo has more than one hundred king, gentoo and rockhopper penguins living at Penguin's Rock with most of them beginning their annual moult as we approach the end of summer.

Meanwhile Kansas City Zoo is home to Helzberg Penguin Plaza which opened its doors

in October 2012 and features 16 king penguins and 38 gentoo penguins. They also have 19 humboldt penguins who live in a different exhibit.

Northern rockhoppers are known for their charismatic personalities and distinctive eyebrows with one of Pierre's favourite activities being checking himself out in the mirror.

Unlike other penguins who slide around the ice on their bellies, rockhoppers prefer to hop around the rocks of the colony grounds which is how they earned their name.

Northern rockhopper penguins also differ from southern ones genetically as well as displaying differences in their songs and appearances.

Pre-moult they average around 4.3kg but during the moult they lose a lot of body mass and often only weigh around 2.5kg at the end of the season.

■ To watch the Edinburgh Zoo livestream, please visit <https://www.edinburghzoo.org.uk/webcams/penguin-cam/> and to watch the Kansas City Zoo livestream, please visit <https://www.kansascityzoo.org/ouranimals/list-of-animals/king-penguin/>



X Factor boss hopes show will return soon

ITV boss Kevin Lygo has said there were “too many changes” to the format of The X Factor before the end of its run, and he is hopeful it will soon return.

The X Factor was launched in 2004 but has been off air since 2018.

ITV aired a celebrity version in 2019 which was won by reality star Megan McKenna.

During a panel at the virtual Edinburgh TV Festival, Lygo was asked if the show will definitely return next year, and what format changes are planned.

He said: “It's not definitely

returning, it might return. It was our most successful entertainment show for the best part of a decade and you need to be wary of changes, we all think there were too many changes towards the end of the run.

“I'm sure X Factor will be back at some stage, it's really when is the right moment.

“Simon [Cowell] controls it, when does he want it to come back? How does he want it to come back? And hopefully we

can be a part of it.”

Cowell bought Sony Music Entertainment's stake in The X Factor earlier this year, as well as Britain's Got Talent.

He also gained ownership of all the international versions of both programmes.

At the end of 2019, Cowell signed a new five-year deal with ITV which will see his shows appear exclusively until at least 2024, including BGT and The X Factor.



Annual weigh-ins for all at London Zoo

MORE than 19,000 animals will be stepping on the scales for their annual weigh-in at ZSL London Zoo as it warned of the “catastrophic” impact of the coronavirus crisis.

Penguins, squirrel monkeys and camels were among the creatures to have their height and weight recorded on Thursday, which allows zookeepers to monitor their health and wellbeing.

Forced to close for an unprecedented three months due to the pandemic, the Regent's Park zoo says a loss of income from ticket sales has put a

“huge financial pressure” on its operation.

Sir David Attenborough and comedians including Jonathan Ross and Catherine Tate have fronted videos aiming to raise funds for the Zoological Society of London, which runs London and Whipsnade zoos.

More than £1 million per month is needed to care for the animals and, while zoos were allowed to reopen on June 15, social distancing means visitor numbers have been limited.

Dominic Jerney, ZSL director general, said: “The impact of coronavirus on ZSL cannot

be understated. Lockdown saw us closed for longer than any time in our history, with fixed costs of more than £1 million a month just on food and care for our animals, let alone our conservation and science and almost no income.

“Being back open is really positive. But with social distancing limiting visitor numbers, we are nowhere near able to make up the shortfall.”

Each year, zookeepers armed with clipboards and calculators tally up every mammal, bird, reptile, fish and invertebrate – more than 600 species.