

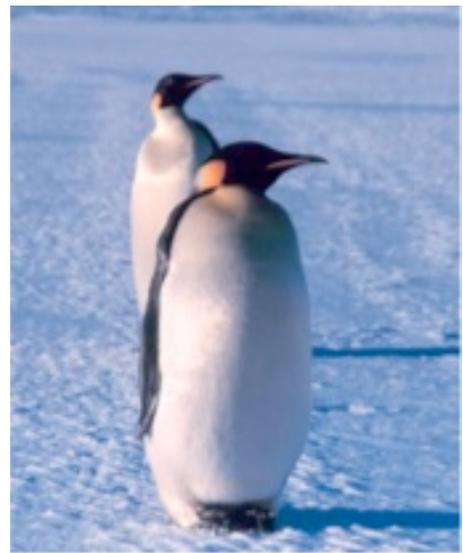
## Color and Survival

As humans exert more influence on the Earth, our preferences will play a role in deciding which other species survive, say scientists. Research shows that preferences are influenced by factors such as small, color highlights. With penguins, the most popular species are those with markings of 'warm' colors such as red, orange or yellow, said a biologist. The more popular a species is, the more likely it will have human support for its survival.

Researchers calculated the popularity of each species by studying photographs in books about penguins. Decisions about how many and which photographs to use and how large to make them are made by a book's editor based on their sense of what appeals to the public. "Penguins are lucky because they are popular with people ... but that's not true of 99.9 percent of the species out there," said a scientist.

At the top of our list are the Emperors, featured in the film "March of the Penguins." Species at the bottom are the Adelie, Yellow-eyed and Little Blue species. Researchers were surprised by the relative lack of popularity of Adelie penguins because these are the most familiar to the public. In all, there are 17 penguin species.

Penguins that are the most popular with humans are the ones that display 'warm' colors in the upper body, neck and head. One scientist compared the effect to that of a man in a tuxedo pinning on a red carnation. Unlike some animals, human preference for a particular penguin species does not seem to be driven by a "cuteness" factor.



Emperor penguins (courtesy NOAA)

Color is not the only factor that can determine how attractive an animal is to us. Characteristics such as size and babyish physical traits such as large eyes and large head can also play major roles for some animals. For example, pandas or zebras are black and white but are still preferred by humans. "Millions of insects" are not as lucky, said a scientist.

*ST*

