New Penguin Species (Pygoscelis kerguelensis)

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Why in News?

An international team of experts published a study identifying a new species of penguin, "Gentoo Penguin" (Pygoscelis papua) for the first time in over 100 years.

- **Common Name -** It is also known as the **Southeastern Gentoo Penguin (*Pygoscelis kerguelensis*)**.
- It is a newly identified species of penguin native to the remote **Kerguelen Islands** in the southern Indian Ocean.

Key Characteristics

- **Appearance -** While P. kerguelensis looks virtually identical to other gentoo penguins on the surface, its true differences are deeply embedded in its DNA.
- It does, however, exhibit slight variations in body size and vocalizations.
- **Genetic Diversity -** The Kerguelen population shows remarkably high genetic diversity.
- Scientists believe these remote islands served as a crucial glacial refuge where the penguins managed to persist and evolve independently during past ice ages.
- **Isolation -** Their habitat is one of the most isolated places on Earth, situated roughly 1,200 miles (2,000 km) north of Antarctica and far from any permanently inhabited landmass.

Other species

- The study elevates 4 geographically isolated lineages to full species status.

Species Name	Common Name	Primary Distribution / Habitat
Pygoscelis kerguelensis *(New)*	**Southeastern Gentoo**	Endemic to the **Kerguelen Islands** & Heard Island (Southern Indian Ocean).
Pygoscelis papua	**Northern Gentoo**	Restricted to the Falkland Islands / Malvinas and Martillo Island.
Pygoscelis ellsworthi	**Southern Gentoo**	Antarctic Peninsula, South Shetland Islands, and South Georgia.
Pygoscelis taeniata	**Eastern Gentoo**	Crozet, Marion, and Macquarie Islands.

Reference

[The Indian express | Pygoscelis Kerguelensis]

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
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