

Nils Olav

Brigadier Sir Nils Olav III is a king penguin who resides in Edinburgh Zoo, Scotland. He is the mascot^{[2][3][4]} and colonel-in-chief of the Norwegian King's Guard. The name 'Nils Olav' and associated ranks have been passed down through three king penguins since 1972 – the current holder being Nils Olav III.^{[1][5]}

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Role in the military

Norway – whose explorer Roald Amundsen was the first person to reach the South Pole in 1911 – presented Edinburgh Zoo with its first king penguin at its opening in 1913.^[6]

When the Norwegian King's Guard visited the Edinburgh Military Tattoo of 1961 for a drill display,^[7] a lieutenant named Nils Egelien became interested in the zoo's penguin colony. When the King's Guard returned to Edinburgh in 1972, Egelien arranged for the regiment to adopt a penguin. This penguin was named Nils Olav in honour of Nils Egelien and King Olav V of Norway.^[2]

Nils Olav was initially given the rank of *visekorporal* (lance corporal) in the regiment. He has been promoted each time the King's Guard has returned to the zoo. In 1982 he was made a corporal, and promoted to sergeant in 1987.^[2] Nils Olav I died shortly after his promotion to sergeant in 1987, and his place was taken by Nils Olav II, a two-year-old near-double. He was promoted in 1993 to the rank of regimental sergeant major and in 2001 promoted to 'honourable regimental sergeant major'.^[2] On 18 August 2005, he was appointed as colonel-in-chief of the same regiment.^{[2][8]} The next honour was a knighthood, awarded during a visit by soldiers from the Norwegian King's Guard on 15 August 2008.^[9]

Sir Nils Olav III



Species	<u>King penguin</u> (<i>Aptenodytes patagonicus</i>)
Sex	Male
Born	Sir Nils Olav III
Hatched	c. 2008 (age 11–12) <div>Edinburgh, Scotland</div>
Residence	<u>Edinburgh Zoo</u>

Military career

Allegiance	 Norway
Service/branch	 Norwegian Army
Years of service	1972–1987 (first) <div>1987 – after 2008 (second)</div> <div>before 2016 – present (third)^[1]</div>
Rank	 Brigadier, <u>colonel-in-chief</u> , and <u>mascot</u>
Unit	<u>Hans Majestet Kongens Garde</u>



Sir Nils inspects troops of the King's Guard, of which he is colonel-in-chief, following his knighthood ceremony in 2008. Military insignia is attached to his right flipper.

The knighthood was approved by King Harald V and Nils was the first penguin to receive such an honour in the Norwegian Army.^[10] During the ceremony a crowd of several hundred people watched the 130 guardsmen on parade at the zoo, and a citation from the King was read out, which described Nils as a penguin "in every way qualified to receive the honour and dignity of knighthood".^[6]

During the 2005 visit, a 4-foot-high (1.2 m) bronze statue of Nils Olav was presented to Edinburgh Zoo.^[2] The statue's inscription includes references to both the King's Guard and to the Military Tattoo. A statue also stands at the King's Guard compound at Huseby, Oslo.



The bronze statue of Nils Olav

A third penguin, Nils Olav III, took over at some point between 2008 and 2016.^[1] On 22 August 2016 he was promoted to brigadier in a ceremony attended by over 50 members of the King's Guard.^{[1][2][11]} Nils Olav now outranks Nils Egelien.^[12]

See also

- William Windsor (goat)
- Wojtek (bear)

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- "Penguin power: Norwegian regiment honours pint-sized chief" (<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/16/2337646.htm>). Sydney: ABC News. 16 August 2008.

11. "Nils Olav the most famous king penguin in the world, parades his way to a new honour" (<http://www.edinburghzoo.org.uk/news/article/11711/nils-olav-the-most-famous-king-penguin-in-the-world-parades-his-way-to-a-new-honour/>). *Royal Zoological Society of Scotland*. 22 August 2016. Retrieved 24 August 2016.
12. "Sir Nils Olav" (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/sir-nils-olav>). *Atlas Obscura*. Retrieved 3 January 2020.

External links

- BBC News on his knighthood (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/edinburgh_and_east/7562773.stm)
 - BBC News (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/1495503.stm>)
 - Scotsman (<http://news.scotsman.com/topics.cfm?tid=609&id=53472005>)
 - Article with pictures (<https://web.archive.org/web/20051116062952/http://www.mil.no/haren/hmkg/start/article.jhtml?articleID=103051>) (in Norwegian)
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