

Penguins

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How many species of penguin are there in the world?
- 2) Which are the largest and smallest penguins?
- 3) How do penguins care for their young?
- 4) How have penguins adapted to their environment?



Penguins

There are 17 species of penguin that inhabit our world and they are all found in the Southern Hemisphere.

The largest is the Emperor penguin which inhabits the Antarctic Continent. They stand at approximately 1.15 metres (3.8 feet) and weigh about 30 kilograms (66 pounds).

The smallest is the Fairy penguin, also known as Blue penguin and Little Blue penguin, which inhabit the most southern coastal regions of Australia and New Zealand. They stand at approximately 36 - 43 cm (13 - 15 in) and weigh about 0.9 - 1.4 kg (2 - 3 lb).



Penguins are very agile swimmers. They use their flipper like wings to steer in the water.



Breeding Habits

Penguins generally spend most of their life at sea, only coming to land to breed. However, some penguins, such as Gentoo penguins, can be found in some breeding areas all year round.

Some penguins are particular to certain areas. For example, the Royal penguin's breeding grounds are found only on Macquarie Island, south of New Zealand. The breeding grounds of other penguins can be more widespread, inhabiting many of the remote islands to the north.

Most penguins breed during the spring and summer months. Some dig burrows and some build nests with sticks and moss and anything they can find. Adelle, Gentoo and Chinstrap Penguins use small pebbles to build their nests.



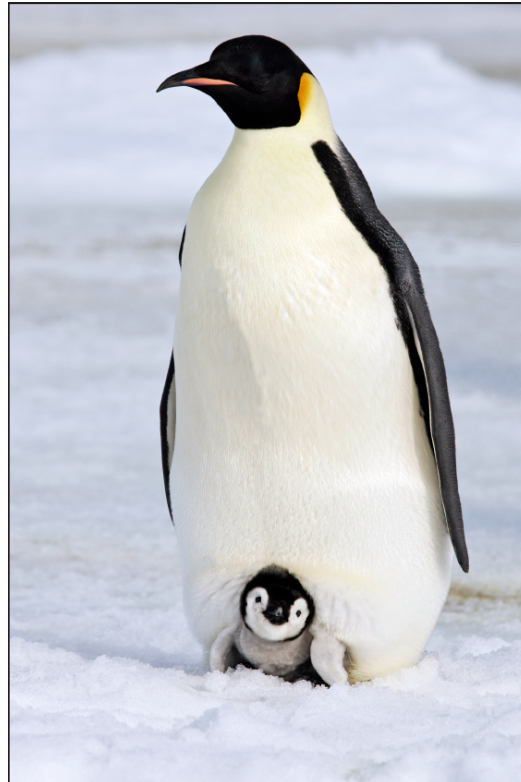
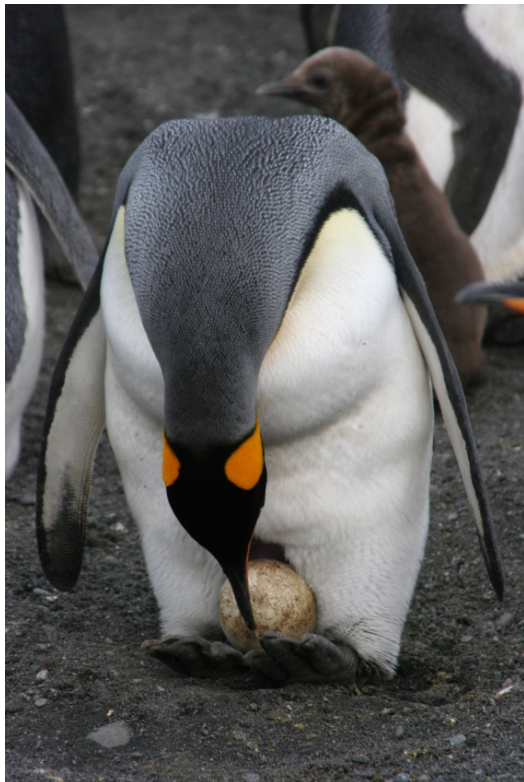
Left: Fairy (Little Blue) penguins dig a burrow in the scrub.

Above Right: Adelle penguins collect pebbles to nest in.

Bottom Right: Magellanic penguins dig small burrows on the ground.

The Emperor penguin is the only penguin that breeds during the winter. Adult Emperor penguins travel inland to lay their eggs enduring very harsh conditions. They hold their eggs on top of their feet using their own body heat to incubate their eggs. The mating pair take turns to hunt and to care for their young.

King penguins also hold their eggs on top of their feet using their body heat to incubate their eggs. The young of the King penguin are brown and the young of the Emperor penguin are grey.



Penguins take turns to hunt for food. They swim in the waters near their breeding grounds looking for small fish to eat before returning to the breeding grounds. Once they find their family they regurgitate their partially digested food to feed their young.