

Name: _____

Talking About Penguins

by Guy Belleranti

Penguins are one of the world's most interesting birds. They waddle when they walk, and have flippers instead of wings. The bones in a penguin's flippers are heavier and more solid than those in the wings of a flying bird. This helps the penguin "fly" through the water.

The penguin's black back and white front has an important function, too -- camouflage in the water. Penguins blend in with the sea from above and with the sky from below. This makes it harder for predatory birds, leopard seals, sea lions, orcas and sharks to see them.

Many people think all penguins live in the cold and ice of Antarctica. However, only 6 of the 17 species or types of penguins live in Antarctica. The others live in parts of New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and South America and on the Falkland and Galapagos Islands.

Let's talk about two of the penguin species – the Emperor penguin of Antarctica and the Galapagos penguin of the Galapagos Islands.

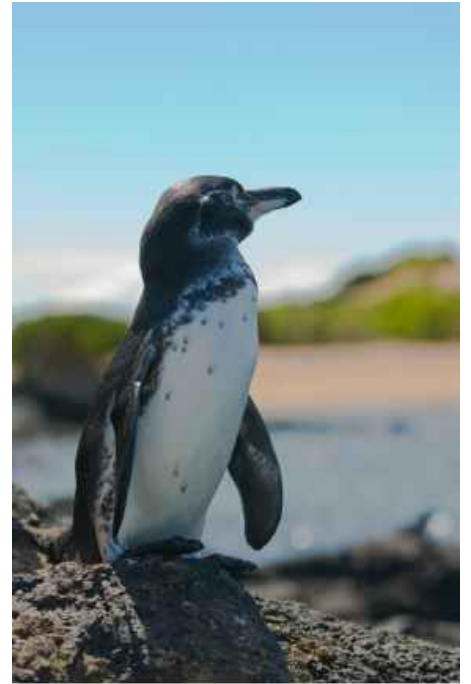
The Emperor penguin is the world's largest penguin. Its oily outer feathers help keep it dry. Its dense inner down feathers and thick fat layer helps keep it warm. Emperor penguins also often huddle in groups to conserve heat.

A mother Emperor penguin lays only one egg at a time. After the mother Emperor penguin lays the egg she travels to open sea to feed on fish, squid and krill (shrimp-like ocean crustaceans). The father stays behind with the egg. He keeps it warm and protected by balancing it on his feet and covering it with feathered skin called a brood pouch. The mother returns two months later, regurgitates food for the newly hatched chick, then stays with it while the father goes out to sea to feed.



Emperor Penguin with Chick

The Galapagos penguin lives in an area much warmer than Antarctica. The Galapagos Islands are on the Equator, 600 miles west of the South American country of Ecuador. This is as far north as any penguin lives in the wild. The Galapagos penguin is one of the smallest and also one of the most endangered of all penguins. It shares the Galapagos Islands with many other unusual animals including the giant Galapagos tortoise and the blue-footed booby. Instead of having to stay warm the Galapagos penguin must find ways to stay cool. The best way is to spend the heat of day in cool water currents hunting small fish and krill. When a Galapagos penguin does get out of the water it often spreads its flippers to cool off. It might also pant like a dog. And it shades its feet by standing with its body hunched forward.



Galapagos Penguin

This has just been a peek at penguins. To find out more visit your school and public libraries.

About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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- Most wild penguins live...
 - in South Africa
 - near the North Pole
 - in the Southern Hemisphere
 - near the Equator
- The father Emperor penguin keeps the egg warm and hatches the chick. Where is the mother penguin during this time?

- How are a penguin's flipper bones different from the bones in other birds' wings?

- A sea lion might have a hard time seeing a penguin swimming in the water. Why?
 - Sea lions cannot see the color black very well because it blends in with the snow and ice.
 - When the sea lion looks up, the penguin's white belly blends in with the bright colors of the sky.
 - Penguins swim very fast and they look like a streak zooming through the water.
 - A penguin becomes invisible when it swims in cold water.
- According to the information in the article, what three things does a Galapagos penguin do to cool off when it is too warm?

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ____ u a t ____ _____

hint: imaginary line around the center of the Earth

2. ____ n d a ____ e ____ d _____

hint: nearly extinct

3. ____ r c ____ s _____

hint: killer whales

4. c ____ ____ r v e _____

hint: protect; keep in

5. ____ a ____ n c i n ____ _____

hint: keeping something steady so it does not fall

6. ____ a n ____ _____

hint: take heavy breaths to cool off

7. ____ e g ____ r ____ i t a t ____ s _____

hint: spits up food that has been partly digested

ANSWER KEY

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1. Most wild penguins live...
- a. in South Africa
 - b. near the North Pole
 - c. **in the Southern Hemisphere**
 - d. near the Equator

2. The father Emperor penguin keeps the egg warm and hatches the chick. Where is the mother penguin during this time?

The mother lays the egg, then leaves for two months to go hunt for food.

3. How are a penguin's flipper bones different from the bones in other birds' wings?

A penguin's flipper bones are more dense to help it swim better.

4. A sea lion might have a hard time seeing a penguin swimming the water. Why? **b**

- a. Sea lions cannot see the color black very well because it blends in with the snow and ice.
- b. **When the sea lion looks up, the penguin's white belly blends in with the bright colors of the sky.**
- c. Penguins swim very fast and they look like a streak zooming through the water.
- d. A penguin becomes invisible when it swims in cold water.

5. According to the information in the article, what three things does a Galapagos penguin do to cool off when it is too warm?

It swims in cold water currents. It also pants and spreads its wings.

ANSWER KEY

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. Equator Equator
hint: imaginary line around the center of the Earth
2. endangered endangered
hint: nearly extinct
3. orcas orcas
hint: killer whales
4. conserve conserve
hint: protect; keep in
5. balancing balancing
hint: keeping something steady so it does not fall
6. pant pant
hint: take heavy breaths to cool off
7. regurgitates regurgitates
hint: spits up food that has been partly digested