

Visit The Wildside!

Emperor Penguins of Antarctica

Antarctica is abundant with Emperor Penguins. Most species of penguins live in the Southern hemisphere and most of them live on the coasts of Antarctica. Penguins are described as flightless birds because they don't fly through air - they can "fly" through water.

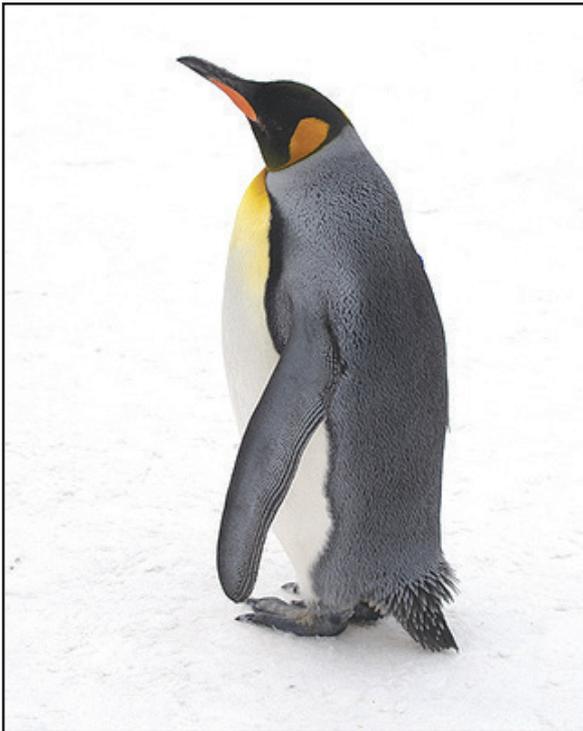
In the water they search for prey like fish, crustaceans, squid and krill. In the water, they are graceful swimmers. They have been observed swimming up to 8 miles per hour though normally they don't go over 6.7 miles per hour.

Most penguins have "tuxedo" coloring with their black back, head, flippers and white front. The emperors have a pale yellow breast and bright yellow ear patches. They grow to about four feet tall and are the heaviest, weighing anywhere between 49 and 99 pounds.

They live and breed during the Antarctic winter months. Winter starts in March in the Antarctic. During this time, the winds may reach up to 124 miles per hour. They survive breeding, raising

young, and eating by relying on a number of clever adaptations. Emperors clump together in huge, huddled masses. They take turns moving to the inside of the group, where they're protected from the icy cold temperatures and wind. Once they've had a chance to warm up, they take their turns back on the circle's edges, giving fellow penguins time in the warmer center.

The total population is estimated to be about 200,000 breeding pairs. They can live to



be 20 years of age. The Emperor Penguin is known best for the sequence of journeys the adults make each year in order to breed and feed their offspring.

The Emperor penguin walk slowly. They are also known to "toboggan" - slide across the ice on their bellies!

All mature Emperor penguins travel to breeding colonies which may include thousands of penguins. Emperor penguins do not build nests. The male stands upright for about 65 days and incubates the egg on top of its feet under a loose fold of abdominal skin called a brood patch. At this time, the male doesn't eat or fast throughout the courtship, nesting and incubation period. He lives off his body fat and loses up to 45% of his body weight, plus stands through icy temperatures, cruel winds and blinding storms. After the female lays her egg, she goes to sea (at times that's well over fifty miles away) to feed while the male is incubating the egg. She returns just before the egg is ready to hatch, bringing food which they regurgitate, (or bring up) to feed the hatched chicks. The males then eagerly leave for their own fishing session at sea. The mother's take over care of the chicks.