

Penguins



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Introduction

Today we are going to take a look at Penguins.

First of all a quick question for you.

Why can't penguins fly?

Because they don't have enough money to buy plane tickets!!!!

O.K, hope that made you laugh.

Here's another question for you.

Who is the most famous penguin in the world?

Yes, it's Mumble from Happy Feet.



What are penguins?

Penguins are a group of aquatic, flightless birds living almost exclusively in the southern hemisphere, especially in Antarctica.

So why are all penguins black and white?

They are this color as it is their camouflage. The black and white blends in nicely with the ice of the Antarctic and also the water.

And why do they have wings when they don't fly?

Well they aren't really wings, they are flippers.



Where are they found?

Although all penguin species are native to the southern hemisphere, they are not found only in cold climates, such as Antarctica.

In fact, only a few species of penguin live so far south. Several species are found in the temperate zone, and one species, the Galápagos Penguin, lives near the equator.

Here in Australia we have a large colony of penguins in Tasmania, Victoria and NSW. If you go to Phillip Island in Victoria you can see the Penguin Parade as the Fairy Penguins come up the beach at night back into their nests.



Penguin sizes

The largest living species is the Emperor Penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*): adults average about 1.1 m tall and weigh 35 kg or more.

The smallest penguin species is the Little Blue Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*), also known as the Fairy Penguin, which stands around 40 cm tall (16 in) and weighs 1 kg (2.2 lb).

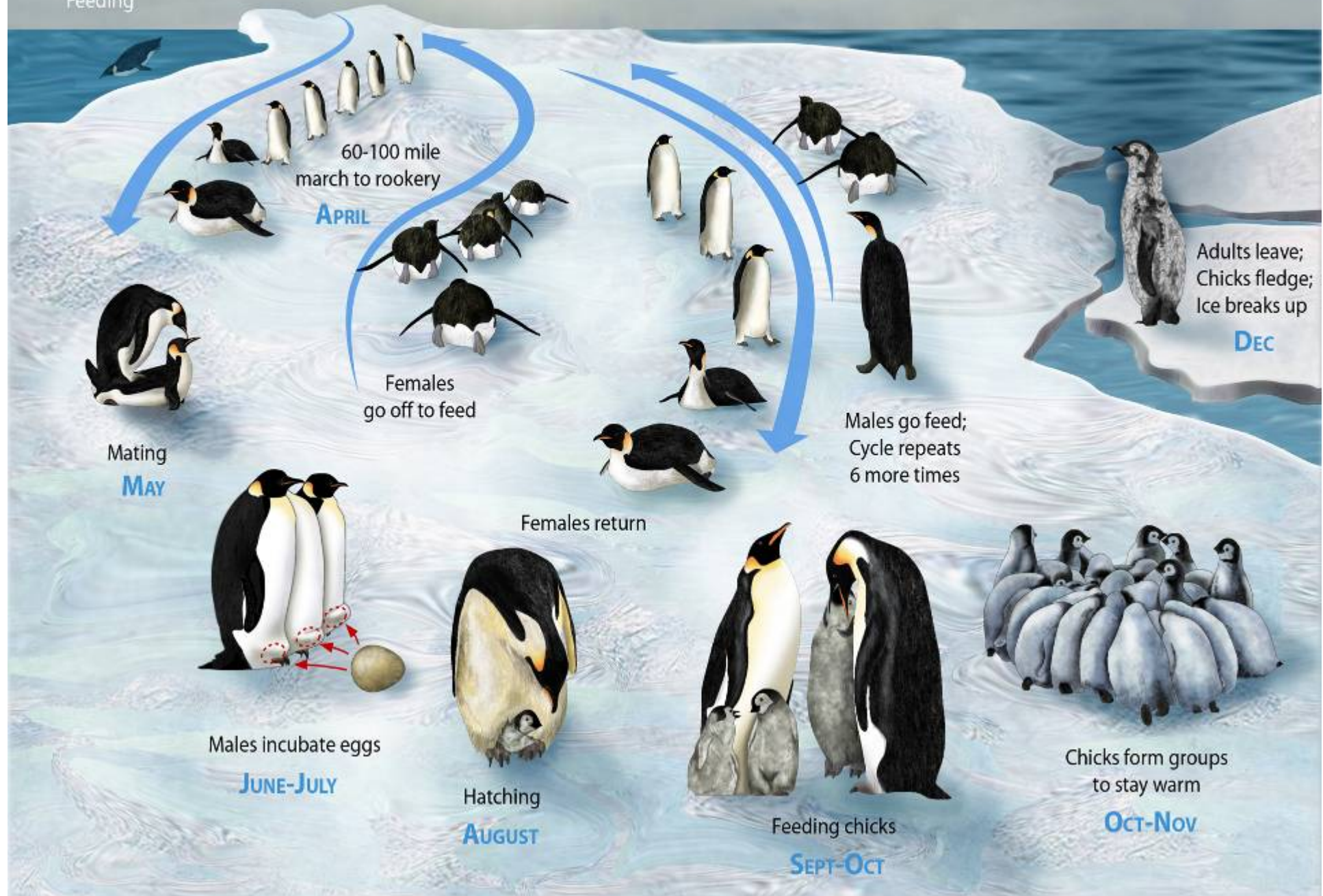
Larger penguins tend to inhabit colder regions, while smaller penguins are generally found in temperate or even tropical climates



JAN-MARCH

Feeding

Yearly Cycle of the Emperor Penguin



Adapted for life in the water

Penguins are superbly adapted to aquatic life. Their wings have become flippers, useless for flight in the air.

In the water, however, penguins are astonishingly agile. A penguin swimming looks very similar to a bird flying in the air. Within the smooth plumage (Fur coating) a layer of air is preserved, ensuring buoyancy. The air layer also helps insulate the birds in cold waters.



On land, penguins use their tails and wings to maintain balance for their upright stance.

Penguins either waddle on their feet or slide on their bellies across the snow, a movement called "tobogganing", which conserves energy while moving quickly.

They also jump with both feet together if they want to move more quickly or to cross steep or rocky terrain.

In the water

Diving penguins reach 6 to 12 km/h, though there are reports of velocities of 27 km/h.

The small penguins do not usually dive deep; they catch their prey near the surface in dives that normally last only one or two minutes.

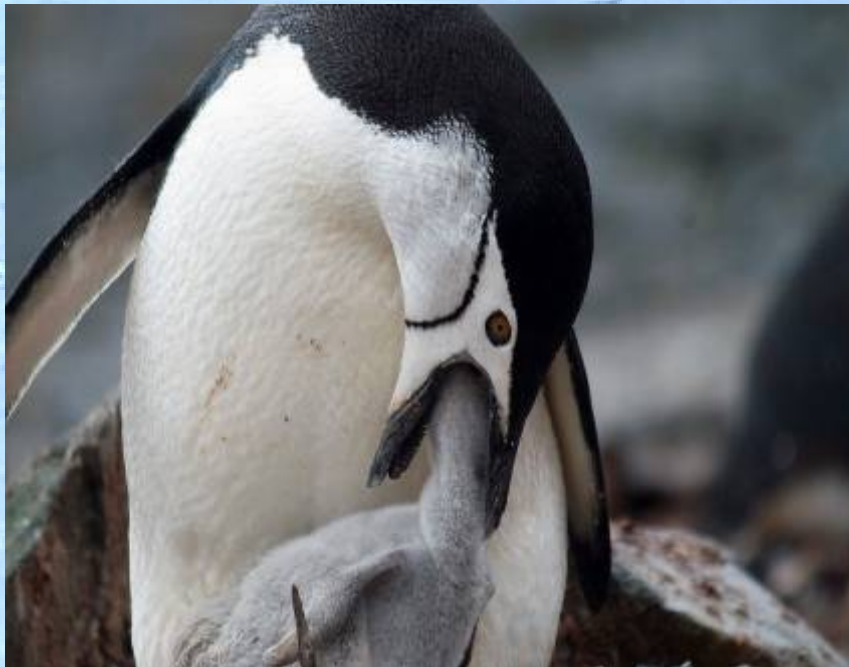
Larger penguins can dive deep in case of need. Dives of the large Emperor Penguin have been recorded reaching a depth of 565 m for up to 22 minutes.



Feeding

Most penguins feed on krill, fish, squid, and other forms of sea life caught while swimming underwater.

They spend about half of their lives on land and half in the oceans.



As we saw in Happy Feet, the Emperor Penguin needs to look after their egg and their partner goes off and feeds and then they swap over.

Once hatched, the parents feed the young by regurgitating food they have stored up.

Senses

Penguins have an average sense of hearing for birds; this is used by parents and chicks to locate one another in crowded colonies.

Their eyes are adapted for underwater vision, and are their primary means of locating prey and avoiding predators; in air it has been suggested that they are nearsighted, although research has not supported this hypothesis.

They can also drink salt water because their supraorbital gland filters excess salt from the bloodstream.



Threats

There are many threats to penguins and not one of them stands out as the major threat, they all seem to be quite equal. However with them all combined together, many species of penguin are endangered.

Natural predators include the Leopard seals, sharks, killer whales and polar bears.



Threats

Their home is under threat too. The penguins that live in the Antarctic are facing the problem that their home is melting away. This is due to global warming as the ice melts.

In warmer climates there is the issue of humans building on their nests or our animals killing penguins. In Manly in NSW, there is a colony of penguins and they are protected but one day a dog got free from their owner and killed 7 penguins, nearly wiping out the entire colony in one hit.



Threats

Many of the ships that go into the southern ocean crash into icebergs and this can lead to massive oil slicks.

Penguins are a common victim to oil slicks as they are in and out of the water all the time. The oil sticks to their features and as it gets older it gets stickier. This can lead to hyperthermia as the fur is their insulation and if the oil gets on it, then it will be destroyed, allowing the water to get to their skin.

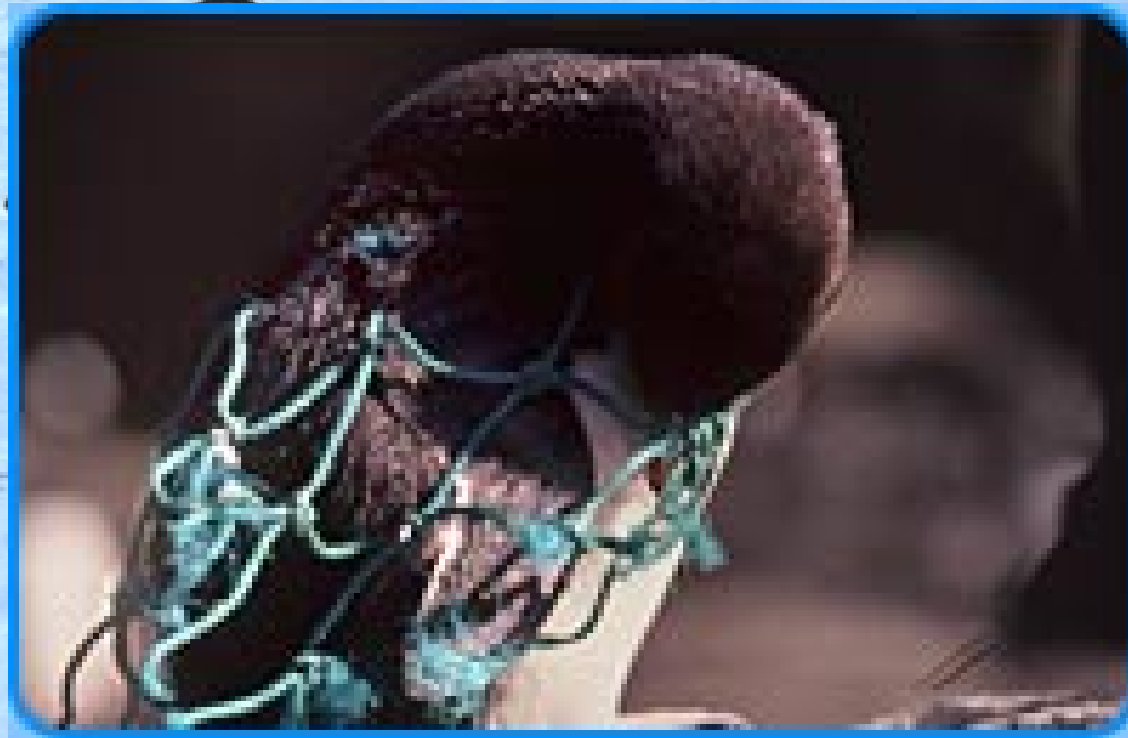
Oil will also kill sources of food.



Threats

Just like so many other animals of the ocean we have learnt about, penguins too can get caught up in fishing nets, drowning before they are recovered.

In the old days fisherman even used to catch penguins and use them as bait. As they are fairly slow on land, they were easy to catch.



Threats

The one we should all know about is penguins getting caught up in plastic.

In Happy Feet Lovelace has the same rings that we use to hold beer together caught around his neck. Whilst this is an animated movie, it happens in real life.



What can we do

There is a lot we can do to help out penguins and every other animal in the ocean.

We have already spoken of reducing greenhouse gases that accelerate global warming. Just by simply turning off a light or riding your bike to school, you will help slow down global warming that is melting the penguins home.



What can I do?

Not using plastic is the best thing we can do. Ask mum and dad to buy beer that is not packaged in the plastic six pack rings. If they do, you can cut them up like this so that nothing can get stuck in them.



If you live in an area where penguins are, make sure that there are signs up to ban dogs and other animals so that they don't get attacked.



Let's make all the
penguins happy
like these guys by
doing our bit.

