

Compare and Contrast: King Penguins and Emperor Penguins

Name: _____



King or Emperor?

King Penguin – The king penguin is the world’s second largest penguin species, reaching over three feet in height and weighing up to 35 pounds. King penguins are very powerful swimmers and can easily reach depths of over 700 feet.

The king penguin looks somewhat like a smaller version of the emperor penguin. It has a black head, neck, back, tail, and black wings (flippers). It has white underparts with varying amounts of gold or yellow toward the top of the breast. In addition, it has bright orange patches at the ears. Like all penguins, the king penguin has waterproof feathers and multiple layers of down feathers that act as insulation. In addition, it has a special gland that acts as a salt filter, which allows the penguin to drink salt water.

King penguins breed on islands that surround Antarctica. They occur with other species of penguins and are easily distinguished from such penguins by their much larger size. There are thought to be nearly two and a half million pairs of breeding king penguins. Unlike other penguins of the Southern Ocean, king penguins feed mostly on fish and squid rather than krill and crustaceans. Lanternfish are thought to comprise most of the king penguin’s fish diet.

Emperor Penguin – The emperor penguin is the world’s largest and tallest penguin. It is also the heaviest penguin, with some individuals recorded at nearly 100 pounds. Adults have a black head, back, tail, and black wings. The bill is also black with an orange lower mandible. The underparts are dingy white. The sides of the neck are marked with a large golden or yellow stripe. In addition, there is a varying amount of gold on the upper breast.

The emperor penguin is found throughout the Antarctic perimeter. It is the only species of penguin to breed during the Antarctic winter. Breeding takes place about 60 miles from the coast in the Antarctic interior, where temperatures regularly drop to -40 degrees celsius. The trek from the Antarctic coastline to the breeding grounds was the inspiration for “March of the Penguins”. The male will incubate the egg for up to 65 days! During this time, he will not eat a single meal. On particularly cold days, hundreds of male penguins may gather together in a compact huddle to warm themselves in the pounding Antarctic winds. In about two months, the female returns and locates her mate and chick by sound. She regurgitates food stored in her stomach to feed the growing chick. The male then takes his turn feeding in the ocean and returns after about a month, at which point both parents tend to the chick by regurgitating food and keeping it off the ice. Once the chick is about seven weeks old, it joins other chicks in a crèche (huddle) to keep warm.

1. Which of the following is true?

- A. The king penguin is the world's largest penguin
- B. The king penguin is larger than the emperor penguin
- C. The emperor penguin is larger than the king penguin
- D. The king penguin is the only penguin to breed in the Antarctic interior

2. All penguins...

- A. live in Antarctica.
- B. have waterproof feathers.
- C. breed during the winter.
- D. feed mostly on fish and squid.

3. Which of the following is answered for the king penguin but not for the emperor penguin?

- A. How much can it weigh?
- B. What does it eat?
- C. Where does it breed?
- D. What color is its head?

4. Both the emperor and king penguin have...

- A. varying amounts of gold feathers on the breast.
- B. bright orange patches toward the ears.
- C. orange upper mandibles.
- D. a golden stripe on each side of the neck.

5. What question is not answered?

- A. When do emperor penguins breed?
- B. For how long does the male emperor penguin incubate the egg?
- C. When does an emperor penguin chick join the crèche?
- D. How many emperor penguins are there?