

PENGUINS Reading Comprehension

Description: 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 wings. 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. Like most penguins, the emperor penguin has thick, waterproof feathers that cover the entire body except for the bill and feet. Emperor penguins normally live about 20 years in the wild, though some individuals have been recorded at 40 years of age.

Diet: Crustaceans, krill, and small fish. Emperor penguins will dive to depths of 800 feet in search of food. Most dives last 3–6 minutes.

Predators: Sharks, leopard seals, and orcas. Chicks are vulnerable to predation from south polar skuas.

Range: 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 the movie "March of the Penguins."

Nesting: Female emperor penguins lay a single egg in May or June. After the egg has been laid, the female must immediately feed in the ocean. First, the egg is carefully transported to the male, who incubates the egg under a brood patch that rests above the feet. Occasionally, the transfer is unsuccessful and the egg rolls onto the ice and instantaneously freezes.

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.

Status: Populations of emperor penguins are thought to be stable. Estimates indicate about 200,000 breeding pairs.

1.) Which of the following animals only preys on penguin chicks?

- a.) orcas
- b.) sharks
- c.) seals
- d.) skuas

2.) Select all of the following that are TRUE.

- a.) After the egg is laid, the male ventures off to the sea first.
- b.) The female locates her chick by sight.
- c.) Both parents will feed chicks by regurgitating food.
- d.) The female locates her chick by sound.

3.) Which of the following scenarios is unlikely?

- a.) Finding an emperor penguin after it has been underwater for 10 minutes
- b.) Finding an orca that has just eaten an emperor penguin
- c.) Finding an emperor penguin that is about 20 years old
- d.) Finding an emperor penguin that weighs 80 pounds

4.) Which of the following is NOT true?

- a.) After the female lays the egg, the male must immediately feed in the ocean.
- b.) Sometimes, the egg transfer from the female to male results in the egg freezing.
- c.) The female lays an egg during the Antarctic winter.
- d.) The male incubates for more than two months without eating

5.) What color is the tail of the emperor penguin?

- a.) white
- b.) yellow
- c.) black
- d.) orange

6.) Where do emperor penguins breed?

- a.) along the coast
- b.) South America
- c.) in the water
- d.) the Antarctic interior

7.) Which of the following is NOT part of the diet of the emperor penguin?

- a.) insects
- b.) krill
- c.) fish
- d.) crustaceans

8.) How many eggs are laid by the female emperor penguin?

- a.) 0
- b.) 2
- c.) 3
- d.) 1

9.) What happens third?

- a.) The egg transfer
- b.) The female feeds in the ocean while the male incubates.
- c.) The male feeds in the ocean while the female tends to the chick.
- d.) The young penguin joins a crèche.

10.) At the end of the passage, a line reads "Populations of emperor penguins are thought to be stable. Estimates indicate about 200,000 breeding pairs." What does stable mean?

- a.) uncertain
- b.) staying the same
- c.) decreasing
- d.) increasing