

Penguin Facts

You Call That a Bird?

Penguins are classified in the bird (Aves) family. Penguins have feathers, wings, lay eggs, and are warm blooded like the rest of the bird family.

No Fly Zone!

Penguins are flightless birds- they don't fly in the air. The penguin's wings look more like flippers and are better suited for propelling them through the water.

It's Cold Outside!

Penguins are able to survive the cold climates because they have a layer of blubber under their skin. On top of their skin are layers of down feathers, and then overlapping those are outer feathers sealing in the warmth. Penguins produce oil with a gland near their tails, which they use to help waterproof their feathers. You can often watch them "preening" their feathers with this oil.

Formal Dress Required!

Most penguins are black and white, giving them the appearance of wearing a tuxedo. This is a form of camouflage called "countershading." This is helpful to hide from both their predators and their prey. Their black feathers make it hard for them to be seen from above looking into the dark water. From below, their white feathers look like the sun reflecting off the surface of the water. Some species may have a little bit of color such as red or yellow colored eyes, red beaks, or feet. The emperor and king penguin have orange and yellow feathers on their head and neck.

No Penguins on the North Pole!

Penguins live in the Southern Hemisphere: South America, South Africa, New Zealand, the Galapagos Islands, and Antarctica. Penguins spend half of their time in the water, and the other half on land. The larger penguins live in the colder climates, and the smaller penguins live in the warmer climates.

Let's Eat!

Penguins are carnivores, which means they eat meat. Their food is caught live in the water and swallowed whole. Penguins do not have teeth; instead, their tongues and throat have fleshy spines that help prevent their prey from escaping. The main diet of the different species depends of their location. Penguins that live in the warmer locations eat mostly fish. Those that live in the cold Antarctic regions survive mostly on krill. Those living in between have a more varied diet of fish, krill, and squid. Both parents feed the hungry chicks. The parents regurgitate their food from their stomachs to feed the baby penguins.

Water, Water Every Where!

But what do penguins drink? They don't live near any fresh water. They are surrounded by the salty ocean water. Did you know that penguins actually are able to drink salt water? They have a special gland in their bodies that takes out the salt and pushes it through grooves in their bill "filtering" the water so it is drinkable.

Sing Me a Love Song!

When male penguins are ready to find a mate, they head for a special nesting area where they will raise their chicks, called a rookery. There they strut about making loud calls to attract a female. When he finds a female penguin who likes what she hears, they bond by "singing" to each other. In this way they learn to recognize each other's voices. Penguins build their nests out of whatever is available for building material, including rocks and stones. Eggs are laid usually one or two at a time. As soon as she has laid her egg, the hungry female waddles off for dinner leaving the male to watch over the egg. When she gets back, it is his turn to go get dinner, and she will take over egg-sitting. When the chick hatches, it immediately starts calling out so the parents can recognize its voice. When the chick is older, the parents will leave together; when they return they will be able to find their chick by the sound of its voice.

Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Penguins are social creatures that often nest with other penguins for warmth and protection from predators.

Danger Abounds!

In the water, penguins have natural enemies, such as the leopard seal, sea lions, and orca whales. Penguins in the warmer climates also have to be concerned about predators out of the water like foxes, snakes, lizards and rats. In the wild, penguins have a lifespan of 15-20 years depending on the species.

Sources:

Prevost & Gill (2018) Encyclopedia Britannica britannica.com/animal/penguin

The New England Aquarium Blog (2018) neaq.org

National Geographic (2016-2018) Nationalgeographic.com/au

Penguin Sock Craft

You will need:

Our penguin template

1 black sock

1 striped or print sock

1 sheet each of felt in the following colors:

Black, White, & Orange

Dry uncooked rice

Poly-fill

Rubber-bands

Scissors

Hot glue, or white craft glue

Googly-eyes, black buttons or black magic marker

Directions:

Place the black sock over a can or sturdy drinking glass, folding over sock cuff around the outside of the glass.

Fill with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of dry uncooked rice.

Generously fill the glass with poly-fill.

Gather up the sock from the glass, and secure with a rubber band.

Cut off the excess sock about $\frac{1}{2}$ from the rubber band. Set aside.

Cut out pattern pieces and pin to felt squares.

Cut felt out according to the pattern pieces; transfer the markings for the placement of the eyes and the beak.

Glue the main white body piece to the front of the black sock.

Take the diamond shaped orange felt piece and place a small bead of glue in the center and fold into 2 triangles, pinching slightly to create a beak.

Glue the eyes and beak to the white body piece as marked.

Glue the feet to the bottom of the penguin's body.

Attach the wings to the sides, with the straight side of the wing facing front.

Take the 2nd (patterned) sock and place it over the top of the penguin so the sock's cuff makes a hat cuff.

Gather up the excess fabric at the top of the penguin's head and secure with a rubber band. Cut the fabric about 1" from the rubber band.

Cut small slits in the 1" piece from the cut edge to the rubber band and fluff at the top of the hat for a pompom.