



Penguins as Parents

Some penguins travel in enormous groups, perhaps five hundred of them, and they swim north in the coldest of winter, so far north they hit ice.

Then they jump out of the water, one by one, and start sliding on their bellies.

They create ruts as they slide, and they follow each other in a line. They do this for days!

After a while they stop sliding, and they get around in a big circle and start making noises. Why do they do this?

What they are doing is looking for a partner. After the male and female have got together they start to make baby penguins.

First, the females lay eggs. They do that standing up. The eggs fall down between their legs, which are about an inch long, and the females rest the eggs on their feet.

Then, the males go over to the females and the females give the males the eggs.

Then, and this is the cool part, the females leave. They travel for days back to the ocean and jump in and go fishing. The females just take off and leave the men with the eggs?

The males take care of the eggs. They sit on them. They have this little pocket between their legs where the egg goes.

They gather around in an enormous circle to keep each other warm. The penguins on the inside of the circle very slowly move to the outside, and then back to the inside. They do this to take turns on the outside of the circle because it is really cold.

They do this for an entire month. The males sit out there on the eggs for a month. They don't even eat. They just watch the eggs.

Then the females come back, and right when they do, almost to the day, the eggs are hatched. The females somehow know, even though they have never had babies before, the exact day to go back to the males.

And that is how baby penguins are made.

