



All About Gentoo Penguins

Gentoo penguins are one of 18 species of penguins known worldwide. They are the third largest species of penguin; only emperor and king penguins are larger. Gentoos can reach a height of about 30 inches and weigh up to 14 pounds. Gentoos have a few

distinctive characteristics when compared to other types of penguins. They can be identified by the white patch of feathers on their head that stretches from eye to eye, a red beak, red feet and white eyelids. The gentoo's short, red beak is specifically designed for catching krill and squid. Their webbed feet aid in swimming and the claws give them extra traction on land and when trying to come ashore. A short wedge-shaped tail provides them with additional balance and may provide some control when swimming at higher speeds. Like all penguins, they have a streamlined body to help them swim efficiently through the water. Their wings are modified into paddle-like flippers and their legs are positioned far back on their bodies. Gentoos are countershaded, which means they are dark colored on their backs and light colored on their bellies. This type of coloration helps camouflage them so they can sneak up on prey and avoid detection by predators. Penguins have more feathers than most other birds. In fact, they may have as many as 70-100 feathers per square inch!

Use the selection above to answer the following questions.

- 1) How many penguin species are there in the world? _____
- 2) What is one benefit of countershading for a penguin? _____
- 3) How does the gentoo's beak help them? _____

- 4) Name the two species of penguins that are larger than the gentoo penguin. 1. _____ 2. _____
Who in your family is bigger than you? _____
- 5) Name two characteristics that would help you identify a gentoo penguin.
1. _____ 2. _____
List two things about you that makes it easy for people to identify you.
1. _____ 2. _____
- 6) Why do penguins have claws on their feet? _____
What would you wear on your feet to walk around on ice and snow? _____

Be an Animal Investigator

Think about and then answer the following questions: How do you think it helps the gentoos to have their feet positioned far back on their body? How does it help them to have more feathers than most other birds? What are some other ways penguins differ from other birds?