

The Emperor's Egg

Martin Jenkins

Jane Chapman, Illustrator

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Can you imagine spending two winter months outside in Antarctica without anything to eat? That's exactly what the male Emperor Penguin does, keeping the egg warm and protected while the mother is off swimming and feeding in the ocean. In this fascinating story of one of nature's truly egalitarian partnerships, Jenkins describes the life of an Emperor Penguin family, from the laying of the egg (by the female, of course) to the young penguin's first swim in the sea.

The chatty style of text is a perfect way for Jenkins to convey his own awe and empathy for the penguin's accomplishments. "Two whole months with an egg on your feet and no dinner, or breakfast or snacks? I don't know about you, but I'd be very, very miserable."

Interspersed with these conversations are several facts about Emperor Penguins in smaller, curved sentences that float on the pages like little ice floes. Chapman's acrylic paintings, in cool blues and purples, deftly portray the inhospitable home of these birds. Through body language and expression we even get a look at penguin emotion, without the usual anthropomorphizing. The large, clean format will make this an easy book to share, as The Emperor's Egg cracks open a wealth of information about a distant frozen land.

LEIGH FORREST (November / December 1999)

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