

Rising Temperatures Threaten Penguins



If you saw the movie *Happy Feet*, its “stars” were Emperor penguins that live on the Antarctic Peninsula. But Emperor penguins and other penguins don’t have much to be happy about these days. Warmer temperatures are causing the ice to melt where the penguins lay their eggs and raise their chicks. The climate change is affecting the penguins’ food supply too.

Antarctic winters have been getting warmer with stronger winds. On the West Antarctic Peninsula, sea ice now covers 40 percent less area than it did 25 years ago. Some of the sea ice is breaking off earlier in the penguins' breeding season. High winds have blown penguin eggs and chicks off the sea ice before they were ready to survive on their own.

Other problems are affecting penguins too. Humans are fishing more in the waters off Antarctica. The increase in fishing has caused a decrease in the number of krill, which are small sea creatures that are a main source of food for some penguins. Krill need cold water to survive, so they are being harmed by the warmer temperatures too.

NEWS WORD BOX

climate peninsula
area percent
decrease survive

Many scientists agree that global warming is causing Earth’s temperatures to rise. Some believe the Antarctic Peninsula is warming *five times* faster than most other places. They warn that countries must take action to cut down air pollution, one of the causes of global warming.

MORE FACTS ABOUT PENGUINS

- The Emperor penguin colony featured in the film *March of the Penguins* has declined by more than 50 percent because of global warming.
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is thinking of adding penguins to the endangered species list.

THINK ABOUT THE NEWS

Are you seeing any affects of global warming?
How are people helping to slow the rate of global warming that is harming penguins and other species?