

This passage is all about penguins. It tells about how penguins survive in the wild.

## Waddle, Dive, and Swim

by Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld

- 1 A flock of penguins waddles across the ice and snow. They walk upright, heads held high. As they step, step, step with their wide, three-toed feet and short, stubby legs, they rock from side to side like chubby wind-up toys.
- 2 Penguins can't fly. But they are birds. Like all birds, penguins have feathers and wings. A penguin's wings are small and flat. While climbing up slippery slopes, or hopping from rock to rock, penguins hold their wings out to the side for balance. To go downhill, they flop on their bellies and slide, using their wings to steer.
- 3 Penguins live mostly in the ocean. But for a few weeks or months each year, they come ashore to nest and hatch their eggs. Once their chicks are grown, penguins hurry back to the sea. They gather at the edge of the ice and peer into the cold water. Their thick coat of waterproof feathers can protect them from the cold, but not from enemies! They watch for lurking sharks, leopard seals, or killer whales.
- 4 When all's clear, they plunge into the water, one after the other, like Olympic divers. Although penguins may look silly while waddling and tobogganing<sup>1</sup> across the land, they are graceful in water. Lots of swimming birds, such as ducks and geese, use their big feet to paddle along. But with their strong, flipperlike wings penguins can "fly" through the sea.
- 5 When penguins are hungry, they dive down deep to hunt for food. Most birds have light, hollow bones to help them rise up in the air. Penguins have heavy bones and sleek, streamlined bodies. That helps them dive deeper and swim faster than any other type of bird.



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<sup>1</sup>tobogganing — to ride as if on a small sled

- 6 Penguins can spend months at sea without ever touching land. But like all birds they must breathe air. Penguins breathe by leaping out of the water like porpoises while swimming fast. They glide over the water for a second or two, gulp a breath of air, then dive back in. “Porpoising<sup>2</sup>” is also a good way to confuse enemies. A stalking shark or seal loses sight of a penguin when it’s out of the water.



- 7 If porpoising doesn’t work, a penguin can escape an enemy by quickly changing direction. It uses its webbed feet and pointy tail like a ship’s rudder to zigzag this way and that. If an iceberg is floating nearby, the penguin can rocket straight out of the water and land on the ice, out of the enemy’s reach.
- 8 Penguins know all the moves they need to stay safe and have fun — both on land and in the sea.

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<sup>2</sup>*porpoising* — to leap out of the water like a porpoise or dolphin