

Fireside Tales

The Worst Journey in the World

Chapter 1 – The Mission

TRANSCRIPT

Hello. It's cold outside. That's why my penguin friend and I are wearing scarves and sitting by the fire. He feels the cold. He's a small penguin from the South Atlantic. But some of his relatives live in a much colder place; Antarctica, the icy southern continent around the South Pole. They are called Emperor Penguins. They look a bit like my friend, black and white with yellow patches, but they're much bigger. They can be up to 130 centimetres tall and weigh up to 45 kilos. They can't fly, but they're amazing swimmers and they eat fish.

The first person to see an Emperor Penguin was probably a Russian explorer who killed and ate one in 1820. Nobody saw an Emperor Penguin for 60 years after 1840. Hardly anything was known about them, but scientists thought that studying their eggs could tell us about the evolution of birds from dinosaurs.

In spring 1902, British explorer Robert Scott's first expedition found a colony of Emperor Penguins; 2000 birds at Cape Crozier. The biologist on that expedition was a young man, Dr Edward Wilson. He wanted to collect some eggs for research, but he was disappointed. Even in spring there were no eggs!

Nine years later, Dr Wilson returned to Antarctica on Scott's second expedition. He tried to reach the penguin colony again. This journey was later described as "The worst journey in the world". In Part two, we'll begin to find out why.

GLOSSARY

Scarf	a long piece of clothing worn around the neck to keep the wearer warm
Penguin	one of 16 species of seabird from the southern hemisphere that cannot fly
Feel the cold	to be very sensitive to cold temperatures
Icy	cold
Fire	a fire built to keep the house warm
Antarctica	a large area of land and sea mostly covered in ice, mainly south of 60 degrees South
Continent	one of the seven main land areas of the world (the others include Africa and Asia)
South Pole	a point on the planet at latitude 90 degrees south of the Equator
Emperor	the leader of an empire
Patch	a small area
Amazing	very surprising, incredible, fantastic
Explorer	a person who travels to discover new unknown places. The Russian explorer, who was probably the first person to see an Emperor Penguin, was Fabian Von Bellingshausen.
Scientist	a person who works to increase knowledge by using scientific methods
Hardly	almost not
Evolution	a natural process by which animals and plants change as time passes
Expedition	a journey made by a group of explorers
Colony	a group of birds/animals which come together in one place to breed/produce young
Biologist	a scientist who studies living beings such as plants, birds and animals
Egg	a hard shell with a new young bird inside, produced by a female
Collect	go to a place, get, and bring back
Research	a process of scientific study to find new knowledge about something
Disappointed	a negative feeling we have when what happens is not what we want
Dinosaurs	a group of reptiles which all died out (became extinct) about 66 million years ago. Birds evolved from dinosaurs.
Spring	One of the four seasons, followed by summer, autumn ('fall' USA) and winter

Return	to go back to where you started
Journey	a big trip
Worst	the most bad
Find out	discover