

Robotic Baby Penguin

Scientists and engineers are designing robots that can be used in many different areas of life. This article is about a robot which looks like a penguin chick. Researchers designed this robot to help them get closer to emperor penguins and find out more about their behaviour.

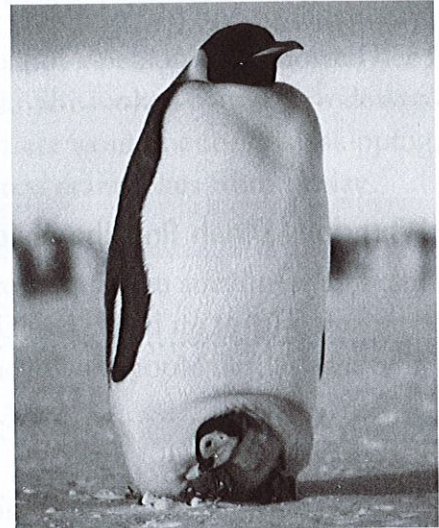
Robotic baby penguin helps researchers get closer to shy adults

A tiny grey robotic penguin with four, thick, snow-ready black wheels is helping scientists to understand the species' behaviour.

- 5 As emperor penguins are notoriously* shy creatures, they retreat* when researchers approach them – causing their heart rates to rise and interfering with data on their health.
- 10 To tackle this problem, a team of scientists and film-makers led by Yvon Le Maho of the University of Strasbourg in France created a remote control rover* disguised as a chick. The cunningly designed robot
- 15 can easily sidle up to* penguins without scaring them away.

- The robot has been deployed* in Adelie Land, Antarctica, where the 2005 documentary *March of the Penguins*
- 20 was filmed, and allowed researchers to study the animals from over 650 feet (200 meters) away.

- But to create the successful bot, scientists endured a process of trial and error, with
- 25 the first disguised version of the rover,



made of fibreglass scaring the real birds, Le Maho said.

- 30 Researchers tried about five versions before they found their final design which is covered in grey fur, sports black arms, and has a black-and-white painted face and black beak.

- 35 "The penguins did not scamper away and even sang to it with "a very special song like a trumpet," Le Maho said.

- 40 Le Maho suggested that the adult penguins were trying to find a mate for their chicks and they were listening for a response, but researchers didn't program the rover to make a sound.

"They were very disappointed when there was no answer," Le Maho said. "Next time we will have a rover playing songs."

Glossary

notoriously — famously

retreat — run away

rover — vehicle

sidle up to — go up to

deployed — used

Abridged article from
www.independent.co.uk