

Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick



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Notes: Sources included North Carolina State University, "March of the Giant Penguins," <http://news.ncsu.edu/releases/2007/june/112.htm>; and BBC News, "Tropical Giant Penguin Discovered," <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/6239846.stm>. Both sites show what the new old giant penguin might have looked like and also have details about a second, smaller prehistoric penguin discovered by the same team of scientists. Sources also included the *Boston Globe*, *Los Angeles Times* and *National Geographic News*.

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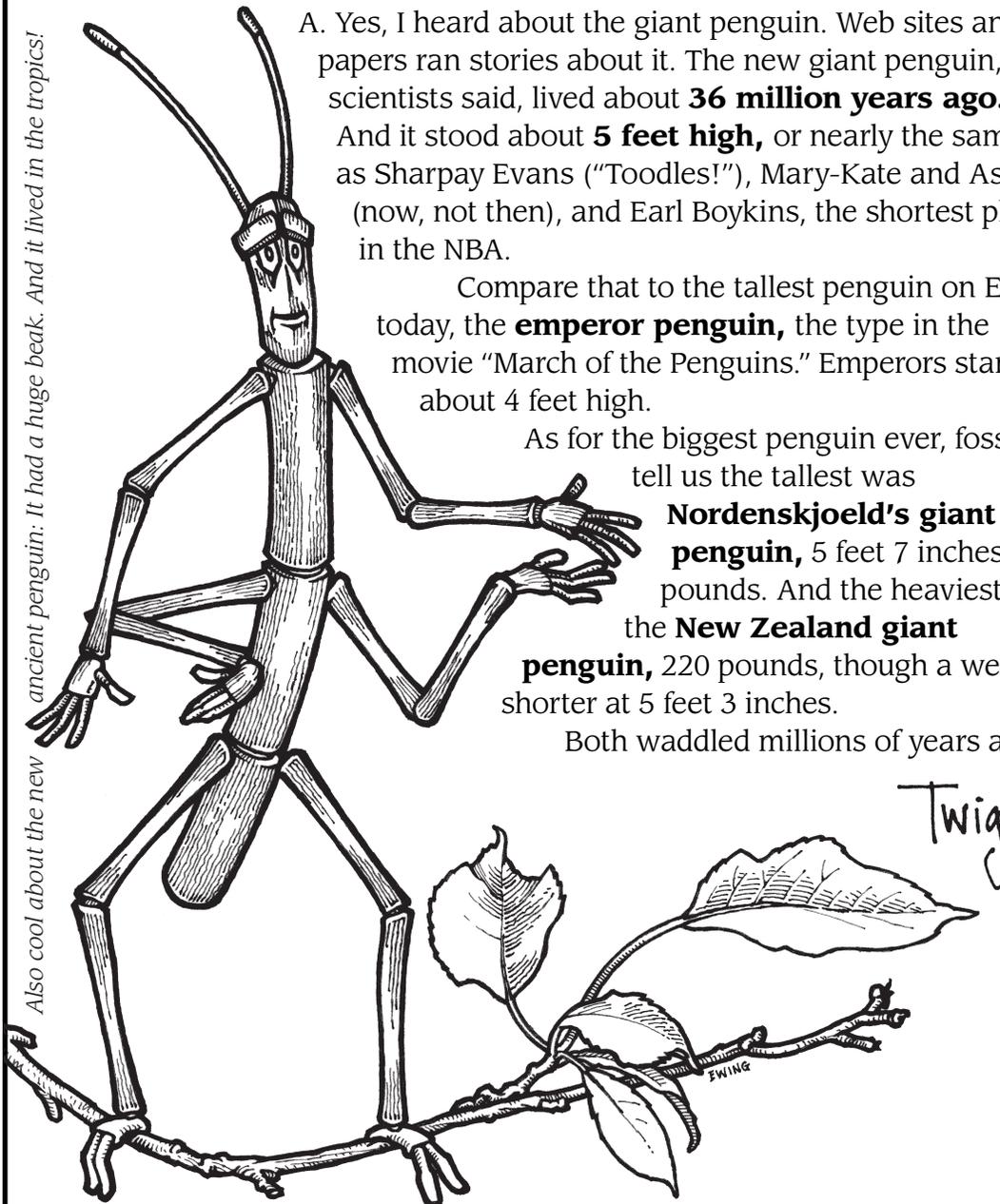
Q. Dear Twig: Did you hear about the giant penguin? Some scientists found some fossils from one. What's the biggest penguin today? What's the biggest penguin ever?

A. Yes, I heard about the giant penguin. Web sites and papers ran stories about it. The new giant penguin, the scientists said, lived about **36 million years ago**. And it stood about **5 feet high**, or nearly the same as Sharpay Evans ("Toodles!"), Mary-Kate and Ashley (now, not then), and Earl Boykins, the shortest player in the NBA.

Compare that to the tallest penguin on Earth today, the **emperor penguin**, the type in the movie "March of the Penguins." Emperors stand about 4 feet high.

As for the biggest penguin ever, fossils tell us the tallest was **Nordenskjöld's giant penguin**, 5 feet 7 inches, 200 pounds. And the heaviest was the **New Zealand giant penguin**, 220 pounds, though a wee bit shorter at 5 feet 3 inches.

Both waddled millions of years ago.



Also cool about the new ancient penguin: It had a huge beak. And it lived in the tropics!

From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (www.oardc.ohio-state.edu) and OSU Extension (extension.osu.edu).