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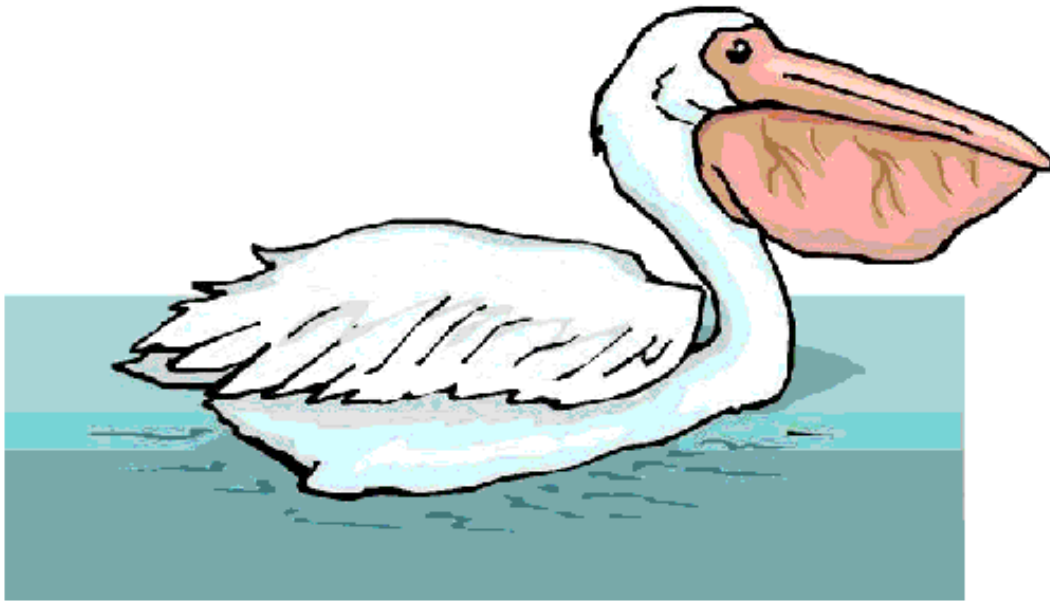
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Birds of the Sea



Name _____

Date _____

Birds of the Sea

In the oceans and seas, all over the world, many birds make their homes. What are birds of the sea? A bird that spends most of its time at the sea is called a seabird. It requires the sea and the land by the sea for its food. The sea and shore are where the seabird makes its nests.

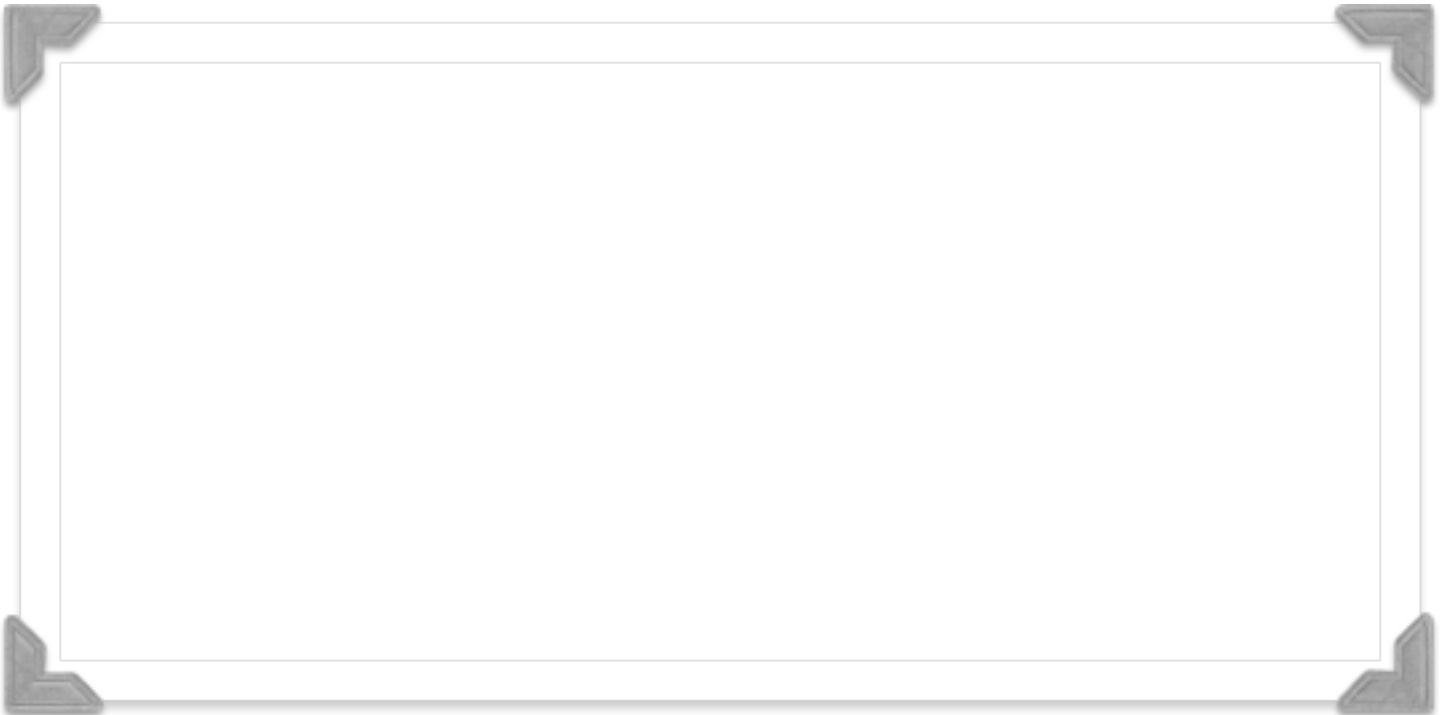


Seabirds are unique in many ways, especially in the ways they adapt to the variety of habitats in the world's oceans. Some live where the water is extremely cold - the polar seabirds. Others live in the warm sea near the Equator. Other seabirds thrive in the swirling and turbulent sea waters. This is because in a swelling sea the plankton is richer. Fish feed on this nutritious plankton. Seabirds, of course, eat fish, and the more nourishing the fish, the better fed the seabirds!

We know of over 8,600 types of birds in the world. Of that number only about 260 are birds of the sea. And even those seabirds have differences among them. Some fly nearly all the time, while others cannot fly at all! Some come only to nest on the shore while others come on shore to sleep every night.

Many seabirds live on the cliffs by the sea. They feed on fish just the same as other birds of the sea, but their home is in the huge cliffs high above the seashore.

Draw a picture of a beach with seabirds feeding or nesting.



Birds of the Sea



Sea birds are some of the healthiest birds in the world.

It is not at all unusual for some species to live as long as fifty years!

Something special about the salt water, the sea air and the ebb and flow of the tides give sea birds longer life-spans.

It is us and our love of the sea that has threatened the longevity of sea birds.

It is important to know how we can help preserve the sea and shore to let these sea birds live long and healthy lives.

Some characteristics of seabirds may surprise you. As mentioned before, some seabirds fly nearly all the time and others cannot fly at all. Most birds of the sea have waterproof plumage; others do not. None of them can walk well. Why do you think that is?



Adaptation is a very important for birds of the sea. They have to deal with variations of climate and meeting their specific needs for food, rest and nesting. We will explore the way certain seabirds have adapted, you may also do some research about other birds you are interested in.

Read the words below. Write a definition for each on the lines.

1. plumage _____

2. adaptation _____

Birds of the Sea



Pelagic Seabirds

Birds that live primarily out in the sea are referred to as pelagic seabirds.

One type of pelagic seabird is the albatross. With wingspans of nearly eleven feet (3.4 meters), the Royal Albatross and the Wandering Albatross are the biggest flying birds of the sea. These birds love the wind and can “catch it” under their wide wings. This lets them soar and just be carried along. Think of a kite that is gliding along effortlessly. This is how an albatross looks as it flies over the sea.

Albatrosses can utilize the wind and its currents quite effectively. A strong wind can help an albatross fly over 60 miles an hour! This is important for our understanding of how the albatross has adapted to the sea to meet its needs.

Riding a bicycle in a hilly area might let you experience how the albatross feels. If you pedal up hard and then just let the downhill part carry you, you can go pretty far uphill without having to pedal.

The albatross flies down close to the surface. The wind’s current comes up and the albatross catches and rides it up.

Other pelagic seabirds are petrels, tropicbirds and shearwaters. The bodies of these birds are small, especially when you think of how large their wings are. With their smaller, lightweight bodies these birds can take off quickly and stay in the air for a good bit of time. After all, their survival depends on getting food - fish - and there aren’t any other ways to get it but go out and catch it!



Birds of the Sea

Seabirds' beaks are also adapted for meeting their particular dietary needs. Catching fish can be slippery, so some have longer beaks for holding onto their catch. A slightly rounded beak is good for scooping tiny animals. A hooked beak is advantageous because it can catch and hold a wide variety of nourishment.



Large sea birds' bodies are ideal for flying. Since they must fly to survive, their bodies have been adapted to accommodate this need. Seabirds fly and then swoop into the water to catch fish to eat. They can eat the fish they catch while they are flying.

They also have to fly so they will be safe from danger such as predators. They cannot swim, and they cannot walk well.



The bodies of large seabirds are designed to do one thing very well, and that is to fly. Many large seabirds can stay aloft for a week or more.

Pretend you are a large seabird. Write a short story what you would do one day. Please use your imagination and complete sentences. Have fun and thank you, very much!

Birds of the Sea

Diving Seabirds

Birds that dive under the water have unusual adaptations to their bodies. Their legs are more behind them than under them. That is also one of the reasons sea birds don't walk so well. Diver birds also have wider webbed feet for speedier catching of their prey.

Below is information on some birds that dive.

Petrel: Petrels are great fliers, underwater! A flock of these petrels will dive straight into a huge wave and come right out on the other side. They are remarkably strong.

Cormorant: Cormorants flatten themselves out to move quickly. They put their wings flat up on the sides of their bodies and zoom through the sea.



Puffins: Puffins are excellent diving sea birds. Their wings move up and down so that they are actually flying under the water. Like petrels and penguins, the puffins' wings work like paddles to make them very strong swimmers.



Penguin: The best of the divers are the penguins. The shape of a penguin's body is ideal for moving quickly underwater. Penguins can only "fly" under the sea. Penguins live only in and around Antarctica.



Auk: Auks, which look quite a lot like penguins, are not related to them. Auks can fly, and they live in the Arctic.

Birds of the Sea

Diver seabirds have bones that are thicker than the other birds' bones. This helps to weigh them down so they aren't as buoyant. The advantage of this is that they can go deeper into the sea. This is one of the ways in which their bodies have adapted to the underwater pressure. Like humans, diving seabirds have to deal with the lack of oxygen under the water. Their heart rate slows down so that there is more oxygen available for their brain.

All sea birds' lives are dependent upon food for survival. If they aren't eating they are seeking out food. Food is their number one priority.

Seabirds' techniques can be very different when they dive for food.

There are five ways in which sea birds find food.

- Scooping
- Skimming
- Diving
- Plunging
- Scavenging



Some birds' diets are very different than others

The top four favorites are:

- Fish, all kinds of fish
- Squid
- Shellfish
- Plankton



Scooping and skimming are similar. The sea bird flies close to the surface of the water to scoop fish or plankton that may be just a bit under the water. Skimming is done much the same way except the food is on top. These methods require sharp eyes and excellent skills.

Birds of the Sea

Seabirds' techniques can be very different when they dive for food.

Brown Pelicans are plunge divers. They can spot their food from where they are soaring. High above, a brown pelican will prepare to dive. At the right moment it plunges down, straight into the water and captures its meal! Its huge pouch holds a “super-sized” amount of fish.

When the pelican's pouch expands it fills with up to two gallons of water. A “pirate” bird might use that moment to get the pelican to turn over its meal. This is one method of scavenging.



Gulls, who like shellfish such as clams, grab up their “catch” and drop it onto some rocks. Then they eat up the “meat.” Murres can dive deep right from the water's surface.

The greatest threat to seabirds comes from people. Sometimes the danger is greatest for birds we try to learn more about. People visit islands and other seashore areas where seabirds live. Without realizing it they often disturb the birds' colonies.



When people walk around the birds' colonies, the birds often fly off and leave their nests. This can be dangerous for their chicks, especially if gulls find them. Gulls are big scavengers and will eat the eggs and even the chicks. It is really sad because people don't know that visiting the birds scares birds away.

Birds of the Sea

Protecting Seabirds

About one hundred years ago many Short-tailed Albatrosses were killed. This was because their feathers could make soft mattresses that people really enjoyed sleeping on. Unfortunately this seabird is now endangered, which means it is very rare and may die out if we don't protect them.

Oil spills in the oceans are also endangering seabirds. The oil gets on the birds' feathers, and it weighs a lot more than the birds can manage. If the bird can't fly it can't eat. If it tries to clean the oil off itself by preening, the oil damages its internal organs. Fortunately there are some people who help take care of birds after oil spills. This has saved many of the birds.



There are some things you can do to protect seabirds. If you see things littering the beach, you can help by picking up items that do not belong on the beach. Plastic holders for some soft drinks and other canned and bottled liquids can choke birds. If you find them, make sure they are cut apart so they won't hurt any birds or other wildlife.

The very best way to enjoy watching seabirds is at a safe distance. Never climb on the cliffs where they may be nesting. Use safe viewing areas to watch them. During nesting times it is a good idea not to fly kites or run with dogs near where seabirds are. Being respectful and caring for birds of the sea is the best we can do to keep them safe and healthy.

What are some of the ways you can help to protect seabirds?

Birds of the Sea

Fill in the missing words. Write them on the blank lines.
You can check the preceding pages for your answers.

1. A bird that _____ most of its time at the _____ is called a sea bird.
2. _____ is very important for birds of the sea.
3. Albatrosses can utilize the _____ and its currents quite _____ .
4. Large sea birds' bodies are _____ for flying.
5. There are _____ ways in which sea birds find food.
6. Shellfish are things like clams, lobsters, shrimp, mussels and oysters that live inside a protective _____ .
7. The very best way to enjoy watching sea birds is at a _____ .



Birds of the Sea

WORD UNSCRAMBLE

Unscramble each word and print the word on the line.



llsgeua

ncaplei

dlegi

ttropce

ofod

npaolknt

Birds of the Sea



Spelling

Print the correct spelling word on the line.

1. oshin _____
ocean _____
ocane _____

2. adaptashi _____
adaptshio _____
adaptation _____

3. albatross _____
ablatross _____
albutross _____

4. penquin _____
penkwin _____
penguin _____

5. dyving _____
diving _____
divein _____

6. pelagic _____
pilagik _____
pelachic _____

Birds of the Sea

WORD FIND

Find and circle these words.
They run down, across, and diagonally.



saltwater
seacoast
sandpiper

penguin
pelican
plover

heron
ocean
sand

egret
tern
gull

t c m l a r s a l t w a t e r
g p u p e l i c a n p m l w a
d e o p o n m v s q u c i g n
n n t p l o v e r y n r g j t
i g z h a r m l h s e o h j s
e u i s e x b k e p g b t d a
g i w c a e a n a r g u w r n
r n i t y n t c d o s k l j d
e l n a v e d j o c i f q l p
t r h e r o n j v e e k t p i
d b s n f u n t s a n s e c p
p r i v s w b x b n n m r g e
s e a c o a s t m m a l n y r

Birds of the Sea

Answers

Page 9 - spends, sea, Adaptation, wind, effectively, ideal, five, shells, distance

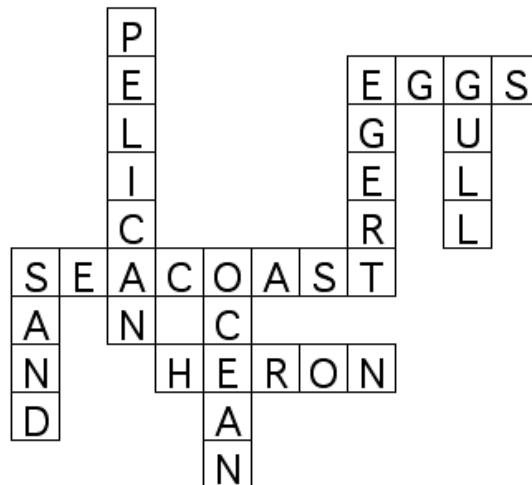
Page 10 - ocean, adaptation, albatross, penguin, diving, pelagic

Page 11 - seagull, pelican, glide, protect, food, plankton

Page 12 -

t c m l a r s a l t w a t e r
g p u p e l i c a n p m l w a
d e o p o n m v s q u c i g n
n n t p l o v e r y n r g j t
i g z h a r m l h s e o h j s
e u i s e x b k e p g b t d a
g i w c a e a n a r g u w r n
r n i t y n t c d o s k l j d
e l n a v e d j o c i f q l p
t r h e r o n j v e e k t p i
d b s n f u n t s a n s e c p
p r i v s w b x b n n m r g e
s e a c o a s t m m a l n y r

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