Name: _____

Atlantic Puffins

By Guy Belleranti

Flying over my head are plump seabirds with brightly colored beaks and feet. Each bird's pigeon-sized body looks a little like a football with wings. The wings are too small for gliding. However, by flapping them up to 400 times per minute, the birds stay in the air. These birds are Atlantic puffins.

Puffins are excellent swimmers and divers. Using their wings to push along and webbed feet to steer, they dive 50 to 200 feet to find small fish and shrimp-like crustaceans. Puffins keep their eyes open while swimming. A puffin's eyes are protected by clear inner eyelids called nictitating membranes.

How do puffins get fresh water to drink in salty seas? Well, they have special salt glands above their eyes. These glands remove the salt from the water in their bloodstream. The salt drains out in a liquid through a puffin's nostrils and down grooves in its bills. The bird shakes its head, and the salt is gone.

In spring, Atlantic puffins come together in colonies on the islands and coastlands of the northeastern U.S. and Canada. Colony sizes range from a few hundred to hundreds of thousands. The feet and beaks of both males and females change from a dull winter gray to a bright orange. The color and the size of beaks may help birds decide on a mate.

About the Author

Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

Atlantic Puffins

By Guy Belleranti

1. Based on the information in the article, where are you most likely to see an Atlantic puffin?

    a. Coast of Maine
    b. Coast of Florida
    c. Coast of British Columbia
    d. Coast of Southern California

2. What is an Atlantic puffin's extra eye covering called, and what does it do?

_____

_____

4. What is a group of Atlantic puffins called?

    a. pack   **b.** flock
    c. colony   **d.** rookery

5. Where do Atlantic puffins dig burrows for their young, and why?

_____

_____

Atlantic Puffins

By Guy Belleranti

Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

_____ **1.** burrow

a. sitting on eggs in order to keep them warm until they hatch

_____ **2.** preen

b. organs in an animal's body that secrete chemical substances

Preview

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_____ **6.** glands

f. a grooming habit of a bird in which it cleans its feathers with its beak

_____ **7.** nostrils

g. thin structures that act as boundaries in an organism

_____ **8.** grooves

h. a short gray or white bird that makes cooing sounds and eats seeds and fruit

_____ **9.** waxy

i. long, narrow indentations

_____ **10.** membranes

j. a mostly aquatic group of animals that includes shrimp, lobsters, and crabs
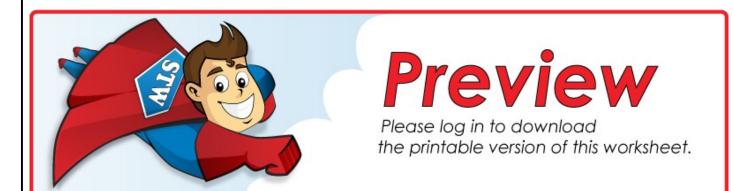
Name: _____

Atlantic Puffins

By Guy Belleranti

In the article, "Atlantic Puffins," you learned that puffins have physical adaptations that make them well-suited for life at sea.

Choose another bird species that is well-suited for spending a lot of time at sea. Describe three physical adaptations that help this bird species thrive in or around the ocean. If you need to use the Internet for your research, be sure to check with an adult first, and credit the website you used on the bottom of the page.

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Website I Used: _____

Atlantic Puffins

By Guy Belleranti

1. Based on the information in the article, where are you most likely to see an Atlantic puffin? **a**

    a. Coast of Maine
    b. Coast of Florida
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Atlantic Puffins

By Guy Belleranti

Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.

c   **1.** burrow

a. sitting on eggs in order to keep them warm until they hatch

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includes shrimp, lobsters, and crabs

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