

Marvels of Creation

Breathtaking Birds



BUDDY & KAY DAVIS

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Arctic Tern

The arctic tern inhabits the coastal waters, lakes, and marshlands of the northern parts of Europe, Asia, and North America. It is a medium-gray color with a black cap and nape. It is pale underneath and has a bright red bill. The arctic tern has short legs and a long, forked tail.

What is truly amazing about the arctic tern is its migratory route. Every year it travels up to 24,000 miles (38,400 km) to winter at the Antarctic Ocean and then return to its nesting grounds.

This bird nests in colonies between May and July near the water on a sandy patch of ground. They often pick deserted islands for their nesting sites. The female lays two eggs, which are incubated by both parents for about 20 to 22 days. The hatchlings can swim within two days and can fly in about 20 days. Both parents continue feeding them even after they have left the nest.

At the end of the summer, the young tern knows what direction, how far, and at what time he needs to start the migratory trip. God has placed in the arctic tern a very wonderful guidance system that leaves man marveling.

The arctic tern feeds mainly on fish. It flies low over the water with its head down looking for prey. When it locates a fish, it plucks it out of the



water or half-dives after it. It can swim, but not for long periods at a time. It also eats mollusks and insects.

Arctic Tern

CHARADRIIFORMES • LARIDAE • STERNA PARADISAEA

WEIGHT: 4-1/4 ounces (119 grams)

LENGTH: 14-1/2 inches (36 cm)

LIFE SPAN: Oldest known 3-4 years

SPECIAL DESIGN FEATURE: The arctic tern was created with exceptional migratory instincts taking it on a journey from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back every year.

DID YOU KNOW? The migratory route of the arctic tern is approximately 24,000 miles (38,400 km) round trip every year and it probably sees more daylight in its lifetime than any other animal.



Atlantic Puffin

The puffin, also known as the sea parrot, is a popular and easily recognized sea bird. This species makes its home in the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. It rarely comes to shore except when it is time to lay its eggs.

The puffin has a very colorful large beak during the breeding season. The bill has red, yellow, and blue stripes with yellow skin in the corner of the mouth. After the breeding season, the colors are shed leaving the bill smaller and gray in color. The feathers of the puffin are black on the upper part of the body and white underneath with the black continuing under the neck like a collar. The puffin has a small colored patch above and below its eyes as well. The puffin has an oil gland located near its tail. It applies this oil to its feathers to keep them waterproof.

Its wings enable the puffin to swim at great depths hunting for food. The inside of the beak has backward-pointing spikes to help hold its food. The favorite food of the puffin is the sand eel, but it also catches small fish, mollusks, and other plankton animals.

Puffins usually pair for life although they don't stay together all of the time. They congregate in large colonies during the breeding season, which lasts from March through April. When it's time to build a nest, both the male and female go on shore and start digging burrows or cleaning out old ones. They even use abandoned rabbit burrows. A single egg

is laid at the end of a six-foot long (1.8 m) tunnel and is incubated by both parents. The egg will hatch in 40 to 43 days. Both parents will feed the new hatchling until it is six weeks old. The chick will then leave the burrow and find its way to the sea at night to lessen the danger of being eaten by predators. Although it cannot fly at this time, it is a good swimmer and will dive if a threat of danger appears. The young chick will return to the colony the following year but will not breed until it is 4 to 5 years old.

The predators of the puffin include all the large sea birds such as gulls. At one time, man hunted the puffin for food and used its feathers for decoration.

Atlantic Puffin

CHARADRIIFORMES • ALCIDAE
FRATERCULA ARCTICA

WEIGHT: 12–17 ounces (490.5 gr)

LENGTH: 12 inches (30 cm)

SPECIAL DESIGN FEATURE: The puffin has backward pointing spikes inside the beak to help hold its food.

DID YOU KNOW? Puffins live in the cold arctic waters and they rarely come on land except to lay their eggs.