

Learn about: Puffin

As Gaeilge: *Puifín* Scientific name: *Fratercula arctica*



Green-Schools



GREEN-SCHOOLS
STAY HOME

Did you know that Ireland's marine territory is over eight times as big as our land? The Atlantic Ocean, Irish Sea, our beaches, cliffs and islands are home to a huge range of marine wildlife. Today we learn about one of our favourite seabirds – the Puffin!

What is it?

The puffin is a small black and white seabird, that spends most of its life at sea, but comes to breed on rocky cliffs and islands. It is easy to spot because of its big red and blue beak, for which it is sometimes known as the “sea parrot” or “Clown of the sea”!



How big is it?

Small! Adults are approximately 20-25 cm in length, with a wingspan (length from wing-tip to wing-tip) of about 50cm.

Where does it live?

Puffins are mostly found along Ireland's west coast, as well as on the Saltee Islands off Wexford, and on Lambay Island and Ireland's Eye in Co. Dublin. During the breeding season, puffins will use their beaks and feet to dig a nesting burrow in the earth, where the female will lay a single egg. Both parents take turns to sit on the egg



for about 5-6 weeks until it hatches. Breeding pairs usually stay together year after year, with both the male and female looking after the chick, which is called a “puffling”!

What does it eat?

Puffins usually feed on small fish such as herring, and sand-eels. They can dive to a depth of 60m (200 feet) and swim by using their wings to push themselves through the water, while using their feet to steer!



Fun fact:
Puffins can
flap their
wings 400
times a
minute!

Threats:

The main threats to puffins are declining fish populations, marine plastic pollution and predators such as rats.

Links:

Click the link below to see a short video clip of puffins by the RSPB: <https://player.vimeo.com/Video/80364498>

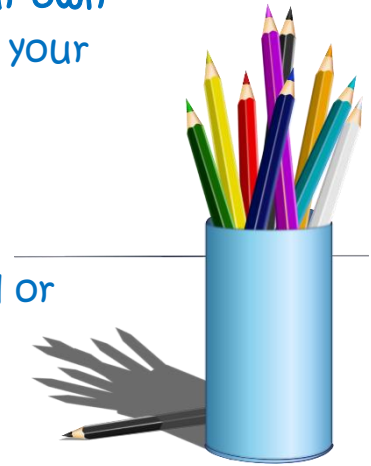
Find out more facts about puffins at Nat Geo Kids:

<https://www.natgeokids.com/za/discover/animals/birds/puffin-facts/>

Your Turn!

Get some blank paper and colours and draw your own puffin. Here are some things to think about for your drawing:

- Remember what colours the puffin is...
- Remember its round, colourful beak
- What's around the puffin? Draw the island or cliff where it lives, what else might you see there?



Quick Quiz:

- Name one thing a puffin eats.
- Where do puffins make their nests?
- How many times can a puffin flap its wings in a minute?
- What is a baby puffin called?
- Name one place in Ireland that you might see a puffin.

If you're stuck for an answer, read back over the fact sheet!

