



PUFFIN FACTS!

We're off on a sky-high adventure with our feathered friends, puffins!



1. Nicknamed “sea parrots” and “clowns of the sea” – Atlantic puffins have black & white feathers with a large parrot-like beak. They are seabirds measuring around 10 inches long.
2. Puffins spend most of their lives out at sea, resting on the waves when not swimming. Their range spans the eastern coast of Canada & the United States to the western coast of Europe.
3. A puffin's beak (or bill) changes color during the year. In winter, the beak has a dull grey color, but in spring it blooms with an outrageous orange! It's thought that the bright color helps puffins find mates. They show affection by knocking beaks together
4. Puffins are carnivores. They eat small fish such as herring, hake (cod) & sand eels.
5. Puffins are fabulous flyers. They flap their wings up to 400 times in a minute and can speed through the air at up to 55 miles an hour.
6. Puffins are super swimmers, too! Using their webbed feet as a rudder, puffins can dive down almost 200 feet under water in search of their favorite fish.
7. In spring and summer, thousands of puffins gather in colonies on the coasts & islands of the North Atlantic Ocean (including Ireland) to breed. They usually pair up with the same partner as previous years – some may have been together for 20 years.
8. When starting a puffin family, puffins dig out a burrow using their sharp claws and beak, usually in a grassy bank or rocky crevice. At the back of their burrow home, they build a nest lined with feathers and grass where the female lays her single egg. Both parents take turn incubating the egg for the next 36-45 days before the baby “puffling” hatches.
9. Puffins live for around 20 years. Their main predators are hungry gulls, which can snatch puffins mid-flight. Climate change is also impacting puffin survival.
10. Although puffins are not classed as an endangered species, populations in some places are in decline. The main threats are overfishing, which can lead to a shortage of food for puffins, and pollution – particularly oil spills. Not only does the oil make these beautiful birds sick, it destroys their waterproof feathers, essential for their survival.

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