

Snow Petrels

by Margaret Maugenest

Winter in Antarctica

Antarctica is a chilly place at the South Pole. It is the coldest place on Earth. Ice covers the ground all year.

Winter in Antarctica begins in June. The days are very short. There is no light in the sky. It is dark all of the time. Few animals live in Antarctica. There is little food. Survival is very hard.

READ & RESPOND

Central Idea

Look at the title of the text. What do you think this text will be about?

Warming Up

Spring comes in September. The days get longer. The sun shines into the sea. The sea becomes rich with small plants.

More animals come. Little animals called krill swim by. They eat the plants. Bigger fish come. They eat the plants and the krill.

Other animals come. There is plenty of food. Seals, whales, and birds hunt smaller animals. They eat krill and fish.



Sea plants



Small fish

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READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

How are the days in spring different from the days in winter?

Summer Days

Summer begins in December. Whales migrate to the Antarctic waters. They feed on the krill.

Now the sea is full of life. Flying birds come. They make nests on the shore.

Some of these birds are petrels. Petrels are like sea gulls. Their strong wings let them fly far from land. Their thick coats keep them warm. Most birds can't smell. Petrels can. They sniff out a meal.



READ & RESPOND

Central Idea

Think about the title. What details on this page link back to the central idea?



Robin



Snow petrel

Snow Petrel Facts

Snow petrels are much smaller than other petrels. They are about the size of robins. Their feathers are white. They blend in with the snowy landscape. Only their bills, eyes, and feet are dark. When they fly, they flutter like bats.

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Central Idea

How does the heading on this page help you know the central idea?

Habits of Snow Petrels

Snow petrels are shy. If bothered, they may just fly away. If something gets too close, they have a trick. They spit out a liquid that smells very bad!

These birds fly low over the sea to find food. When they see their dinner, they dive into the water to catch it. Some birds roll in dust to clean their feathers. Snow petrels roll in the snow. That is how they clean up after they hunt.

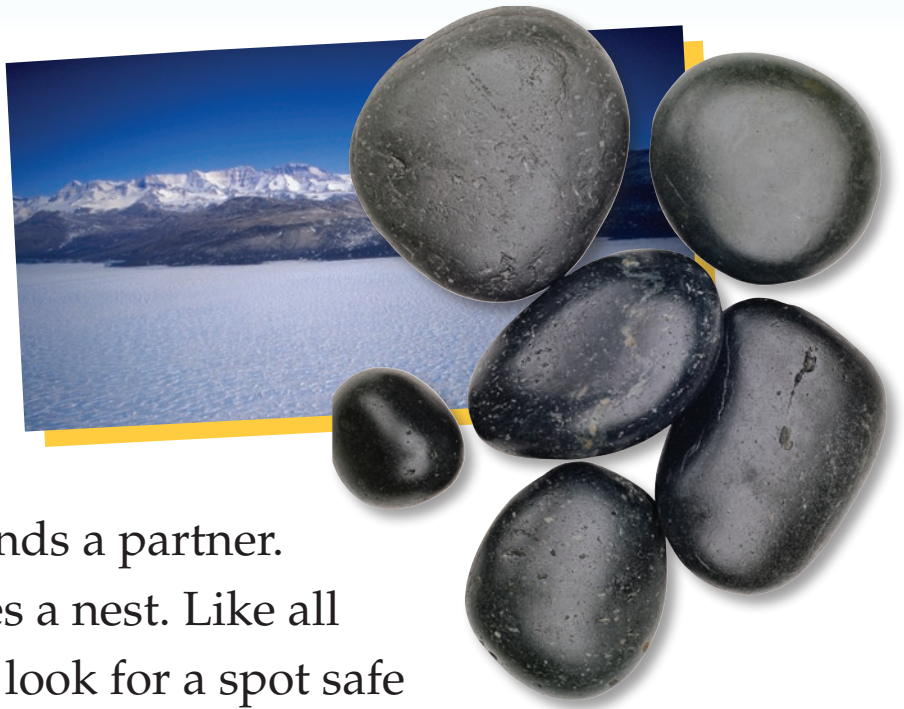


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READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

Think about how some birds clean their feathers. What is different about how snow petrels do it?



Petrel Families

A snow petrel finds a partner. Then the pair makes a nest. Like all birds, snow petrels look for a spot safe from other animals. Petrels make their nests in holes on rocky cliffs.

Most birds make their nests with leaves and grass. It's hard to find leaves or grass in Antarctica. Snow petrels line their nests with small pebbles.

The female lays one egg. Six weeks later, the chick hatches. In seven more weeks, it will fly away. It may live up to twenty years.

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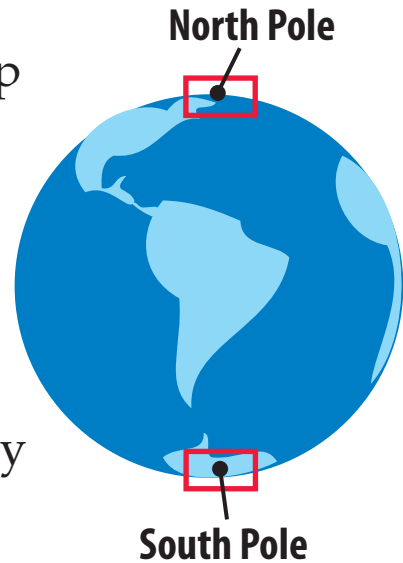
READ & RESPOND

Text Structure

How is a snow petrel nest different from the nests of most birds?

The North Pole (Arctic) and South Pole (Antarctic)

- In this diagram, the North Pole is at the top of Earth. The South Pole is at the bottom.
- The North Pole and the South Pole stay dark during the winter. They stay light during the summer.
- The North Pole and the South Pole are very cold places.



When Different Seasons Begin in the North and South Poles

	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
North Pole	December	March	June	September
South Pole	June	September	December	March

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READ & RESPOND

Text Structure and Central Idea

How does the author organize the text? How does it help you understand the central idea?



Reread and Respond

1 How is life in Antarctica different in winter than in spring and summer?

Hint

For clues, see pages 50, 51, and 52.

2 Birds, seals, and whales come to Antarctica in the summer. Why don't they live there in the winter?

Hint

For clues, see pages 50 and 56.

3 How is the snow petrel different from other birds?

Hint

For clues, see pages 52, 53, 54, and 55.