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The Arctic Tern's Vocab Migration



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Did you know that some birds fly far away to avoid the cold of winter? This is called migration, and where and when animals do it depends quite a lot on which animal you're talking about and even where they live. Everything from meadowlarks to some bald eagles do it. Our journey today follows a family of arctic terns, the birds who migrate the farthest of all.

What does "migration" mean?

What is the state bird of Kansas?

This box will hold the answer to the lower question on the previous page! Give your best guess and then check your work!

Meet the Family

Dad



Gary

Adrian

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Let's meet the family we'll be following. Our heroes are twin chicks Gary and Adrian. They live with their dad high up north in the cold, but not too frigid lands of the arctic circle. The family has lived together like this for around 4 months now and things have been going well... until...

What does "frigid" mean?

How many bird species migrate?

Western Meadowlark

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“We’re gonna leave in the morning. Eat all that you can, because it’s gonna be a long trip. The place is very remote.” Dad had never said anything like this before, and the twins were a bit spooked, so they just had to ask, “Where are we going?” “I’ll tell you on the way,” was the only reply they got, so they just got to work eating all the little fish they could.

A remote is a device you use to control another machine. This remote is not used in the sentence. What does the adjective “remote” mean in this sentence?

What bird has the largest wingspan?

4,000 species migrate

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After the whole day of eating, the morning came. The twins asked Dad again, where the heck they were going?! “We’re going way down south, and following the sun. Beyond that, I don’t know exactly.” This only confused the chicks even more, but they didn’t have time to ask.

What does “exactly” mean?

Why do you think Arctic Terns go so far?

The wandering albatross has the longest wingspan

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From a tall, colossal mountain the terns leap off and fly! The chicks hadn't been flying all that long, so they were still a bit shaky, but with a little help from Dad the family were already soaring over the north sea.

What does "colossal" mean?

What is the tallest mountain in the world?

You'll learn why later on!

Now that they had the chance, the twins' first question was why the heck were they following the sun of all things? Dad glanced up to the sun high above, "Winter is coming to the north, so we follow the sun to where it's summer again. It's across many oceans, but we can make it." The twins kind of understood that. Somewhat.

What does "somewhat" mean?

How many oceans are there in the world?

Mt Everest

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But now that they knew why they were flying so far, the twins hadn't quite figured out how they were going to make it. Their wise dad again had an answer, "We're saving our energy but riding the wind to glide and soar without flapping, and we stuffed ourselves to have as much energy as possible."

What does "wise" mean?

How far can albatross fly in a single food trip?

4 or 5 depending on who you ask

“But how are we gonna sleep?!” Gary cried. Dad smiled, “We’ll stop sometimes, but for the time between, I’ll show you a little trick. See, if you use the wind to glide, you can doze off a little. Just don’t go too deep into your dreams.”

What does “doze off” mean?

How do dolphins sleep?

More than 10,000 miles

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The kids understood how they'd sleep now, but they still had no clue how they were going to eat. If they were flying so much, finding food would be really difficult. Dad had an answer for that too, "We're above the water! We'll just swoop down and..."

What does "difficult" mean?

What's your favorite kind of bird?

They let half their brains sleep at a time... like migrating birds!

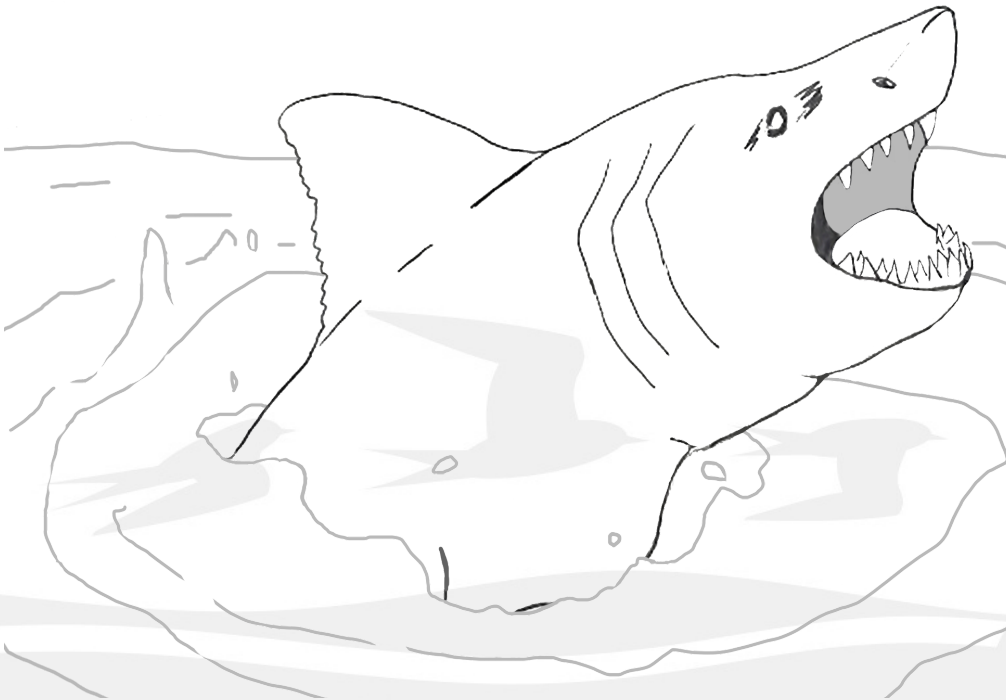
Dad swung down to show how they'd catch fish while flying when a shark leaped from the water! The twins were terrified! The shark's gnashing teeth, hungry for birds flew straight up at Dad...

What do you think will happen next?!

What is the biggest shark in the world?

What was it?

Shark!



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But he just managed to pull up in time! He's safe! "That was a close one! But I managed to grab some food. That's how you get fish while we're moving, though hopefully there won't be one of those when you do it. But I think it's about time for you guys to eat up and doze off for a while. You'll need the rest, for a while the miles will feel numerous and never ending as we fly for so long. I'll keep watch."

What does "numerous" mean?

What is the biggest bird in the world? The smallest?

Whale Shark

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And now that the kids knew what to do, the journey went smoothly. For months and months, the family flew. They passed over islands and titanic continents and lands unknown. For a while things got really warm, but as the trip came to a close, things were just as cold as when they started; just like home. “Alright kids, we made it.”

What does “titanic” mean?

How many miles do Arctic Terns migrate?

Ostrich and Bee Hummingbird

The twins were confused again. “Hold on, if things are just as cold down here, why did we leave home?” Dad smiled, “We like the cold, but way back north it’s now much too frigid and dark. Down here, we get the temperature we like and all the sunlight we could ever want.”

How many miles do Arctic Terns migrate?

How large is Antarctica?

Up to 50,000 miles per year

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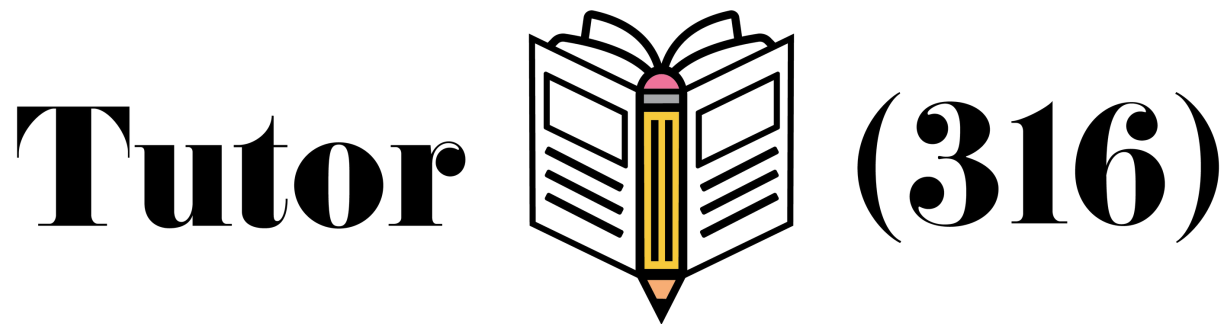
With that, this migration was over. But the journey of the twins' lives was just beginning, and just like thousands of terns across the world, they'd make this trip many many times. But that is a story for another day.

Did you learn any new words?

Fun fact! Arctic Terns get the most time in the sunlight out of any animal!

25,000 miles each way

5,500,000 square miles



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