

Arctic Tern – Record-Breaking Flier

Camilla de la Bédoyère

Where	Between the Arctic and Antarctic	
When	July to November, April to June	
Why	For food	
How	Flying	

Arctic terns regularly migrate between the Arctic, near the North Pole, and Antarctica, near the South Pole. If they travelled in a straight line, the route would be 15,000 km. However, these globe-trotters fly in a figure-of-eight to make the most of prevailing winds and save energy.

THIS IS THE LONGEST
REGULAR MIGRATION
OF ANY BIRD.

Each bird’s round trip actually covers an incredible 70,000 km.

Food

Arctic terns feed at sea by skimming fish from near the water’s surface, or plunging head-first into the water to grab crustaceans in their beaks.

When they reach the Antarctic, the terns feed on vast amounts of food. There are huge swarms of Antarctic krill (small, shrimp-like crustaceans) in the Weddell Sea in the southern summer, which draw many animals to the region.

Two summers

Arctic terns are almost unique among animals because they experience both the Arctic summer and the Antarctic summer. Chicks hatch in the Arctic breeding grounds and grow fast so that they are ready to begin the long flight to the Antarctic. When the terns head south they cover about 330 km a day, but they can travel up to 670 km every day on the return flight!

ARCTIC TERNS
SPEND MORE
HOURS IN THE
SUNLIGHT THAN
ANY OTHER BIRD.

Arctic tern timeline

July–September	November–March	April–June
The birds leave their breeding sites in Greenland, near the North Pole. At the end of August, they spend a month at a stop-over point in the middle of the North Atlantic to feed. In the middle of September the birds head south.	In November, the birds reach the Weddell Sea in the Antarctic.	They leave the Antarctic and head back to the Arctic, flying in a massive ‘S’ shape to follow the winds. Some birds take a break at the stop-over point in the North Atlantic. In June, the birds reach Greenland to rest and breed.

Name:	Class:	Date:
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1 What is the reason the terns migrate?

2 Look at the paragraph beginning “*Arctic terns regularly migrate ...*”.

Find and copy a phrase that means *travellers*.

3 What do terns eat? Find **two** things.

4 Look at the paragraph beginning “*Arctic terns regularly migrate ...*”.

Which of the following options is the word “*prevailing*” closest in meaning to? Tick **one**.

most basic ☐

most common ☐

most helpful ☐

most successful ☐

5 The sub-title of this text is “**Record-Breaking Flier**”. Why is this appropriate?

Give **two** reasons.

6 It is 15,000 km from the North Pole to the South Pole, yet the terns fly nearly 70,000 km.

Find **two** pieces of evidence to explain why this is. You do not have to use direct quotations from the text.

7 Why does it take the terns longer to fly south than it does for them to fly north?

Give **two** reasons.

8 Why do Arctic terns spend more hours in the sunlight than any other bird?

9 Why do you think the author includes a timeline? Tick **one**.

to prove that Arctic terns spend more time in the sunlight than any other bird ☐

to help the reader understand where the birds’ journey begins and ends ☐

so the reader knows how the birds spend each month ☐

to explain why the birds fly back to the Arctic in an ‘S’ shape ☐

2b

☐

1 mark

2a

☐

1 mark

2b

☐

1 mark

2a

☐

1 mark

2c

☐

1 mark

2b

☐

2 marks

2d

☐

2 marks

2b

☐

1 mark

2f

☐

1 mark