

## You Go, Gulls!



photos courtesy US Fish & Wildlife Service

### Mini Fact:

The mew gull has a greenish-yellow bill, a gray back and wings, and a white head. It lives around coastal shorelines, marshy grasslands and interior lakes.

When we go to the beach or visit a harbor, we often see many “sea” gulls. There are about 45 different kinds of gulls. There are herring gulls, California gulls and ring-billed gulls, to name a few.

Even though gulls have webbed feet and can swim well, they rarely go far out to sea. Many might follow boats in hopes of getting food, but most of these birds don't fly out very far.

Gulls can also be found inland near rivers and lakes. The number of gulls is growing because many have discovered that garbage dumps are good sources of food!

### Feeding

Gulls usually follow the coastal shores in search of food. Often they pick up an oyster or clam, fly up high, and drop the shell to the ground to smash it open.

Gulls catch much of their own food, such as fish, clams and worms. Larger gulls will eat animals such as rats and mice. Often, gulls eat the eggs and young of other birds, such as terns. You might have seen gulls eating picnic scraps or pieces of bread people have tossed into the air.

Many gulls follow farmers as they plow the fields. Gulls eat the worms, insects and mice the plows bring up. They will eat wheat and grain.

They also find food by scavenging, or eating dead fish and scraps. This ability to scavenge is why they have adjusted so well to dumps and waste sites.

Gulls help humans and the environment by cleaning up dead animals and garbage.

Gulls can drink salt water as well as fresh. They have special glands in their heads to get rid of the extra salt.

### Nesting

Most gulls build their nests on the ground near water. Some build nests on cliffs or in trees. A few even build on rooftops and chimney stacks.

Both parents help hatch the eggs and feed the chicks. Females usually lay two or three eggs once a year.

After the breeding season, each mate goes its own way until it is again ready to breed. Gulls often meet their same mates and breed at the same nesting spot every year.

Gulls do not have nests when they are not breeding, but roost near food sources on offshore islands, sandbars or sheltered waters.



Laughing gulls



Gull nest

### Gull relatives

Terns are close relatives of gulls. Terns are generally smaller and slimmer than gulls.

Terns fly with their bills and heads pointed down. Gulls fly with their bills pointed forward.



Common tern

Terns are more graceful than gulls. They are called “sea swallows.” Terns eat only the fish they catch. They are not the scavengers that gulls are.

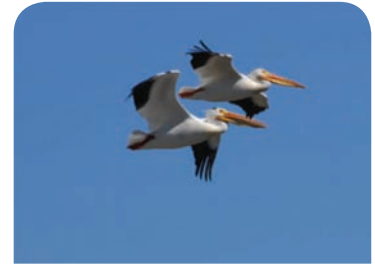
Pelicans are distant cousins of gulls. They have long bills and sagging throats.

They are excellent fliers. Some fly hundreds of miles a day in search of food.

Pelicans eat mostly fish. They use their throat pouches as nets. They can scoop up as much as two gallons of water.

Pelicans like to be together. They fly, roost, feed and breed in groups.

Pelicans can live long lives of up to 25 years. One pelican in a zoo lived to be 54 years old!



American white pelicans

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [bit.ly/MPgulls](http://bit.ly/MPgulls)
- [bit.ly/MPgulls2](http://bit.ly/MPgulls2)

### At the library:

- “Seagull” by Isabel Thomas

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## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of gulls are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BEACH, BIRD, COASTAL, DUMP, FEET, FIELDS, FLY, FOOD, GARBAGE, GLAND, GRAIN, GROUND, GULL, HARBOR, HATCH, INLAND, INSECTS, MATE, NEST, PELICAN, SHORELINE, SWIM, TERN, WORMS.

G L S D Q W P I C G L A N D M  
T U N D N A L N I S M F O B F  
Q T L J Q U N R E T E L H E N  
E N I L E R O H S C G Y A A I  
W O R M S E R R N E A F R C A  
U T P M U D T J G S B E B H R  
D S I Y H C T A H N R E O P G  
R E F I E L D S M I A T R K N  
I N L A T S A O C F G F O O D  
B S W I M F C P E L I C A N S



## Cook's Corner

### Fresh Fruit Pie

#### You'll need:

- 1/2 cup whipping cream
- 6 ounces cream cheese, softened
- juice of one lemon
- 1/3 cup sugar

- 1 ready-made graham cracker pie crust
- 2 cups sliced strawberries
- 1 cup fresh peaches



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

1. Combine whipping cream, cream cheese, lemon juice and sugar. Beat with an electric mixer until smooth. Spread mixture in the pie crust.
2. Place in the refrigerator for 2 hours until set.
3. Remove from the refrigerator and arrange fruit on top of cream cheese mixture.
4. Place back in the refrigerator overnight. Slice and serve the next day. Makes 8 servings.

## 7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. sunshine, wind and rain (7) \_\_\_\_\_
2. what soda comes in (6) \_\_\_\_\_
3. dangerous animal (5) \_\_\_\_\_
4. change in position (8) \_\_\_\_\_
5. use your ears (6) \_\_\_\_\_
6. last (5) \_\_\_\_\_
7. say the same thing (5) \_\_\_\_\_

MO	TEN	AL	BOT
BEA	ENT	TH	AG
TLE	REE	ST	VEM
FIN	WEA	LIS	ER

Answers: weather, bottle, beast, movement, listen, final, agree.

## Mini Jokes



**Gilbert:** What do you call a seagull when it flies over a bay?  
**Greta:** A bagel!

## Eco Note



Waste and litter are a big problem in many cities. City governments can help by providing recycling facilities and encouraging people to recycle. In some city districts in developing countries, waste is not collected. But materials such as cardboard and metal are valuable, so a lot of waste is recycled. Remember, it takes the same amount of energy to recycle 20 cans as it does to produce one new one.

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## For later:

Look in your newspaper for items about birds and bird-watching.

**Teachers:** For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bit.ly/MPstandards](http://bit.ly/MPstandards). And follow The Mini Page on Facebook!



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