

Name _____

Long-Distance Travelers

Arctic terns migrate farther than any other animal on the planet. They travel from their native habitat in the Arctic to Antarctica and back. During the migration season, terns nest in open tundra, rocky beaches, and boreal forests along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts. They have been observed migrating south along the coast of South America and as far south as New Zealand and Australia. They winter in the northernmost part of Antarctica. Arctic terns may migrate as far as 25,000 miles round trip every year!

How did researchers track such long-distance migratory routes? They attached locaters to terns in Greenland and discovered the birds flew south along the coast of Africa in the fall, spent winter on the north coast of Antarctica, and then returned to their Arctic habitat in the spring. Given a life span of about thirty years, this adds up to over one million miles traveled in

a tern's lifetime. That's the equivalent of three trips to the moon and back!

Researchers find it difficult to observe and study Arctic terns due to their remote habitats. Scientists have learned a few things, though. Terns hover in mid-air before plunging into the water to catch fish. Occasionally, they may steal fish from other birds in mid-flight.

Along with many other species, Arctic terns will be affected by possible global warming. They winter on pack ice in the Antarctic and rely on Arctic ecosystems for breeding, habitat, and feeding. During the winter, they molt and lose most of their feathers. If feathers are lost faster than they can be replaced, the birds are rendered flightless for a time. Perhaps this is nature's way of giving them a rest before they make the long trek back north for the summer breeding season.

Text Questions

- What is the main idea of the text?
 - how global warming will affect Arctic terns
 - the migratory routes and patterns of Arctic terns
 - why scientists study Arctic terns
 - to compare Arctic terns to other birds
- Which title would be a good alternative for this text?
 - "Breeding Habits of Arctic Terns"
 - "All About Arctic Terns"
 - "The Longest Flight"
 - "Fishers of the Arctic"
- What does the word *remote* mean as it is used in the text?
 - distant
 - wireless
 - temperate
 - tropical
- Which statement from the text best describes the migratory route of the Arctic tern?
 - They travel from their native habitat in the Arctic to Antarctica and back.
 - This adds up to over one million miles traveled in a tern's lifetime.
 - The birds flew south along the coast of Africa in the fall.
 - Arctic terns will be affected by possible global warming.
- How can learning about the migration routes of Arctic terns benefit people?
