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Tundra Swan Fun Facts

Tundra swans are birds. Birds are the only animals that have feathers. Like mammals, they breathe air and are warm-blooded. Birds hatch from eggs.

They are also called Whistling Swans because their wings “whistle” as they fly. They have a high-pitched call that can be heard at great distances.

Adult tundra swans are between 3 and 4 feet with a wingspan of 7 feet. Adult tundra swans weigh between 13 and 20 pounds (males are heavier). *How tall are you and how much do you weigh?*



When angry or scared, a tundra swan will hiss and raise its wings. With the wings spread open, the swan looks very big and that helps to scare off other animals. The wings have a hard bony spur on the elbow of the wing, especially large on an adult male that could hurt other animals.



Their webbed feet help them swim.



Tundra Swan Life Cycle Sequencing Activity

See if you can put the swans' life-cycle events in order to spell the scrambled word.

Cygnets stay with their families about a year and get adult plumage at about 15 months. They will mate and start their own family when they are four or five years old.

The female lays three to five cream colored eggs that are about five inches long in each nest.

The babies, called cygnets, have gray, down feathers and pink on their beaks that gradually turns black. They leave the nest and can swim within 24 hours of hatching.

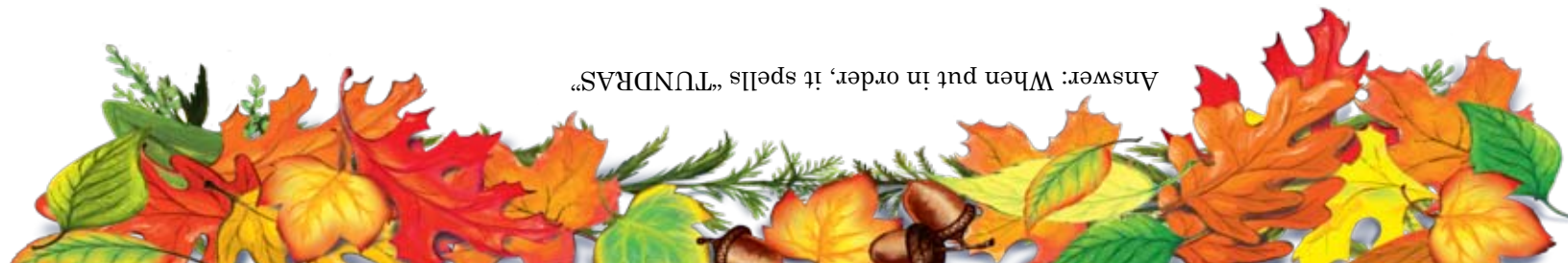
The female incubates the eggs while the male stands guard. The parent birds can't protect eggs from large predators (wolves, polar bears, or humans) so they will often fly away from the nest making it harder for the nest to be found.

Eggs hatch after 31 or 32 days—usually in late June.

The young cygnets eat plants, worms and other invertebrates to gain strength. As they get older, they tend to eat more plants and seeds, like their parents.

The male and female work together to build a large, open bowl-like nest in tundra ridges close to a pond or lake. They use grass and moss to build a nest that is about one to two feet across and about 12 to 18 inches deep.

Answer: When put in order, it spells "TUNDRAS"



Migration Fun Facts

Migration is the survival movement of animals for breeding or to follow food or water during changing seasons.

Migrating animals may travel short distances (up and down mountains) or very long distances, like the tundra swans.

Migrating animals will follow the same route year after year. Because of that, scientists can predict when and where you can go to see migrating animals.

Many animals migrate in the fall to avoid cold winter weather and then back again in the spring. Other animals only migrate a few times in their lives, like a female sea turtle returning to the area she was born to lay her eggs, or salmon swimming upstream to lay their eggs.



Swans migrate south from the breeding grounds in September or October and will travel in family groups or small flocks.

Tundra swans will stop at lakes and ponds in the northern US and Great Lake areas to rest and eat. Then they will take off again and fly over 1,000 miles without stopping.



Tundra swans start to arrive in their wintering grounds at coastal estuaries, lakes, and ponds in mid-November. Then they turn around and migrate back to the tundra from their wintering grounds in mid-March.

During the summer, tundra swans nest in the northern tundra above the Arctic circle. Each pair claims their territory and guards it carefully. They'll return to the same area year after year.



Animal Adaptation Matching Activity

All animals have physical or behavioral adaptations that help them survive in their environment and with seasonal changes in that environment. Physical adaptations are parts of their bodies that help them move, make their homes, and get their food. Some animals have learned behavior adaptations to help them survive: like migration or hibernation. See if you can match the animal adaptations that are listed below to the right animal. *Can you tell which adaptations are physical or behavioral?*

1. _____

- These birds fly thousands of miles to warmer weather.
- Like many birds, they have huge wings to help them fly long distances. Their bones are hollow (less weight) for flying.
- They usually eat plants but will also eat some small animals (insects or small clams, etc.).

2. _____

- These mammals' long back feet have hair between the toes that they use to help paddle through the water. They use their long, flat tails to steer, like a boat rudder.
- They build "pushups" or piles of plants in the ice where they store food to eat and where they breathe during the winter.
- Like tundra swans, they are mostly plant eaters but will eat small animals if they are really hungry.

3. _____

- These birds of prey have large, sharp talons (claws) to catch and hold onto their animal dinner.
- They soar high in the sky on air currents and use their good eyesight to see prey below. Depending on where they live, some of these birds migrate ahead of freezing ice; others do not migrate at all.

4. _____

- These mammals are true scavengers and will eat whatever they can find: plant or animal. Their long front paws have five "claw fingers" that they can use to open things—like trash cans!
- They don't hibernate but they do sleep snug in their dens for long periods of time in the winter. On warm days, they'll stretch and grab some food.

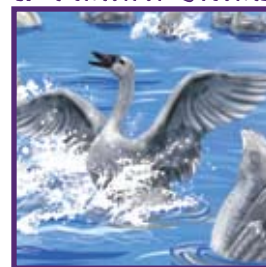
a. Eagles



b. Raccoons



c. Tundra Swans



d. Muskrats



Answer: 1. c, 2. d, 3. a, 4. b