

# THE AMERICAN BIOLOGY TEACHER



## About Our Cover

### Puffin Cover Nancy L. Elwess

The Atlantic puffin on this month's cover, which is often called the common puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), was photographed on Machias Seal Island. This treeless island is located between the Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy (New Brunswick). What is unusual about this small (~18 acre) island is the sovereignty which has been disputed since the War of 1812, initially between Great Britain and the United States and now between Canada and the United States. Despite the island's small size, it is a valuable seabird nesting colony for arctic and common terns in addition to the puffins. During the summer, the number of pairs of puffins on this island can range between 1000 and 5000 pairs. There are strict limitations as to the number of visitors allowed on the island each day. During the summer, there are only two tour groups a day allowed, one from Cutler, Maine, and the other from Grand Manan, New Brunswick, with only 15 passengers each to visit Machias Seal Island. Once on the island, the visitors are broken up into small groups and enter blinds so they can see the puffins and other seabirds in their natural habitat. The island is covered in boardwalks to prevent visitors from stepping on nesting sites.

The Atlantic puffin got its name because it is the only puffin found in the Atlantic Ocean. Their breeding grounds include Norway, Russia, Iceland, Greenland, and as mentioned New Brunswick and Maine. Their nests are typically a dug-out burrow on top of cliffs or in the case of Machias Seal Island on the ground among the rocks. Puffins are believed to mate for life, and they usually lay one white egg per year. Both parents tend to the chick, which is called a puffling, and usually within six weeks the fledging is ready for flight.

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RECOMMENDED  
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