

KITTIWAKES AT BALTIC

Nobody quite knows why the first kittiwakes wandered so far up the Tyne in the 1960s but they clearly like it here!

Normally kittiwakes are coastal birds. However the kittiwakes that breed along the River Tyne nest, not on coastal cliffs, but on man-made structures like buildings and bridges. Visit BALTIC's Level 4 viewing platform to see our colony of nesting birds.

This colony is the most inland kittiwake breeding colony anywhere in the world and makes NewcastleGateshead Quayside one of the few city centre locations in the world to have a seabird colony at its heart.

Although our kittiwakes have set up home at BALTIC they still catch their food out on the Northumberland coast. During the breeding season, kittiwakes feed on small fish which they catch near the surface of the sea and can sometimes travel hundreds of miles for their dinner.

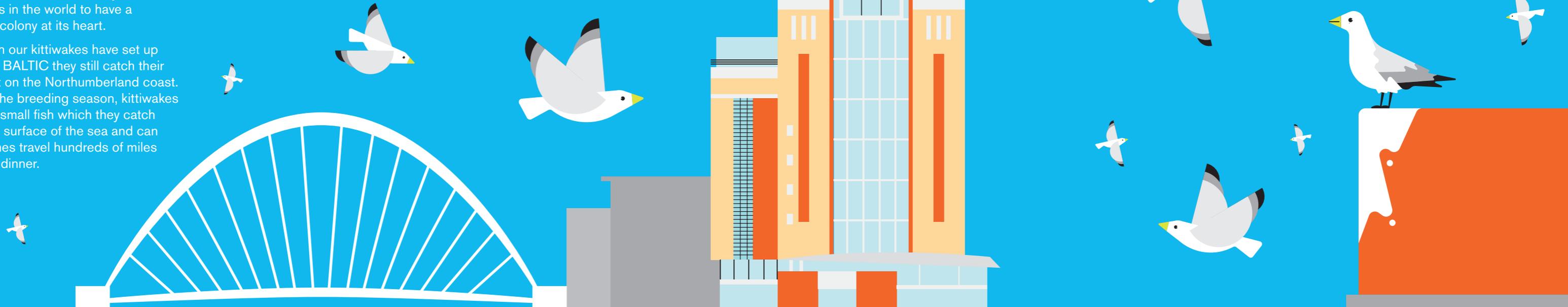
Kittiwakes spend most of the year out at sea, travelling as far as Canada but every March they return home to the Quayside and BALTIC to breed.

Explore the NewcastleGateshead Quayside. Look up and around for other kittiwake nesting sites. Remember, kittiwakes are noisy, so follow your ears.

FACTS

- Kittiwakes can live up to 28 years
- They can start to breed when they are 3 years old
- They lay 2-3 eggs
- Young kittiwakes spend 5-7 weeks in the nest
- Lots of seabird poo in one place is called guano. Guano is a really effective fertiliser.
- Kittiwakes return to nest in March. Males often return to where they were born
- They leave the Tyne in August and remain at sea until spring
- Bonding behaviour between partners includes bowing, head bobbing and food begging displays
- Pairs may stay together for several years but kittiwake divorce is common

KITTIWAKE EXPLORER



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WHAT IS A KITTIWAKE?

Kittiwakes are a type of gull. Adult kittiwakes are mainly white with pearl-grey backs and upper wings. Their wing tips are black, as if they've been dipped in paint. They have greenish-yellow beaks and black legs and feet.

Kittiwakes are loud! You might hear them before you see them. They get their name from their screeching "Kitt-eeewake" call.

The young birds are similar to their parents but have black marks on the back of their heads, necks and their wings. Baby kittiwakes' beaks are black.

How would you re-design a kittiwake? Add your new colours and patterns here.



BREEDING

During the summer, the NewcastleGatshead Quayside is home to hundreds of pairs of breeding kittiwakes.

Our kittiwakes build their nests on the narrow ledges of BALTIC's north wall.

At low tide you can spot a kittiwake collecting nest-building materials from the riverside. Between mid-May and late-June, kittiwakes lay their eggs.

When hatched, a kittiwake chick is covered in white and grey downy feathers. They are fed regurgitated fish by both of their parents and, when they are 42 days old, are ready to fly.

KITTIWAKE QUESTIONS

1. Stand on Level 4 terrace. How many kittiwakes can you count?
2. What materials have the kittiwakes used to make their nests?
3. Why do you think the kittiwakes come to BALTIC?
4. What type of music do you think kittiwakes would like to listen to?
5. What do you think the kittiwakes would change about our planet?
6. How will you make the world a better place for kittiwakes and other birds?