

## Top Ten Puffin Facts

1. Nicknamed “sea parrots” – and sometimes “clowns of the sea”! – Atlantic puffins have black and white feathers and a large parrot-like beak. They are small seabirds measuring around **25cm** in length.
2. Puffins spend most of their lives out at sea, resting on the waves when not swimming. Their range spans the eastern coast of Canada and the United States to the western coast of Europe.

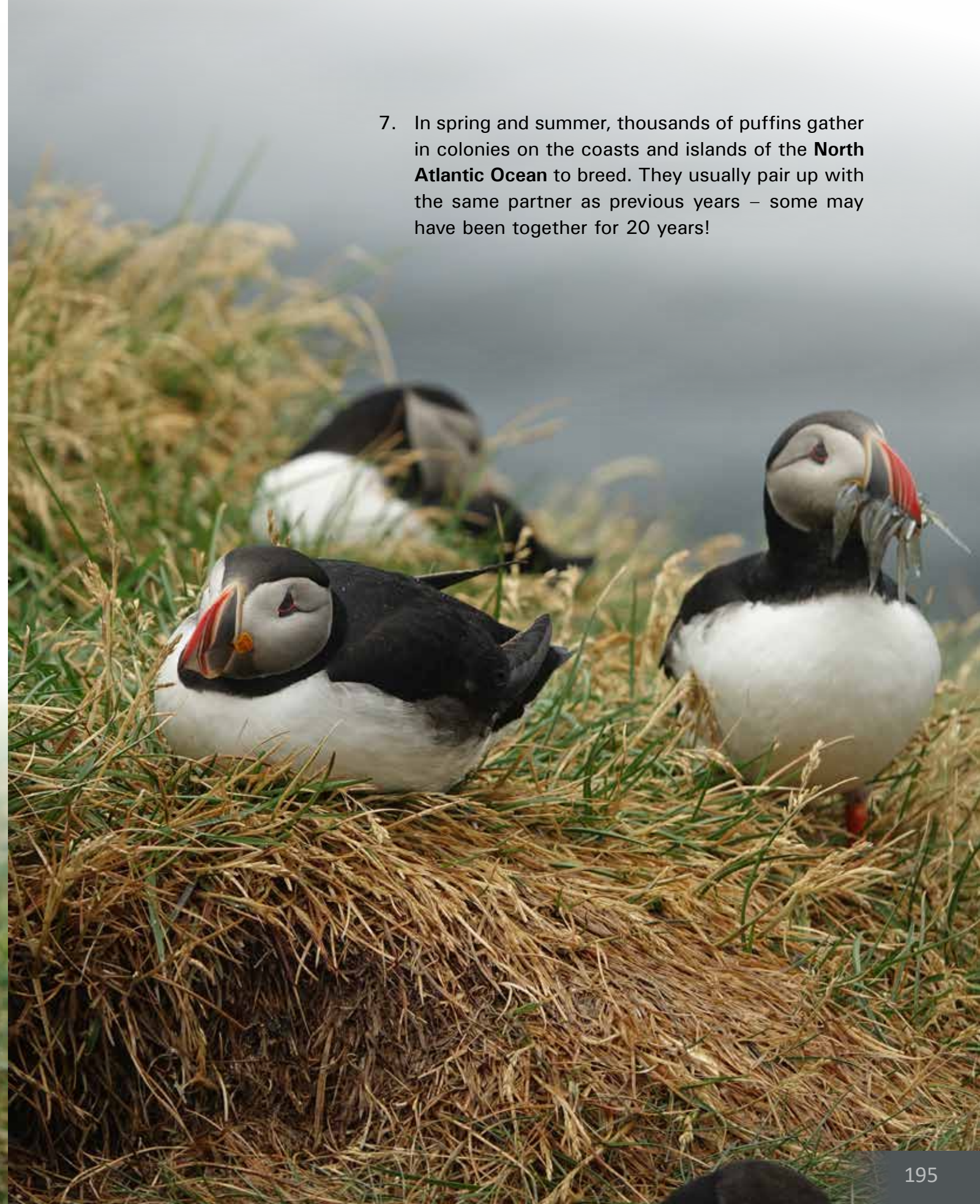




3. A puffin's beak (or bill) changes colour during the year. In winter, the beak has a dull grey colour, but in spring it blooms with an outrageous orange! It's thought that the bright colour helps puffins assess potential mates.
4. Puffins are carnivores and live off small fish such as herring, hake and sand eels.
5. Puffins are fab flyers, flapping their wings up to **400 times a minute** and speeding through the air at up to **88km an hour**. Wow!
6. What's more, these brilliant birds are great swimmers, too! Using their webbed feet as a rudder, puffins can dive down **60m under water** in search of their favourite fish.



7. In spring and summer, thousands of puffins gather in colonies on the coasts and islands of the **North Atlantic Ocean** to breed. They usually pair up with the same partner as previous years – some may have been together for 20 years!







8. When starting a puffin family, our feathered friends dig out a burrow using their sharp claws and beak, usually in a grassy bank or rocky crevice. At the back of their burrow home, they build a nest lined with feathers and grass where the female lays her egg. Both parents take it in turn to incubate the egg for the next 36-45 days before the baby “**puffling**” hatches!
9. In the wild, these winged wonders live for around 20 years. Their main predators are hungry gulls, which can snatch puffins mid-flight or swoop down and scoop their tasty treat from the ground – so they need to keep alert!
10. Although puffins are not classed as an endangered species, populations in some places are in decline. The main threats are **overfishing**, which can lead to a shortage of food for puffins, and **pollution** – particularly oil spills. Not only does the oil make these beautiful birds sick, it destroys their waterproof feathers, essential for their survival.

*(Source: National Geographic for Kids)*

