



# Animals at the Beach

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# Animals at the Beach

*From sea turtles to penguins, meet some awesome animals that call the beach home.*



Wouldn't it be nice to live right on the beach? Some animals do! Read on to find out how sea turtles, pinnipeds, and even penguins survive on the shores.

## *Super Sea Turtles*

For more than 100 million years, marine reptiles called sea turtles have swum in the ocean. And they also journey onto beaches! Sea turtles are reptiles, meaning that they are animals with skeletons and scales. Like other reptiles, sea turtles are cold-blooded. This means that they must get their warmth from their environments. Sea turtles also breathe air. Because of this, they must swim to the surface to breathe. However, sea turtles are very comfortable in the water. Their long flippers help them swim. Their shells protect them from hungry animals. And they can hold their breath for up to two hours!

But even though sea turtles are at home in the water, they need the beach to survive. This is because the beach is where a sea turtle lays its eggs. When a female sea turtle is ready to lay eggs, she pulls herself up onto a sandy beach. Then, she uses her flippers to dig a hole in the sand. This is where she lays her eggs. When she is done, the sea turtle buries her eggs and heads back to the water. Some two months later, the eggs are ready to hatch! In the middle of the night, tiny sea turtles push their way out of the eggs and climb out of the sand.



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Then, they head to the water. One day, some of these babies will return to the same beach to lay their own eggs!



A whiskered sea lion peers curiously into an underwater camera.

### Plenty of Pinnipeds

You've probably seen a pinniped before—even if you didn't know it! Pinniped is the name given to marine animals that have front and back flippers. This includes seals, sea lions, and walruses! All pinnipeds have long, oval-shaped bodies. This shape helps them swim quickly through the water. All pinnipeds are also carnivores, meaning they eat meat. Their meals usually include fish or other ocean animals like crabs and shrimp. Pinnipeds can sense their prey moving in the water thanks to their sensitive whiskers.

However, many kinds of pinnipeds are also different from each other. Seals do not have outer ears. Instead, they have small ear holes that they can seal up in the water. They also have small flippers, and pull themselves along to move on land. Sea lions, on the other hand, do have outer ears. They have large flippers, which they can use to waddle on land. And walruses? They don't have outer ears, but they do have large flippers. And on top of that, they have two long, curved teeth, called tusks.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

**The word pinniped comes from the Latin words meaning "feather foot." This describes the shape of a pinniped's flippers.**



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Despite their differences, the beach is important to all pinnipeds. Pinnipeds can sleep in the water, but it is often safer to sleep on land. Pinnipeds also like to rest and warm themselves on the beach. But most importantly, the beach is where pinnipeds have their babies! These babies, called pups, are raised on land. When they are old enough, they move to the water, too.



*A group of African penguins, called a waddle, rookery, or colony, shuffle around on the beach.*

### Playful Penguins

Penguins at the beach? That's right! Most penguins live in very cold places, on the ice. But for one type of penguin, life's a beach. Meet the African penguin, a type of penguin found on the beaches of southern Africa. Like all penguins, African penguins are birds. Birds are animals with skeletons, wings, and feathers. Most birds use their wings to fly. But not penguins! Penguins are not able to fly. Instead, they use their wings as flippers. Penguins are great swimmers, and their flippers help them speed through the water to catch fish and other sea creatures.

#### FUN FACT

**African penguins sometimes make nests using their own poop, called guano.**

Like other penguins, African penguins zip through the ocean to find food. However, instead of returning to ice, they come back to the beach! There, African penguins hang out in large groups called colonies. They build nests in the sand, where they lay their eggs.



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Of course, these sandy beaches are much warmer than the icy Antarctic where other penguins live. Luckily, African penguins have a special patch of pink skin around their eyes. This skin helps let out heat, keeping the penguins nice and cool on hot days.