

# Seagulls



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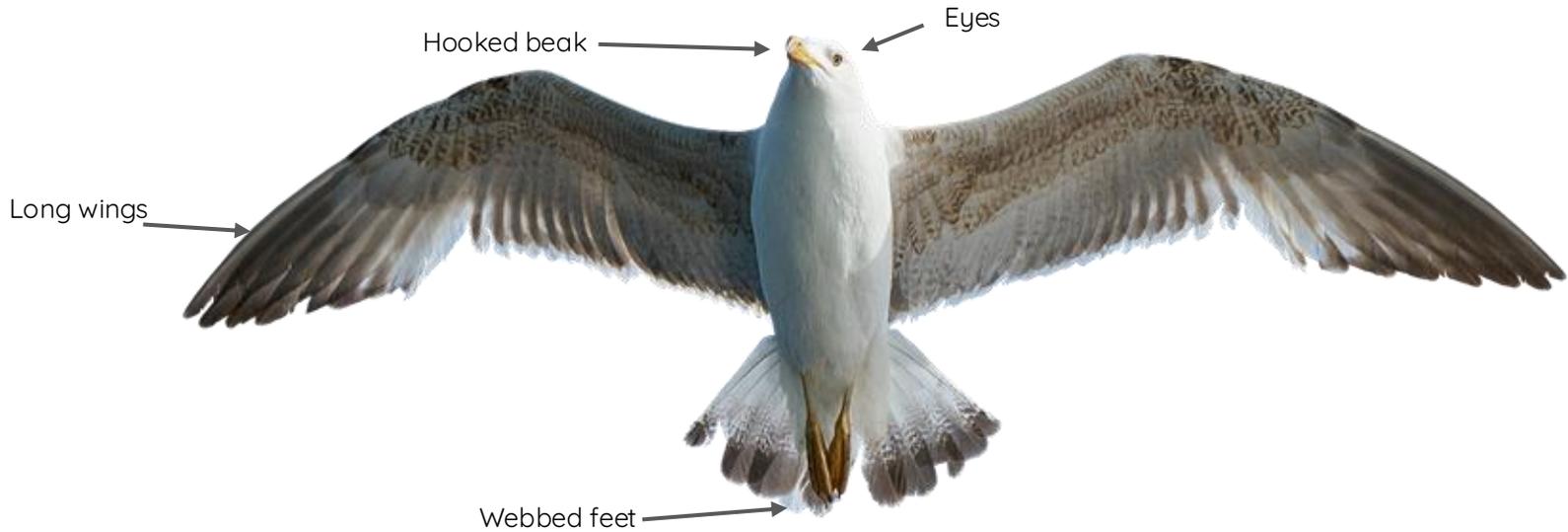
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## What's in a name?

These birds are usually called seagulls. Ornithologists (people who study birds) call them sea gulls because not all gulls live by the sea. Whatever name you use for them, gulls are fascinating creatures.



## Appearance

Most seagulls are white with black markings, but some are gray or black.

Their long wings make them excellent fliers. They use the wind to quickly change directions, swooping from one direction to the next.

Seagulls have excellent eyesight and can see better than humans. Unlike most birds, they can move their eyes in their sockets.



Seagulls come in many sizes. The Great Black-Backed Gull is the largest gull. It has a wingspan of 5 feet 7 inches.

The smallest gull is the Little Gull. This gull typically weighs less than six ounces. It lives in Europe.



## **Food**

Seagulls are omnivorous, meaning they eat just about anything. They eat seafood, fish, human food, seeds, fruit, eggs, and even other birds.

Gulls are very smart. They have developed strategies to help them get food.

Some gulls use breadcrumbs to catch fish.

Other gulls have figured out how to get to the clam inside a clamshell. Since gulls can't pry open the shell, they fly high in the sky with the shell and drop it on a hard surface to break it open.

They can even steal food from picnic baskets left on the beach.





Seagulls can drink salt water but prefer freshwater. They have a special gland behind their eyes that eliminates, or gets rid of, extra salt in their body. This allows them to fly far out to sea to search for food without worrying about finding water to drink.

## Family life

Seagulls typically mate for life. A breeding couple will build a cup shaped nest on the ground or on cliffs that are difficult for predators to reach.

A female gull lays a clutch, or group, of one to three eggs. Both the male and the female take turns keeping the eggs warm.

A group of gulls will work together to scare away predators and protect the young.





Both the male and female gull take care of the chicks when they are born. After a couple of weeks, the chicks are raised together in a nursery colony. A few adult male birds teach all of the young in the colony how to hunt. The young gulls leave the colony when they can survive on their own.



## **Communication**

Gulls communicate by squawking and wing flapping. They are very social creatures. They can even play games!



Sea gulls are capable of many amazing things! Next time you see some, watch to see them soar, problem solve, cooperate, play, and communicate.

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Purple level  
Multisyllabic Words  
Four syllable words

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