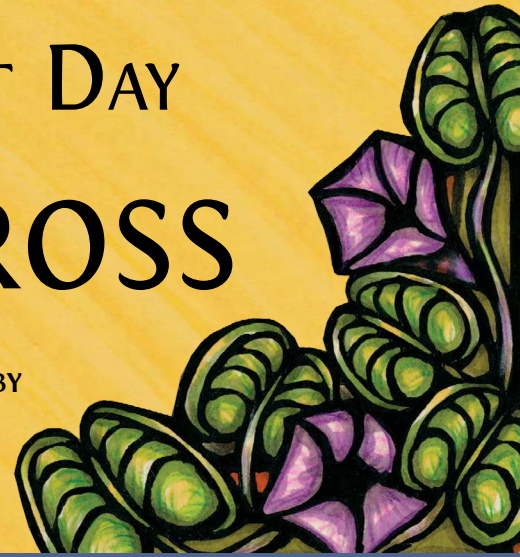


A PERFECT DAY *for an* ALBATROSS

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY
CAREN LOEBEL-FRIED



EDUCATIONAL GUIDE

About the Book

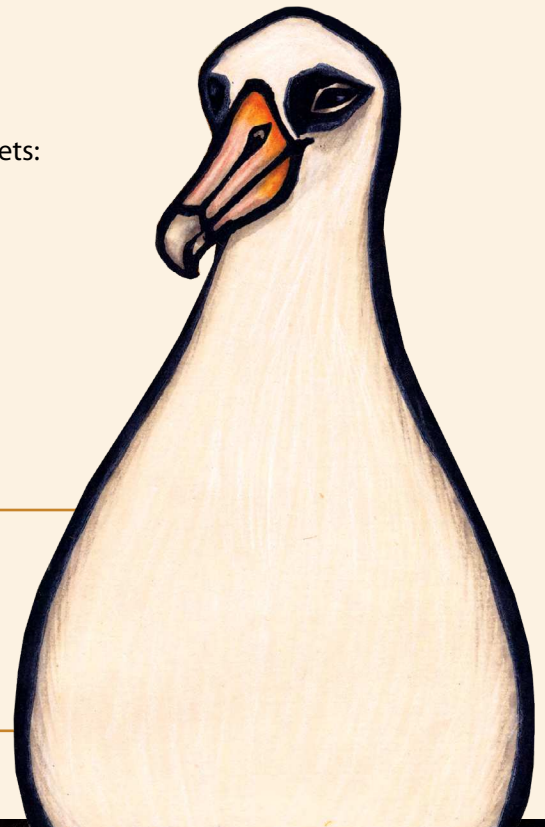
A Perfect Day for an Albatross sweeps the reader into an albatross' world of wind, rolling seas, dancing, and their intense commitment to one another and their nestlings. Set on Midway Atoll, where 72 percent of the world's Laysan Albatrosses make their nests, Mālie, an albatross, must protect her egg until her mate returns. Join Mālie as she dances, hunts, and soars over the ocean swells. Discover the behaviors and habitats of these Albatrosses, the largest seabirds to make their home in the North Pacific.

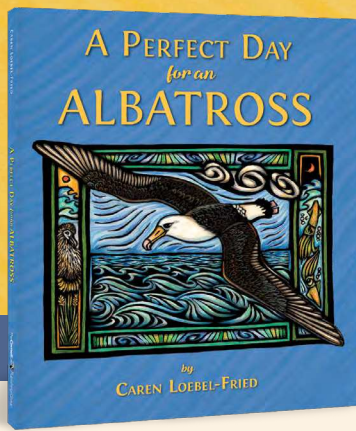
Using this Educator's Guide

This guide features activities that target national education standards for a variety of subjects for grades 1-3. Each activity lists which standards it meets:

- **Science** (SCI; Next Generation Science Standards)
- **Math** (MATH; Common Core State Standards)
- **English Language Arts** (ELA; Common Core State Standards)
- **Art** (ART; National Core Art Standards)

Be sure to visit <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/k12/a-perfect-day-for-an-albatross/> for access to the specific standards, and the extra images, videos, and links mentioned in this guide, as well as additional background information.





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Discussion Questions

BEFORE READING

Show the book cover and title, and ask:

- What do you think this book is about? (Brainstorm some ideas, then find out if they match up to what happens.)
- What do you think a perfect day for an albatross might look like?
- What do you know about albatrosses?
- What might the book cover tell you about the albatross and where it lives? (Encourage students to pay attention to the habitat details, both in images and words, within the book.)

AFTER READING

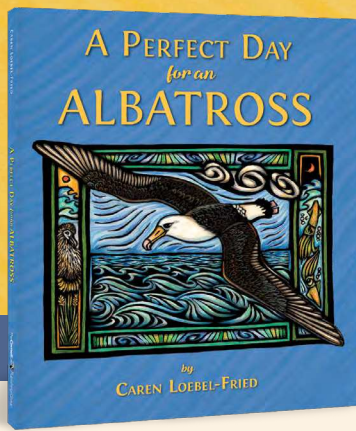
After reading, ask:

- What was “perfect” about Mālie’s day?
- How did our predictions match up to what happened in the book?
- What might an albatross look like when it hatches, and how does it change as it grows? (Albatrosses start small and fluffy, but get bigger and also start to lose their fluffy down with age. Albatross chicks take a very long time to lose their down and grow flight feathers—as long as 280 days.)
- What types of things does an albatross learn to do as it grows? (For example: take off and fly, walk, soar, hunt, dance.)



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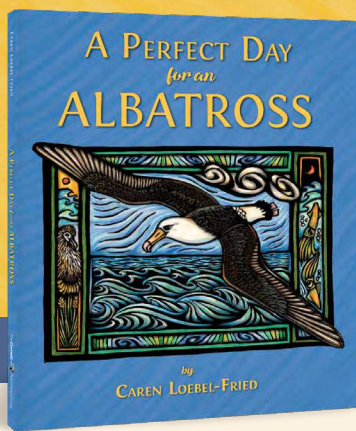
Activities

1 SO MANY NESTS (SCI, ELA)

Show the book image of the albatross bunchgrass nest and the petrel burrow. Ask students questions such as:

- In what ways are the nests similar? In what ways do they differ? (Both nests are functionally the same, despite looking very different. Birds provide warmth and protection while their embryos develop inside eggs, and once the eggs hatch, the young need a place to safely mature until they can care for themselves.)
- Why do you think birds build nests? (To hold/protect their eggs and young.)
- Have you seen a nest before? Where was it? What was it made out of? (Answers will vary, but likely will include nests made of sticks, mud, grass and placed in trees, on buildings, or in nest boxes.)
- Do all birds build nests? (Most bird species build some kind of nest, though some are just simple scrapes in the ground. Exceptions include Emperor Penguins who hold their eggs on their feet and Brown-headed Cowbirds who lay their eggs in other birds' nests.)
- When do birds build their nests? (Birds in North America generally build their nests in spring and raise their young during spring and summer. Note that a nest is a place where parents incubate and care for eggs and young, rather than a year-round "home" for birds.)
- Share images of different types of bird nests, having students describe each and guess what kind of bird made them (examples can be found on the online book page). Talk about the similarities and differences in nests of all kinds.
- Finally, make a list of locations where students think that nests are found (in trees, under the eaves of buildings, on the ground, in tree cavities and nest boxes, etc.) as well as a list of nesting materials (sticks, small twigs, mud, grass, spider webs, etc.). When both lists are complete, emphasize the great diversity of nests and the fact that birds nest in many locations on land, both in natural and man-made structures.





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2 STORY OF THE SEABIRDS (ELA, ART)

Describe the overall structure of the story by revisiting the events that occur in *A Perfect Day for an Albatross*. The book begins with Mālie sitting on the egg and is told in present tense. Then Mālie tells the reader about the time when she was in an egg and her years growing up before again returning to the current story line. Looking at verbs as clues, find examples of present tense and past tense.

Use a storyboard to create a numbered sequence of events, picking out the most important parts of the story. (Be sure to show which parts of the sequence are in the past.) Have students take their own turn at creating a fictional story about a bird through writing, drawing, or dictating. (Younger students can create their story strictly chronologically; older students can add a flashback.) Afterwards, have students read or explain the events in order to the group, emphasizing various transition words (for example: first, then, next, lastly). Invite small groups to collaboratively act out the stories.

3 SEE ALBATROSSES IN ACTION (SCI)

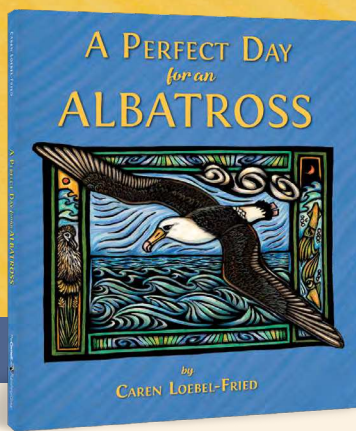
Review *A Perfect Day for an Albatross* and make a list of the different behaviors featured in the book (preening, dancing, bobbing, clapping, soaring, etc). Visit the Cornell Lab streaming cams and archived footage to observe Laysan Albatrosses on the island of Kaua'i in Hawai'i (links and information are on the BirdSleuth website). Challenge students to match behaviors they observe on the bird cams to the list of behaviors from the book.

4 ALBATROSS HABITAT (SCI, ART, ELA)

A habitat is a place that provides everything that living things need to survive: food, water, cover, and space. Cover can include shelter, nesting areas, and places to sleep, hide, or escape. Make a list on the board of the habitat elements (food, water, cover) that albatrosses need as seen in the book and/or discovered via online research. Provide small groups of students with a large poster board or sheet of butcher paper and invite them to paint or sketch a mural of the perfect albatross habitat. Encourage deeper thinking and more complete murals by asking students questions such as:

- Does an albatross live in one habitat or more than one habitat? (Students should at least mention/draw the land and marine habitat.)
- What types of animals might you include in your mural? Have you included animals that live on land and those that live in the ocean? (You might refer to the last pages of the book.)
- What types of foods are available to these animals? (Plants, smaller fish, squid, seeds, insects, eggs, etc.)
- Hang the murals up on a wall or bulletin board and transform the room into an albatross habitat.

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5 DANCE LIKE A 'TROSS (SCI, ART, ELA)

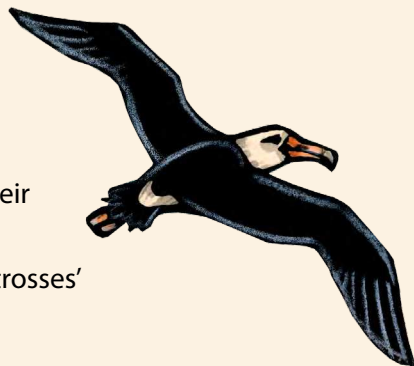
Watch the "Dance Like a 'Tross" video, and let students enjoy dancing along! Albatross pairs tend to form lasting bonds. They perform elaborate courtship displays that include coordinated movements in which the birds touch bills, spread one or both wings, bob their heads, place their bill under one wing, and pause with their bill pointed at the sky.

After watching the video from the Albatross cam and looking carefully at the book for clues, have students choreograph their own albatross dance (either Kumukahi's or Mālie's, or both)! Encourage them to include movement and sound. What music or song do the students think would go well with this dance and why? After practicing their dance a couple of times, ask students how long they think it would take to get really good at it. Might it take many years, like it does for the albatross?

When Mālie meets her friends after a long time apart, they dance. What do you and your friends and family do when you see each other after a long time? How do people from other cultures greet each other? Do research and write a story to explore this theme.

6 MY PERFECT DAY (ELA)

Ask students to write about, describe aloud, or draw a picture of their own perfect day. Is it anything like the albatrosses' in the story?



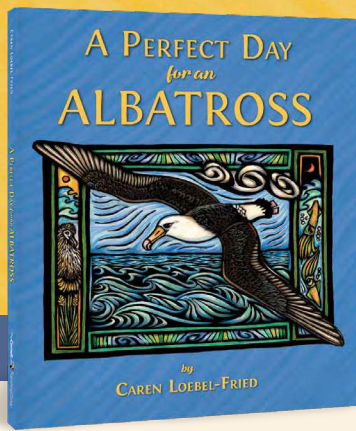
7 GIANT IN THE SKY (SCI, MATH, ART)

How big are an albatross' wings? Find out by trying your own pair of "wings" on for size! Get a very large piece of cardboard, strong tape, yardstick or meter stick, and scissors. An adult Laysan Albatross is 32" (80 cm) long from beak to tail and has a wingspan of 80" (200 cm)—keep in mind each wing should be approximately 36" long to account for the width of the body. Draw wing outlines on your piece of cardboard and cut them out, folding over the wing and taping the bottom together to wrap around the arm and make an "arm pocket" (see photos at the website). Allow students to take turns with the wings outdoors or into a large indoor space such as a gym. They might even feel the lift/drag on the wings on a windy day and imagine being able to soar for thousands of miles across the Pacific Ocean!

The classic behavior of albatrosses is dynamic soaring—a flight style marked by very infrequent wing beats and masterful soaring. The bird takes advantage of wind speed and direction changes at different heights to fly great distances with very slight alterations of their wing position. On the ground these big birds walk ponderously and usually have to run along the ground, into the wind, to be able to take off. Is it hard to walk around with such long wings?

As an alternative or in addition, use butcher paper to outline the shape of an albatross and have students compare the size and shape of the bird to their own.

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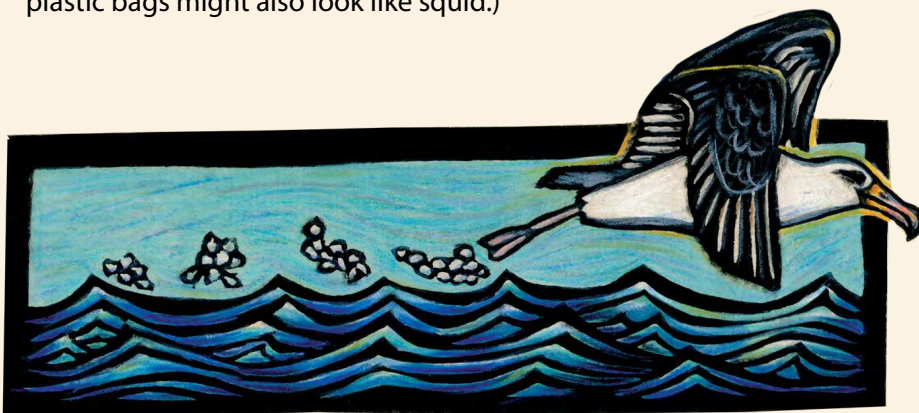
8 STASH THE TRASH (SCI, MATH, ELA, ART)

Trash is a big problem for albatrosses. Every year, chicks die from eating plastic that their parents have mistaken for food. Some chicks get so much plastic in their stomachs that there isn't any room left for food, and they starve. Ask:

- How do you think trash ends up in the ocean? (It blows into the ocean, is carried there via streams and rivers, or dumped there.)
- How might we help with this problem? (Not littering, recycling, and picking up trash in the community.)

Take students outside to explore a defined area or to walk along a path. As a group, explore the kinds and amounts of trash you see by making a list of items or collecting trash if possible, using gloves and bags you provide. Ask:

- How much of the trash we see is plastic? Which items would float? What happens to litter? (Some trash, especially floating plastic, ends up in the ocean.)
- Why do albatrosses pick up trash to begin with? (It can resemble the foods they normally eat. For instance, a tin can might resemble the silver scales of a fish, a candy wrapper could be mistaken for an insect or small squid, plastic bags might also look like squid.)

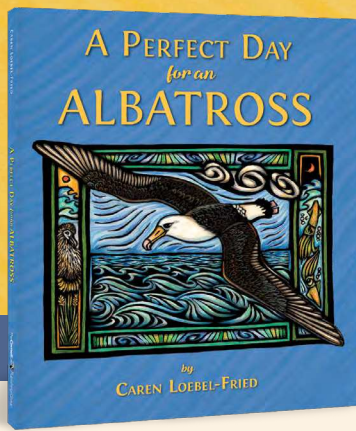


If you've collected trash, weigh it and explore which pieces can float when you return to the classroom. Albatross chicks can have as much as 14 ounces (400 grams) of plastic in their stomachs. Calculate how many chicks you possibly saved by picking up your total weight

of trash. Finally, talk about ways in which students and their families can help keep trash out of the oceans and prevent harm to animals like albatrosses. Design posters related to discouraging littering, featuring litter's impact on wildlife. Research and write about the threats faced by albatross and other seabirds.

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9 RETELLINGS AND REENACTMENTS (SCI, ELA, ART)

Involve students in a reenactment of the events in the book. Use pantomime as a way to retell the story without using words. Have students use hand gestures, facial expressions, and body movements to convey the action of the story. You might supplement with a variety of props, including sticks, rocks, toy eggs, and other materials for the students to use in their reenactment. For practice, have the students form a circle and encourage them to act out events from the story such as Ahonui visiting Mālie on the nest, Kumukahi and Mālie trading places sitting on the egg, and Mālie diving for food in the ocean. Ask the students what they think albatrosses feel when they meet each other. Show a video of albatrosses greeting each other. Have students reenact the visit, keeping in mind the details they recall from the video of a real greeting.



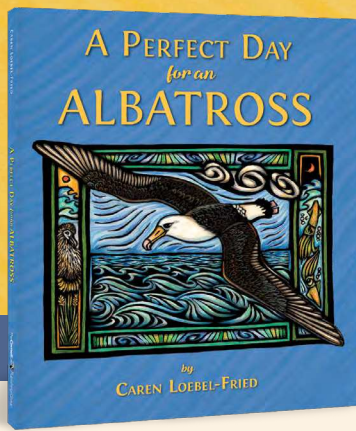
10 IT MAKES SENSE

Have students convey with words and/or drawings, the things in the environment that Mālie sensed and felt using her eyes, ears, mouth, nose. Include examples of what Mālie....

- Touched and felt (her warm egg, the chilly ocean spray, wind in her wings, Kumukahi leaning against her)
- Saw (her mate and friends, other animals, food in the ocean)
- Heard (grunts, clacking, and calling of other albatrosses, wind, waves crashing)
- Tasted (squid, flying-fish eggs, salt water, fresh water)
- Smelled (the ocean, food)

How do you think albatross senses compare to our own?





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11 MOVING PICTURES

The author chose a style of illustration that shows a lot of motion. Discuss with students:

- How can you tell the waves are moving? Which way are they moving?
- How can you tell when the ocean is still?
- What clues do you see in the pictures that show when it's windy?
- How does the artist show that it's raining? Can you tell how hard it's raining?
- What did the artist do to show how fast Mālie runs across the sand? (Think about what happens when you walk or run across sand, dirt, or mud—what do your footprints look like when you walk and what do they look like when you run?)
- How can you tell which way water is splashing? (Be sure to look at the pictures when Mālie is taking off from the ocean and when she is splashing down to grab a squid.)



The **Cornell** Lab  of Ornithology
BirdSleuth K-12

To access other free lesson plans, Book Activity Guides, and professional development opportunities, please visit the Cornell Lab's educational program, BirdSleuth, at www.birdsleuth.org.