Our Coasts

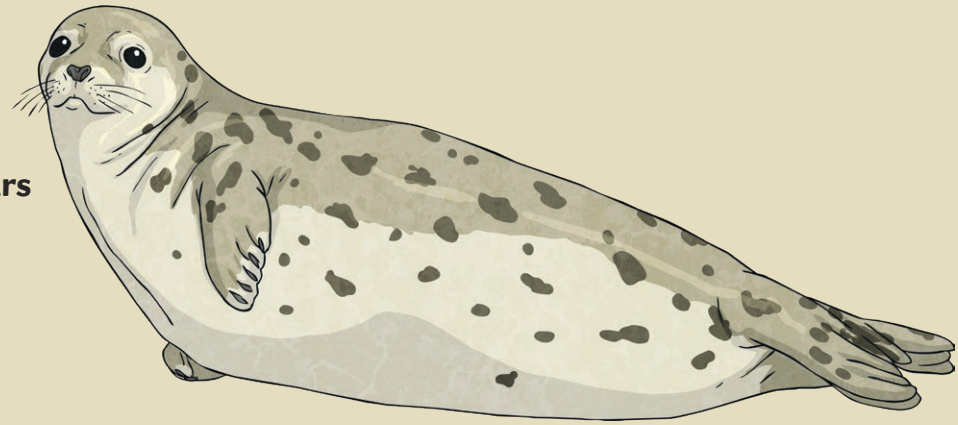
Britain's coastline is full with wildlife that live through the harsh weather that the UK's beaches, peninsulas, sea lochs, bays and estuaries can often offer. Let's jump into the fact files and look at some of the wonderful creatures that call our coasts home.

Harbour Seal

Average mass: 60-150kg

Average length: 1.2-1.6m

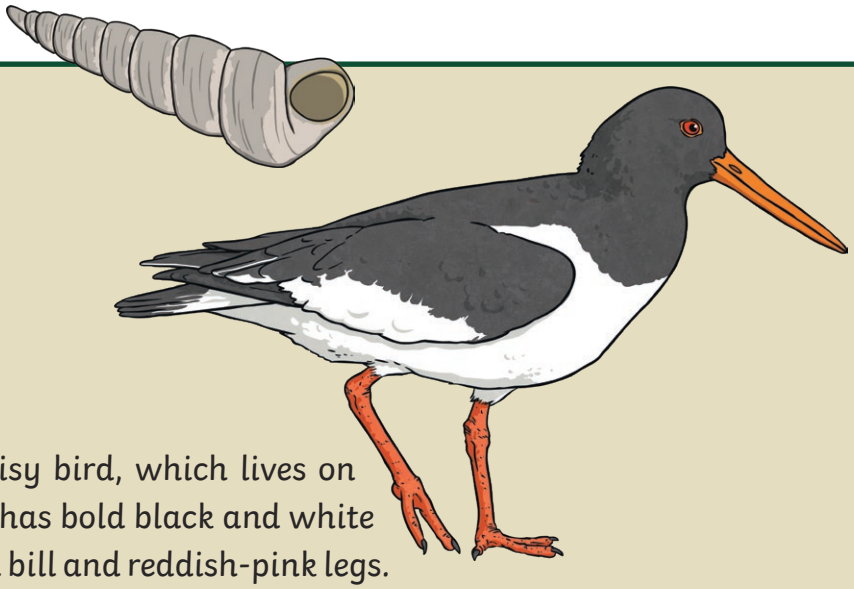
Average lifespan: 20-30 years



The harbour seal is also known as the common seal. Harbour seals are easy to spot because of their distinctive appearance. They have grey or brown fur which is covered with a fine, spotted pattern.

Harbour seals can be seen all year long around the coasts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and eastern England. Like all seals, harbour seals live both on land and in the water. They prefer the safety of sheltered shores and estuaries so they drag themselves onto sandbanks and beaches. They eat lots of different types of fish, including herring, eels and flatfish. Sometimes, they even eat shrimp or squid.

Oystercatcher



Average mass: 430-650g

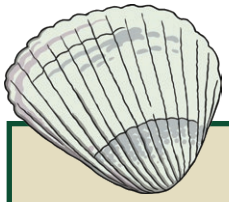
Average length: 40-45cm

Average wingspan: 80-86cm

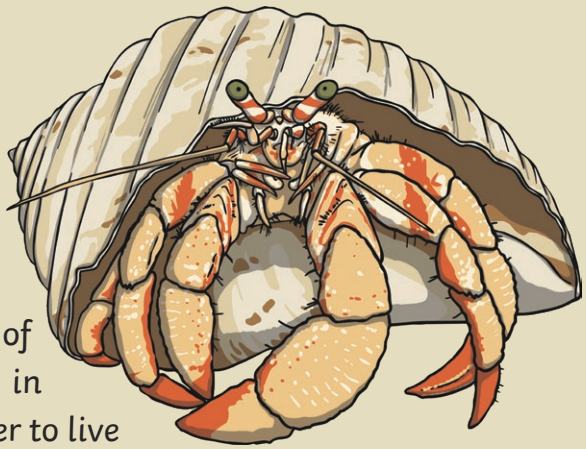
Average lifespan: 12 years

The oystercatcher is a large and noisy bird, which lives on Britain's coastline all year round. It has bold black and white feathers, a long, powerful orange-red bill and reddish-pink legs.

Oystercatchers love to eat the shellfish found on Britain's coastline, such as oysters, cockles and mussels. They force them open using their strong, flattened bills. Although they used to live solely on the coast, oystercatchers have recently been seen moving further inland to breed on lakes and waterways. However, large numbers can be seen gathering in major coastal estuaries during winter.



Common Hermit Crab



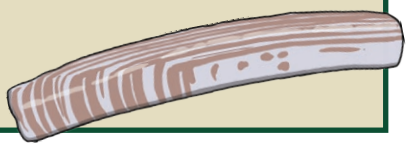
Average mass: 7g

Average length: 8cm

Average lifespan: 1-10 years

The common hermit crab calls the cold waters of Northern Europe home. They can be found living in the waters around all of the British Isles. They prefer to live around rocky seabeds and can often be spotted in rock pools.

Interestingly, this crafty creature does not have a hard shell of its own. Instead, it must find and use the shell of another creature. So that it can fit into lots of different shells, the common hermit crab has a soft, twisted body. When it feels threatened, the hermit crab can go completely into its shell and block the entrance with its claws.



Why Not Go for a Dip?

Rock pooling is a fun activity and can be a great chance to explore the different creatures that share a home on Britain's coastline. All you need is:

- a small fishing net or sieve;
- a bucket;
- a **Rock Pooling Identification Checklist**.

1. It is best to go rock pooling when the weather is dry and calm, such as between late spring and early autumn. Always stay safe and warm when rock pooling. Wear shoes with a good grip, such as old trainers or wellies with a thick sole. Take a jumper or coat with you – the British coastline can be quite chilly!
2. Get an adult to fill your bucket with water from a rock pool.
3. Carefully, lower your net or sieve into the rock pool. Move it slowly through the water.
4. Gently lift out your net. Turn it over onto your bucket. Use the checklist to find out what you have caught. **Remember:** Look but never touch.
5. When you have finished, get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the bucket back into the rock pool.

Questions

1. Which two of these items does the first instruction recommend taking with you when rock pooling? Tick two.

   - ○ shoes with good grip
   - ○ a warm jumper
   - ○ a tent with strong poles
   - ○ a large umbrella

2. Join the boxes to match each creature to its average lifespan.

Oystercatcher	1-10 years
Harbour Seal	12 years
Common Hermit Crab	20-30 years

3. Fill in the missing words.

   The common hermit crab calls the _____ waters of _____ Europe home.

4. List two sea creatures eaten by the harbour seal.

   - _____
   - _____

5. Find and copy two adjectives used to describe the oystercatcher.

   - _____
   - _____

6. **...get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the bucket back into the rock pool.**
   Explain why this is an important step.

7. Why do you think that it is important for the common hermit crab to find a disused shell?

8. Which of these creatures would you most like to see at the coast?
   Give a reason for your choice.

Answers

1. Which two of these items does the first instruction recommend taking with you when rock pooling? Tick two.

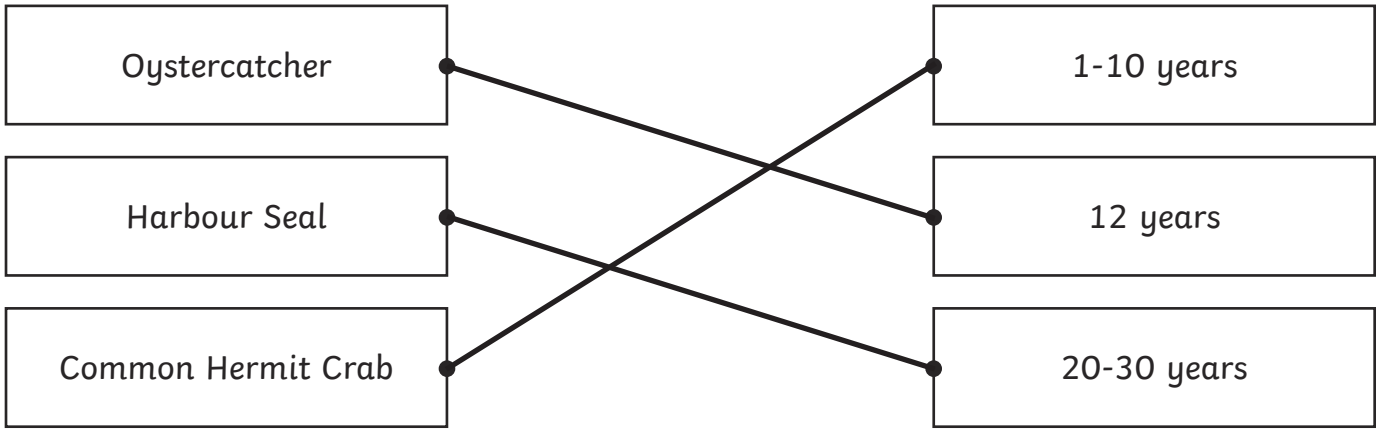
   shoes with good grip

   ○ **a warm jumper**

   ○ a tent with strong poles

   ○ a large umbrella

2. Join the boxes to match each creature to its average lifespan.



3. Fill in the missing words.
   The common hermit crab calls the **cold** waters of **Northern** Europe home.

4. List two sea creatures eaten by the harbour seal.
   Accept any two of the following: herring; eels; flatfish; shrimp; squid.

5. Find and copy two adjectives used to describe the oystercatcher.
   large, noisy.

6. **...get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the bucket back into the rock pool.**
   Explain why this is an important step.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: It is important to put the creatures back into the rock pool so that they are returned to their natural habitat and can continue to survive.

7. Why do you think that it is important for the common hermit crab to find a disused shell?
   Pupils' own responses, such as: It is important for the common hermit crab to find a disused shell because it needs a shell in order to protect itself from predators. Without one, it is likely to be eaten.

8. Which of these creatures would you most like to see at the coast?
   Give a reason for your choice.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to see a harbour seal because I have never seen one before and I would like to look at the pattern on their fur.

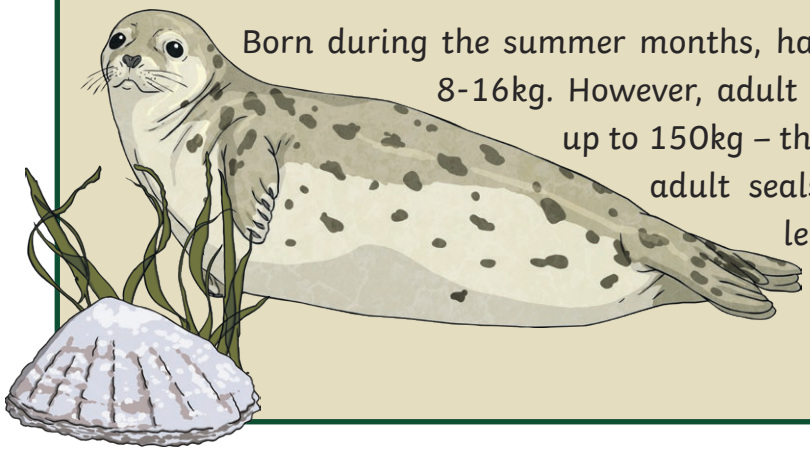
Our Coasts

Britain's ever-changing coastline is swarming with wildlife that live through the often harsh and unpredictable conditions that the UK's beaches, peninsulas, sea lochs, bays and estuaries can offer. Let's delve into the fact files and examine some of the wonderful creatures that call our coasts home.

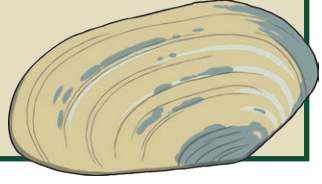
Harbour Seal
Scientific Name: Phoca vitulina

The harbour seal is also known as the common seal. It is one of two species of seal which are common in British waters – the other being the grey seal. It is simple to spot harbour seals due to their distinctive appearance; they have grey or brown fur covered with a fine, spotted pattern.

Harbour seals can be spotted throughout the year around the coasts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and eastern England. Like all seals, harbour seals live both on land and in the water. However, they prefer the safety of sheltered shores and estuaries, hauling themselves onto sandbanks and beaches. They are known to eat a wide variety of fish, including herring, eels and flatfish, with the occasional shrimp or squid.



Born during the summer months, harbour seal babies usually weigh between 8-16kg. However, adult harbour seals have been known to weigh up to 150kg – the same as two adult humans! Fully-grown adult seals usually measure between 1.2-1.6m in length and have an average lifespan of 20-30 years.



Oystercatcher
Scientific Name: Haematopus ostralegus

The oystercatcher is a large and stocky bird, which is resident on Britain's coastline all year round. It is unmistakable in appearance with its bold black and white feathers, a long, powerful orange-red bill and reddish-pink legs.

Unsurprisingly, given their name, oystercatchers specialise in eating the shellfish available on Britain's coastline, such as oysters, cockles and mussels. They prise them open using their strong, flattened bills. Originally living solely on the coast, these incredibly noisy birds have recently been seen moving further inland to breed on lakes and waterways. However, during winter, large numbers can be seen gathering in major coastal estuaries, which are rich in cockles, such as Morecambe Bay.

Oystercatchers usually grow to between 40-45cm in length and have a wingspan of between 80-86cm. They usually weigh between 430-650g and have an average lifespan of around 12 years.

Common Hermit Crab
Scientific Name: Pagurus bernhardus

The common hermit crab calls the cold waters of Northern Europe home; they can be found living in the waters around all of the British Isles. Preferring to live around rocky and mixed seabeds, the common hermit crab is often spotted by nature fans having fun in a rock pool.

Interestingly, this crafty creature does not have a hard shell of its own to protect it from predators. Instead, it must find and use the shell of another creature. Due to this, the common hermit crab has a soft, twisted body, which has evolved to allow it to fit into shells of many different shapes and sizes. Common hermit crabs are usually reddish-orange in colour but brown and even purple hermit crabs have been seen. When threatened, the common hermit crab can completely retreat into its shell, blocking the entrance with its claws.

The common hermit crab becomes an adult at just one year of age and usually lives a maximum of 10 years. The overall size of the common hermit crab depends upon the shell it lives in but they have an average body length of just 8cm.

Why Not Go for a Dip?

Rock pooling is a fun activity and can be a great chance to explore the different creatures that share a home on Britain's coastline. All you need is:

- a small fishing net or sieve;
- a bucket;
- a Rock Pooling Identification Checklist.

1. It is best to go rock pooling when the weather is dry and calm (late spring to early autumn affords the best conditions). Always stay safe and warm when rock pooling. Wear shoes with a good grip, such as old trainers or wellies with a thick sole. Take a jumper or coat with you – the British coastline can be quite chilly!
2. Get an adult to fill your bucket with water from a rock pool.
3. Carefully, lower your net or sieve into the rock pool. Move it slowly through the water.
4. Gently lift out your net. Turn it over onto your bucket. Use the checklist to find out what you have caught. **Remember:** Look but never touch.
5. When you have finished, get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the bucket back into the rock pool.

Questions

1. Which of these is the scientific name for the Harbour Seal? Tick one.

   - ○ Haematopus ostralegus
   - ○ Phoca vitulina
   - ○ Pagurus bernhardus
   - ○ Delphinus delphis

2. Join the boxes to match each creature to its average length.

Oystercatcher	8cm
Harbour Seal	40-45cm
Common Hermit Crab	1.2-1.6m

3. Find and copy two adjectives the author uses in the first paragraph to describe the conditions along the British coastline.

   - _____
   - _____

4. Fill in the missing words.

   It is one of _____ species of seal which are common in _____ waters – the other being the _____ seal.

5. List two items that the text encourages you to take with you if you are rock pooling.

   - _____
   - _____

6. Explain what you think would happen if the common hermit crab was unable to find a disused shell.

7. Give your opinion on why oystercatchers may have moved inland to breed over recent years.

8. Fully explain how the common hermit crab protects itself from predators.

9. **...with the occasional shrimp or squid.**
Why do you think that the harbour seal only eats shrimp and squid **occasionally**?

Answers

1. Which of these is the scientific name for the Harbour Seal? Tick one.

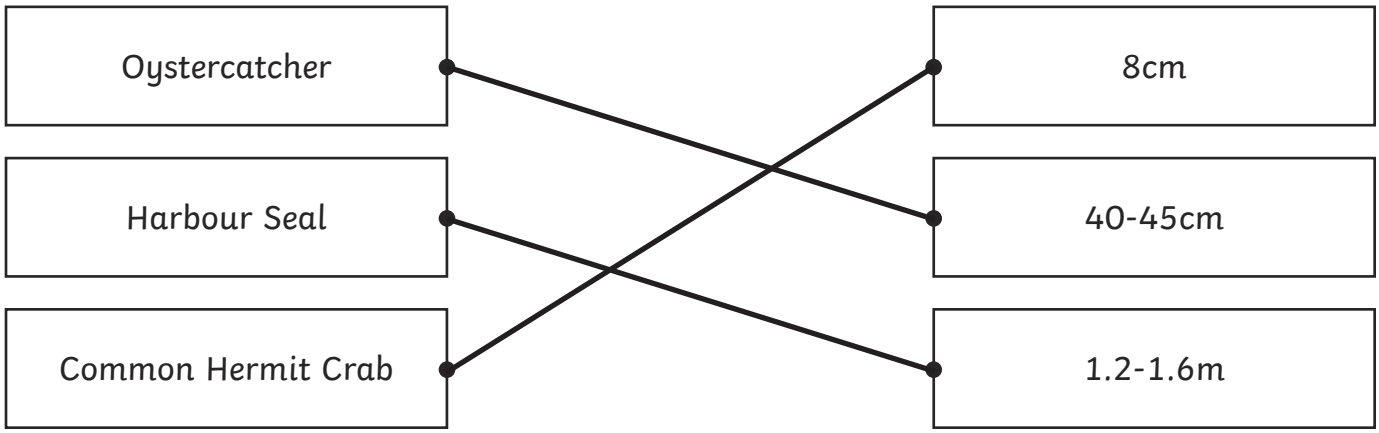
   ○ Haematopus ostralegus

   Phoca vitulina

   ○ Pagurus bernhardus

   ○ Delphinus delphis

2. Join the boxes to match each creature to its average length.



3. Find and copy two adjectives the author uses in the first paragraph to describe the conditions along the British coastline.
   harsh
   unpredictable

4. Fill in the missing words.
   It is one of **two** species of seal which are common in **British** waters – the other being the **grey** seal.

5. List two items that the text encourages you to take with you if you are rock pooling.
   Accept any two of the following: fishing net or sieve; bucket; Rock Pooling Identification Checklist; shoes with a good grip; old trainers; wellies; jumper; coat.

6. Explain what you think would happen if the common hermit crab was unable to find a disused shell.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: Without a shell to live in, the common hermit crab is likely to be eaten by predators because it does not have a way to protect itself.

7. Give your opinion on why oystercatchers may have moved inland to breed over recent years.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that oystercatchers may have moved inland to breed because lots of people drop litter inland and food for their babies may be easier to find.

8. Fully explain how the common hermit crab protects itself from predators.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: The common hermit crab protects itself from predators by living inside disused shells. When it senses that an attack from a predator is coming, it retreats into the shell and uses its claws to block the entrance.

9. **...with the occasional shrimp or squid.**
   Why do you think that the harbour seal only eats shrimp and squid **occasionally**?
   Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that the harbour seal only eats shrimp and squid occasionally because they are hard to find in the places that the seal chooses to live.

Our Coasts

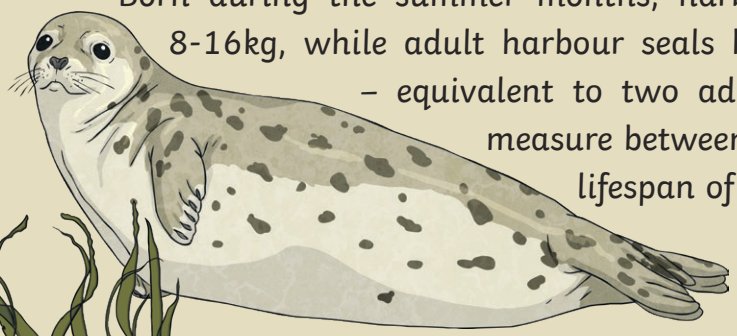
Britain's ever-evolving coastline is teeming with wildlife that withstand the often harsh and unpredictable conditions that the UK's beaches, peninsulas, sea lochs, bays and estuaries can offer. Let's delve into the fact files and examine some of the magnificent creatures that call our coasts home.

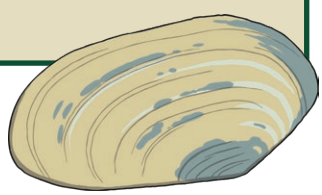
Harbour Seal
Scientific Name: Phoca vitulina

The harbour seal, also known as the common seal, is one of two seal species prevalent in British waters – the other being the grey, or horsehead, seal. Identifying a harbour seal is simple due to its distinctive appearance: grey or brown fur covered with a fine, spotted pattern.

Harbour seals are often spotted throughout the year around the coasts of Scotland, Northern Ireland and eastern England. Like all seals, harbour seals live both on land and in the water, preferring the safety of sheltered shores and estuaries where they haul themselves onto sandbanks and beaches. They are known to eat a wide variety of fish, including herring, eels and flatfish, with the occasional shrimp or squid.

Born during the summer months, harbour seal babies usually weigh between 8-16kg, while adult harbour seals have been known to weigh up to 150kg – equivalent to two adult humans. Fully-grown adults usually measure between 1.2-1.6m in length and have an average lifespan of 20-30 years.

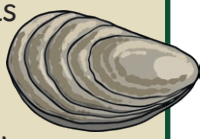




Oystercatcher
Scientific Name: Haematopus ostralegus

A large and stocky bird which is resident on Britain's coastline all year round, the oystercatcher is unmistakable in appearance, boasting bold black and white feathers, a long, powerful orange-red bill and reddish-pink legs.

Unsurprisingly, given their name, oystercatchers specialise in eating the abundant shellfish available on Britain's coastline, such as oysters, cockles and mussels, which they prise open using their strong, flattened bills. Originally a coastal species, these incredibly noisy birds have recently been seen moving further inland to breed on lakes and waterways. However, during winter, large numbers can be seen gathering in major coastal estuaries which are rich in cockles, such as Morecambe Bay.

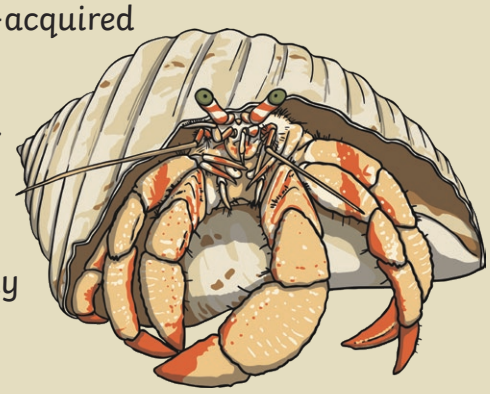


Oystercatchers usually grow to between 40-45cm in length, boasting a wingspan of between 80-86cm. They usually weigh between 430-650g and have an average lifespan of around 12 years.

Common Hermit Crab
Scientific Name: Pagurus bernhardus

The common hermit crab calls the cold waters of Northern Europe home and can be found resident around all of the British Isles. Preferring to reside around rocky and mixed seabeds, the common hermit crab is often spotted by avid nature fans having fun in a rock pool.

Fascinatingly, this crafty creature does not have a hard shell of its own to protect it from predators; instead, it must find and use the shell of another creature. Due to this, the common hermit crab has a soft, twisted body, which has evolved to allow it to fit into shells of many different shapes and sizes. Common hermit crabs are usually reddish-orange in colour, although brown and even purple hermit crabs have been observed. When threatened, the common hermit crab can completely retreat into its newly-acquired shell, blocking the entrance with its claws.



The common hermit crab becomes an adult at just one year of age and tends to live a maximum of 10 years. The overall size of the common hermit crab is dependent upon the shell it inhabits but they boast an average body length of a mere 8cm.

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4. Gently lift out your net. Turn it over onto your bucket. Use the checklist to find out what you have caught. **Remember:** Look but never touch.
5. When you have finished, get an adult to slowly pour the creatures from the bucket back into the rock pool.

Questions

1. **...is one of two seal species prevalent in British waters...**
   Which of these words is closest in meaning to prevalent? Tick one.

   ○ common
   ○ mundane
   ○ unnecessary
   ○ obscured

2. Join the boxes to match each creature to its scientific name.

Oystercatcher	Pagurus bernhardus
Harbour Seal	Haematopus ostralegus
Common Hermit Crab	Phoca vitulina

3. Find and copy three adjectives from the text used to describe an oystercatcher's bill.

   • _____

   • _____

   • _____

4. Fill in the missing words.

   _____ a harbour seal is _____ due to its _____

   appearance.

5. **...the common hermit crab can completely retreat into its shell...**
   Rewrite this sentence in your own words.

   _____

6. Fully explain how the common hermit crab's body has evolved to increase its chance of survival.

   _____

   _____

7. Explain why the name of the oystercatcher is unsurprising.

8. Give two ways in which the instructions for rock pooling in this text emphasise the importance of safety.

9. Summarise the information in the first paragraph of the text in 20 words or less.

10. Explain why harbour seals may prefer sheltered shores and estuaries over beaches and sea lochs.

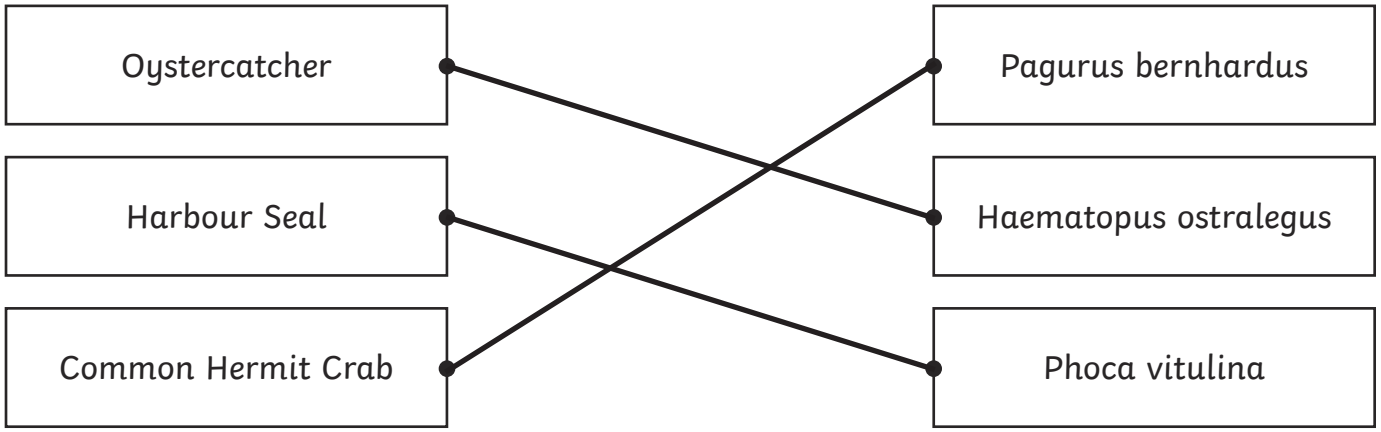
Answers

1. **...is one of two seal species prevalent in British waters...**
   Which of these words is closest in meaning to prevalent? Tick one.

   common

   ○ mundane
   ○ unnecessary
   ○ obscured

2. Join the boxes to match each creature to its scientific name.



3. Find and copy three adjectives from the text used to describe an oystercatcher's bill.
   Accept any three of the following: long; powerful; orange-red; strong; flattened.

4. Fill in the missing words.

   Identifying a harbour seal is **simple** due to its **distinctive** appearance.

5. **...the common hermit crab can completely retreat into its shell...**
   Rewrite this sentence in your own words.

   Pupils' own responses, such as: The common hermit crab can go completely into its shell.

6. Fully explain how the common hermit crab's body has evolved to increase its chance of survival.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: The common hermit crab's body has evolved to be soft and twisted, allowing it to fit into any available shell. This gives the common hermit crab the maximum possible chance of finding a shell to protect itself from predators and helps them to survive longer.

7. Explain why the name of the oystercatcher is unsurprising.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: The name of the oystercatcher is unsurprising because it enjoys catching oysters, as its name suggests.

8. Give two ways in which the instructions for rock pooling in this text emphasise the importance of safety.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: The instructions in the text emphasise the importance of being supervised by an adult in lots of different places. The instructions use adverbs such as carefully and gently to tell readers to be careful. They also give clear instructions about the safest way to do things, such as using shoes with good grip.

9. Summarise the information in the first paragraph of the text in 20 words or less.
   Pupils' own responses, such as: Despite its harsh conditions, lots of different creatures live along Britain's ever-changing coastlines. This text tells you more about them.

10. Explain why harbour seals may prefer sheltered shores and estuaries over beaches and sea lochs.
    Pupils' own responses, such as: Harbour seals may prefer the sheltered shores because they are more protected from predators than they are at the beach and in lochs. They may also find it easier to hunt for their food and raise their young safely.