

Skomer Island

Skomer Island is located 1 mile off the Pembrokeshire coast in West Wales. It is 1.5 miles long and 2 miles wide and is separated by a narrow 'bridge' on the east side of the island. You can only reach Skomer Island by boat. The stretch of water between the coast of Pembrokeshire and the island, called the Jack Sound, is very dangerous and many ships have been wrecked there.



Skomer is such a special place that is a Natural Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and a Special Protection Area. Most of the island is also classed as an ancient monument.

The island is made of lots of different types of rock, including volcanic rock that dates back 400 million years. Scientists believe the island was once attached to the mainland but was separated during the last ice age. On the island, you can find lots of ancient monuments such as stone circles, standing stones and the remains of prehistoric houses. Historians believe that more than 200 people used to live on the island during the stone age. That's over 5,000 years ago!

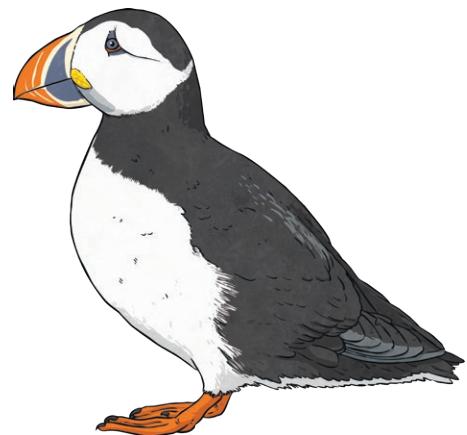
Skomer Island is famous for its puffin colonies. Between Skomer Island and its sister, Skokholm Island, there are over 10,000 pairs of puffins, making it the most important puffin colony in Britain. The puffins arrive on the island in mid-April and stay for three months. They thrive on the island, using rabbit burrows to nest in and they don't even mind the tourists!

Many other animals call the island home, such as razorbills, gannets, fulmars and over half the world's population of Manx shearwaters. In the waters around the island, you can find dolphins, harbour porpoises, Atlantic grey seals and even colourful sea slugs! It is also home to the Skomer vole, a 12cm long, forty-gram mammal that is unique to the island and cannot be found anywhere else in the world! It was discovered in 1867 by a pharmacist from Swansea called Robert Drane. There are over 20,000 Skomer voles on the island.

Today, Skomer Island is uninhabited. The last people to live there were the

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Codd family who left the island in 1950. The first tourists to the island were welcomed in April 1946 and many people still take day trips to the island today, although only 250 people are allowed on the island each day. In 2005, a renovation project was started to convert the old farm buildings into places where people could stay overnight. Solar panels were installed to make the whole building environmentally friendly.



Questions

1. What do you know about the geography of Skomer Island? E.g location, size, what the land is made from.

2. List two reasons why you think Skomer Island is a Natural Nature Reserve?

1. _____
2. _____

3. Why do you think Skomer Island has ancient monument Status?

4. Find two facts about the Skomer vole.

1. _____
2. _____

5. Who was Robert Drane?

6. How many puffins are there in total around Skomer Island?

7. Find the meaning of the following words:

Unique: _____

Uninhabited: _____

Thrive: _____

Questions

8. What happened during these significant years?

1867 _____

1946 _____

1950 _____

2005 _____

9. Do you think it was a good idea to use solar panels to power the guest houses? Give reasons for your answers.

10. Can you find out information about the puffin? Write a short fact file in the box below and draw a picture to illustrate your work.
