

# Little terns: Watch out for predators!



## Little tern teachers' notes

### Lesson 2 - Predation of the little tern

Teachers notes and activities for lessons about little tern for years 3 - 6, to be paired with the little tern learning pack workbooks for year 3-4 and year 5-6.

For more information on the little tern learning packs, accessible versions or on site activity packs for school visits, please visit [littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk](http://littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk) or call 01824 708313. All learning packs are available for download in PDF format and accessible PDF versions.

# Predation of the little tern

## Key Stage 2

Years 3 and 4

Years 5 and 6

## Lesson subjects in the little tern learning packs are:

1. Breeding                      2. Predation                      3. Conservation

## Lesson duration

40-50 minutes

## Areas of Learning and Expertise, Curriculum for Wales

Science, Literacy

## Science: statements of what matters:

The world around us is full of living things which depend on each other for survival

- Predators and prey

## Objectives

By the end of this activity learners will be able to:

- a) Understand predation and how it relates to the little tern
- b) Learn about the different skills that animals use to predate other animals

## Context

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The little tern is the smallest tern species you will come across in Britain, about half the size of a common tern. They have a yellow bill with a small black tip and a distinctive chattering voice. The adults only weigh a little over 50g, as much as a golf ball.

*Sternula albifrons* is the Latin name for the species and it translates as 'white-fronted small tern', an apt description of the forehead pattern and small size of the species in relation to other members of this seabird family.

The little tern arrives back in Britain from West Africa at the end of April to breed on sand or shingle beaches, spits or small inshore islands. The beach at Gronant offers good nesting habitat as it is made up of a perfect mix of shingle and sand. Little terns are predated upon by many different animals. Predators also have incredibly amazing skills to prey on little terns, their eggs and chicks.

It is important to stress that predators are not bad, they eat their prey so their young can survive. Most predators are predated on too, but they are vital to the ecosystem that supports both predators and prey.

The wardens, conservationists and volunteers at Gronant have protected the little tern in many clever ways including putting up fences, using diversion and scare tactics and moving the terns' nests to safer places. Lesson 3, conservation goes into this in detail.

## Video and animation assets

### Introduction to the life cycle of the little tern video (5 minutes)

If learners haven't already seen this video in lesson 1 play this video about the life cycle of the little tern as an introduction to the lesson



### Introduction to the little tern animation (1 minute 23 seconds)

Play this quick explainer animation to learners if they haven't already viewed it in lesson 1.



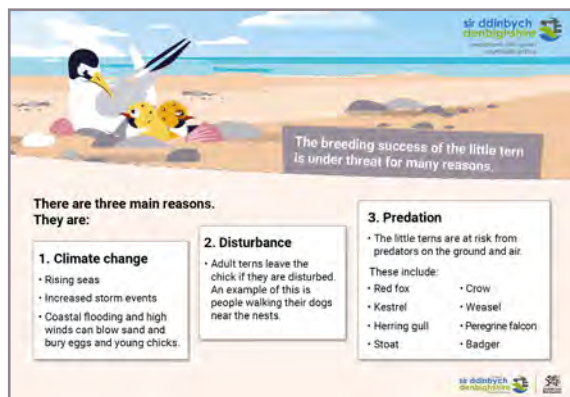
### Predation animation (1 minute 20 seconds)

Play this animation as an introduction to the lesson's subject: predation of the little tern.



## Powerpoint introduction - 10 minutes

Available to download for your lesson is a powerpoint (LittleTern\_Predation\_Presentation.pptx) to use for an introduction to predators. It comprises of eight slides and is also available as a PDF (LittleTern\_Predation\_Presentation.pdf).



The breeding success of the little tern is under threat for many reasons.

There are three main reasons. They are:

- 1. Climate change**
  - Rising seas
  - Increased storm events
  - Coastal flooding and high winds can blow sand and bury eggs and young chicks.
- 2. Disturbance**
  - Adult terns leave the chick if they are disturbed. An example of this is people walking their dogs near the nests.
- 3. Predation**
  - The little terns are at risk from predators on the ground and air.
  - These include:
    - Red fox
    - Kestrel
    - Herring gull
    - Stoat
    - Crow
    - Weasel
    - Peregrine falcon
    - Badger



We will learn how climate change and disturbance affect the little tern in later lessons. Today's lesson is about

### PREDATION



Predation is when one animal kills another to eat it. The animal that kills the other is called a **PREDATOR**.

The animal that is killed is called the **PREY**.



An animal that eats another animal is called a **CARNIVORE** or **PREDATOR**.

Predators are at the top of the food chain.

**We are all carnivores and predators!**



**Predators aren't being mean!**

They need to catch and eat other animals to survive and feed their own babies, so they grow up to be healthy.

They are a very important part of the ecosystem as they help manage the whole food chain, keeping the balance in nature.



The little tern has many predators including:

**MAMMALS**

For example red foxes, badgers, stoats and weasels.

These mammals use their stealth and speed to kill little terns and their chicks.

Foxes are nocturnal, which means they hunt at night. A fox has very good night eyesight, sense of smell and hearing, it can hear a watch ticking 40 yards away.



**BIRDS**

For example peregrine falcons, carrion crows, kestrels and herring gulls.

These birds rely on their agility in the air, speed and fantastic eyesight. The birds of prey have sharp talons and hooked beaks which they use to kill and tear their prey into smaller pieces to eat.

However little terns are brave birds and will act together to mob these larger birds in order to protect their chicks.



**But...**

Little terns are predators too!

They catch small fish, for example sand eels, young herring, shrimps and other invertebrates that live in the shallow sea.



## Glossary of helpful words

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|------|-----------|--|
| i.   | Predator  | An animal that eats other animals.                                   |
| ii.  | Nocturnal | Animals that are active during the night and sleep by day.           |
| iii. | Carnivore | An animal that only eats meat.                                       |
| iv.  | Ecosystem | A community of living organisms that live in a specific environment. |

## Resources

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A-Z Animals

Discover Wildlife

Little Tern Project

National Geographic

Denbighshire Little Tern Project

North Wales Little Tern

North Wales Wildlife Trust

British Trust for Ornithology

Royal Society for the Protection of Birds

RSPB's Wild Challenge award scheme provides a perfect framework for learning and is open to all ages and abilities. Encourage your pupils to apply their curriculum knowledge outdoors in nature and support them to develop resilience and agency.

RSPB Wild Challenge is an award programme containing 24 activities which can link to your curriculum learning. You can choose the most relevant activities and each one helps children to connect with and learn through nature. There are bronze, silver and gold awards to achieve depending on how many activities you do.

[rspb.org.uk/schoolswildchallenge](https://rspb.org.uk/schoolswildchallenge)

Welsh Government Digital Compliance Framework

Welsh Government National Literacy and Numeracy Framework Curriculum for Wales

## Activity 1 - Little tern predator top trumps

**Activity duration 30 - 35 minutes (15 minutes preparation, 15-20 minutes play)**

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### Science

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Aims to inform learners about:

- Predation of the little tern
- Adaptations of predators

### You will need

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- Two pieces of cardboard per set of top trump cards
- Two pieces of paper per set of top trump cards
- Each piece of A4 landscape cardboard will make four x top trump cards
- Paper glue
- Round edged scissors for learners
- Colouring pens/pencils

### Activity steps

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1. Ask learners to get into pairs.
2. Either prepare the eight x top trump cards per pair of learners before the lesson starts or ask the class to make the cards.
3. If you make the cards it will take longer than the 15-minute preparation time that it would take for the learners to make the cards. However once the cards are made subsequent classes can use them.
4. Learners then have the option to use the outline illustrations that they can colour in or use the colour illustrations.
5. To make the cards, print off the two x A4 templates from the IWB resource for each pair playing the game. The pages have the type of predator, their category rating for speed, weight and killer rating and a fun fact.
6. Once they have printed off the pages ask them to colour in the animal outlines.
7. Use the interactive whiteboard resource to display the pictures of the animals in colour as a reference (the pictures are in the IWB lesson resource.)
8. Or ask them to print off and glue the already coloured illustrations to cardboard.
9. Take two pieces of cardboard and glue the top trump card pages on to the pieces of cardboard.

10. Whilst the glue is drying ask learners to watch the how to play top trumps video below, the link is also in their workbooks.
11. Once the glue is dry ask learners to cut up their paper into top trump cards.  
Each portrait page has four cards.
12. When everyone is ready tell the class to play top trumps for 15 minutes.
13. Tell learners that when they win a round of cards, they can read aloud their fun fact to their classmate.
14. Tell learners they should pay attention to the facts as there will be a quiz later to see how much they have learnt.



## How to play top trumps

Ask learners to watch this video, the link is in their workbook.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RNtB--oGiw>

## Top Trumps content

Red fox	5 - 8kg	30 mph	Rate 100	Mammal	Hearing

### Fun fact

The fox is the number one killer of the little tern.  
 They are nocturnal, meaning they hunt at night.  
 They can squeeze through tiny gaps to predate the tern eggs and chicks.  
 They can also jump 6ft fences.

Weasel	55 - 130g	15 mph	Rate 80	Mammal	Powerful jaws

### Fun fact

Weasels are nocturnal.  
 His jaws and canines are like a lions - able to puncture a skull with ease.

Badger	10 - 18kg	16 - 19mph	Rate 65	Mammal	Powerful diggers / strong claws

### Fun fact

Badgers are nocturnal.  
 The word badger comes from the French word becheur, meaning digger.

Stoat	140 - 445g	20mph	Rate 90	Mammal	Aggression

### Fun fact

Stoats are nocturnal.  
 Stoats are voracious and aggressive predators that kill their prey with one bite to the back of the neck!

Peregrine falcon	1kg	242mph	Rate 80	Bird	Faster than any other animal

### Fun fact

The fastest animal on earth when it dives to catch its prey.  
 It is nearly four times the speed of the fastest land animal (the cheetah).

## Top Trumps content

Predator	Weight	Speed	Tern killer rating*	Group	Super skill
Carrion crow	370 - 650g	70mph	Rate 90	Bird	Intelligence

### Fun fact

The all-black carrion crow is one of the cleverest, most adaptable of our birds.

Kestrel	156 - 252g	38 mph	Rate 95	Bird	Eyesight
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### Fun fact

When hunting, the Kestrel will hover before suddenly swooping down to attack its prey. A kestrel can spot a small insect from 50 m away.

Herring gull	690 - 1440g	20 mph	Rate 75	Bird	Bold
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### Fun fact

They are long-lived birds and tend to have a lifespan range of 32 to 49 years. They tend to forage for dumping grounds, rubbish heap, leftovers, worms and chicks of birds. They also run off with the eggs and fledglings of other birds.

## Extension activity (15 minutes)

Ask learners to plot a bar chart using the top trump data.

## Activity 2 - Predation quiz

**Activity duration 20 minutes**

Ask learners to answer the following questions.

After 10-15 minutes ask for a show of hands to answer the questions.

Did anyone get 7 out of 7 correct?

**Ask learners to try not to peek at their cards to answer the following questions.**

Questions		Answers
1.	What does nocturnal mean?	Active at night
2.	Name three nocturnal predators that predate little tern? (3 points)	Red fox, Weasel, Badger, Stoat
3.	What does the word Badger mean in French?	Becheur, meaning digger
4.	What is the fastest predator on earth?	Peregrine falcon
5.	Which bird of prey is known for hovering above its prey before swooping down to catch it?	Kestrel
6.	Which predator is thought to be one of the cleverest?	Carrion crow
7.	Which top trump predator lives the longest?	Herring gull

## RSPB's Wild Challenge

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You can also find a 'Spot it at the point of Ayr' PDF at [littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk](https://littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk), to use on site visits to Gronant, featuring all the birds that you can see there.



yn rhoi  
cartref i  
fyd natur

giving  
nature  
a home

## Chwiliwch! Adar yn Y Parlwr Du Spot it! Birds at Point of Ayr



**Gylfinir**  
Curlew



**Môr-wennol fechan**  
Little tern



**Corhwyaden**  
Teal



**Glas y dorian**  
Kingfisher



**Pioden y môr**  
Oystercatcher



**Redshank**



**Pintail**



**Crëyr bach**  
Little egret



**Corhedydd y waun**  
Meadow pipit



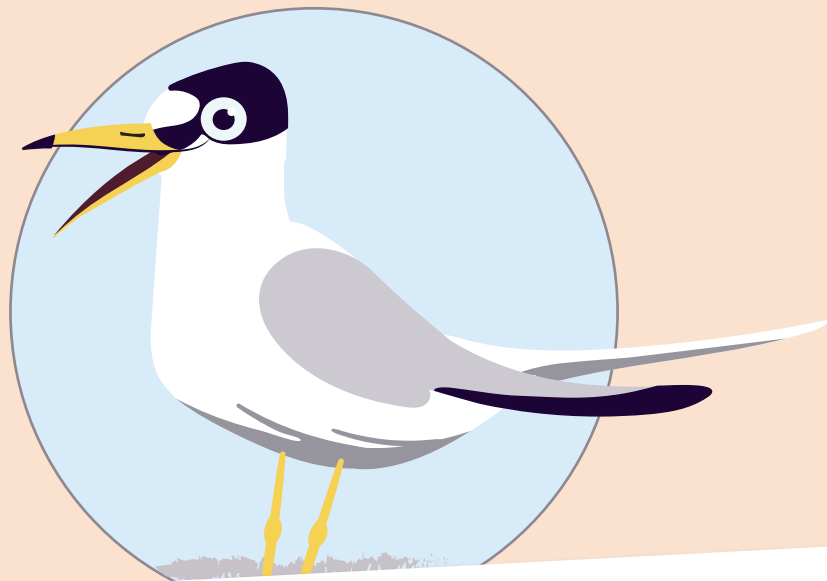
**Hebog tramor**  
Peregrine



**Hwyaden yr eithen**  
Shelduck

Illustrations by Mike Langman, Chris Shields

# Little terns at Gronant



**Visit our website at  
[littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk](http://littleterns.denbighshirecountryside.org.uk)  
to find out more about the little terns at Gronant**