

On July 26th, the Audubon and Explore.org Cam team hosted a live chat on Twitter. Project Puffin founder Dr. Stephen Kress answered questions live on the [Audubon Society](#) Twitter account. We received many great questions and wanted to share them (along with Dr. Kress's answers) for anyone who missed the chat.

Q: Which type of puffin is the puffin loafing ledge cam following?

A: The loafing ledge cam follows Atlantic Puffins.

Q: Has Dr. Kress been to the Cliffs of Moher in Ireland? I just went and saw thousands of puffins. It was incredible.

A: Dr. Kress has been to the Cliffs of Moher, but not during puffin nesting season, so the puffins were at sea. Nonetheless, he found the cliffs to be beautiful.

Q: What became of Petey's body? Was it left for the parents to see?

A: The parents did see Petey. The research team gave Petey a small funeral and buried him on the island.

Q: Do all species of Puffins typically behave the same way, with the same eating habits, mating habits, burrows types, etc?

A: All Puffins basically have same life history. All nest in burrows, eat fish, live similar lives.

Q: Why do the osprey bob their heads?

A: When Osprey see something in the distance, they bob their heads to follow the motion and help them focus their eyes.

Q: Is it possible to establish a new camera in another puffin burrow to see a baby fledge successfully?

A: There are very few burrows with the specific size and opening necessarily to fit a cam. We haven't found another, but can still learn from Petey's burrow.

Q: Why do the puffins feed their chicks whole fish rather than crop milk?

A: Pigeons and doves use crop milk while other birds eat insects, mammals, or fish. Whole fish are high in protein & available to seabirds.

Q: Did Petey die of starvation or choking on a fish?

A: We believe he starved. When Petey was examined, there was no evidence of choking or fish in his stomach

Q: Was a necropsy performed on Petey? If so what were the findings?

A: Petey was examined, weighed & measured. An internal exam was not performed, but it was clear he was underweight & small for age.

Q: What was his weight, and what is the average weight for a chick his age?

A: Petey was 141 grams and his wing chord (length from bend to tip) was 82mm. Average for his age would be about 160-180 grams.

Q: What is the average size to fledge?

A: Puffin chicks normally fledge at 200 grams.

Q: He did appear somewhat immature for a chick. Was Petey also under developed as well?

A: As far as we could tell, Petey was acting normal, outside of his size. However, there's still much to learn about

burrow behavior, which is one of the reasons why the burrow cam is important.

Q: Where are all the birds? I live in Warren County, NY and they have stopped singing and the number has decreased.

A: By late July, most birds have stopped nesting and therefore stopped singing. Birds are much less conspicuous this time of year.

Q: What would happen to Petey if his parents didn't return to feed him? Would other puffins adopt him?

A: While adoption does occur in other species of birds, it has never been documented in Puffins.

Q: Is the wonderful beak coloration used in sexual or species recognition processes?

A: Beak coloration indicates age and is also an indicator of health. More brightly colored birds are considered healthier.

Q: So by the beak how do you determine or estimate age?

A: By the time a Puffin is two years old, its beak has all basic colors. As the bird continues to ages, the beak gets larger and develops more ridges along the orange section. The larger and more ornate the beak, the older the bird.

Q: 25 years ago I was in Northern Norway and the puffins seemed chubbier than they are now. I have read since then that their main food source is dying. What do we do?

A: Puffins in Norway can't find enough food for their chicks due to warming oceans. We can reduce energy use and take climate change action to help address this issue.

Q: Are Atlantic Puffins threatened or endangered and how many are in the wild?

A: Atlantic Puffins aren't endangered, but they are listed as a threatened species in Maine. There are estimated 8M in the wild, mostly in Iceland.

Q: Was there any way that Petey's parents expressed grief?

A: We don't have any way of knowing whether or not birds can express human emotions like grief.

Q: I've heard that the comeback of the eagle on the coast has caused problems for puffins. Is this true?

A: Eagles coming back has been a problem for seabirds; however, having interns live on our islands prevent eagles from landing, thus helping puffins.

Q: Dr. Kress, would it ever be possible to rescue an ailing puffling, or too difficult to get into burrow?

A: Most chicks are out of reach. Additionally, we typically do not intervene.

Q: Other than global warming, what else is leading to a shift in the fish population at Seal Island?

A: In addition to global warming, many fisheries here harvest the same fish Puffins depend on (Atlantic Herring & White Hake).

Q: What other birds are related to puffins?

A: Birds in the Alcid family are related to Puffins, such as Common Murres, Razorbills & Black Guillemots.

Q: Dr. Kress do you have a personal favorite bird besides Puffins?

A: I really like Black Guillemots & Arctic Terns & Roseate Terns & Common Terns. Actually, I like them all!

Q: *Will you post an update once the Puffin chicks begin to fledge?*

A: We will post an update on this blog once we know some chicks have fledged.

Q: *What will the behavior look like when baby Ospreys are about to take their first flight? And do they come back to the nest?*

A: When ready, Ospreys will stand on the rim of the nest with their wings flapping. They may return to the nest after first flight.

Q: *How long does it take to get used to the chattering noises from the gulls on the islands?*

A: Most of the seabird stewards that live on the island enjoy the noise. They miss the sounds when they're not on the island!

Q: *I was at Hog Island last year in mid to late August and there were still Osprey babies in the nest. Is that normal?*

A: There was an Osprey pair last year that started their nest later than normal, so the chicks were still around a bit later in summer

Q: *Do you think Petey's parents are first time parents?*

A: It's difficult to know for sure because the birds aren't banded, but based on the beaks, at least one of the parents looks like a younger bird, around 4 or 5 years in age.

Q: *My son adopted C6 - one of a trio. [Has this puffin been spotted this year?](#)*

A: Yes, C6 has been re-sighted this year. Thanks for adopting a Puffin. If anyone else is interested, [click here](#).

Q: *Do you know what caused Petey's death?*

A: We believe Petey starved due to the fact that his parents were not bringing him enough of the right kind of fish.

Q: *Why is there netting & seaweed in the Osprey nest?*

A: Its primary use is as a liner & cushion for eggs, but overtime they have also been used as "toys!"

Q: *I imagine many Seabirds are indicators of how our oceans are faring?*

A: Seabirds are important indicators of ocean health, especially of over-fishing. Rising ocean levels are also a threat to seabirds worldwide.

Q: *Is Petey's death an indicator of fisheries health or a somewhat normal occurrence for Puffin chicks?*

A: About 10% of Puffin chicks die in the burrow, so we don't think Petey's death is necessarily an indicator of fisheries' health.

We also received this question after the Twitter chat was closed:

Q: *Why are the cameras sometimes unavailable?*

A: Rest assured, we do monitor our cameras, as do the staff at [explore.org](#) - if they are down, please note that [explore.org](#) is aware and will get them back up as soon as possible. There are various reasons why they go down, including animals accidentally unhooking the wires, solar power, or weather. If the camera cannot be re-started, sometimes a staff member will have to head out to the island to try to figure out what the problem is. So, that is why sometimes they are down for longer than any of us (staff or viewers) would like. We love that all of you are tuning in, though - *thank you!*