Phil the godwit's Arctic round trip

LEVEL B1


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I. WARM-UP

1. What is the longest journey you have ever made?
2. What animals in your country move with the seasons?
3. How could people help wild birds on long journeys?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

tracker
a small device that follows and records movement

migration
the regular, long-distance travel that animals make each year

peninsula
a piece of land almost surrounded by water

wetland
land with shallow water where many birds feed and rest

Arctic
the very cold region around the North Pole

flock
to come together in a large group, like birds do

breed
to produce young

flyway
a usual route that many birds follow when they migrate

III. READING

A bar-tailed godwit called Phil has completed a 6,800-mile journey from Norfolk to Siberia and back. RSPB scientists mapped his migration with a tracker weighing 6g. The Wash Wader Research Group fitted it in January and named him after its long-time leader, Phil Ireland.

The device showed Phil flying from the Wash to the Wadden Sea coasts of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany in March. He then went to the Taymyr peninsula in central Siberia in late May to breed. On the return trip he crossed the Arctic Ocean off northern Norway.

He paused on three small Norwegian islands and stopped again at the Wadden Sea. Phil is now back at RSPB Snettisham on the edge of the Wash, where thousands of birds flock at the highest tides. RSPB adviser Jeff Kew said tracking Phil shows why protecting migratory birds needs a global effort.

Dr Nigel Clark of the Wash Wader Research Group said the Wash is linked to the east Atlantic flyway, a network of wetlands used by millions of birds each year.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **The Guardian***: "Meet Phil, the bar-tailed godwit tracked on...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How far did Phil travel on his round trip?
2. Who fitted Phil's tracker, and when?
3. Which sea area did Phil visit before flying to Siberia?
4. How did Phil travel back from Siberia to the Wadden Sea?
5. Why do experts say protection must be a global effort?

V. DISCUSSION

1. What surprised you most about Phil's journey? Why?
2. Why are wetlands important for migrating birds?
3. Should countries work together to protect bird flyways? Why?
4. Have you ever seen a big flock of birds? Describe it.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Reported speech

We report what people say with say/said + a clause. With said, we usually move the verb one tense back: present → past; past → past perfect; was/were → had been; will → would. If the fact is still true, we can keep the present, as the text does: "said the Wash is linked".

"Dr Nigel Clark said **the Wash was linked to the east Atlantic flyway**.*"*

"A guide said **Phil was back at RSPB Snettisham**.*"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence in reported speech: put the words in brackets one tense back.

1. Researchers said Phil (flew) ___ via the Wadden Sea. _____
2. An adviser said thousands (flock) ___ at the highest tides. _____
3. Staff said the device (was fitted) ___ in January. _____
4. Scientists said he (was breeding) ___ in late May. _____
5. Locals said many birds (use) ___ those wetlands. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach or check: bar-tailed godwit, the Wash, Wadden Sea, Siberia, peninsula, wetland, flyway, and miles vs kilometres.
- Run the reading in two passes: first gist (where and how far), then detail (route and stops). Pair students for the comprehension, then check as a class.
- For discussion, start in pairs so quieter students can speak, then form small groups to compare reasons linked to the text.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Collect quick first reactions, then ask for the single detail that shocked them most.
2. Elicit food, rest and safety; push for concrete examples from the text like the Wash.
3. Do a show of hands first, then mix groups so each side explains their reasons clearly.
4. Model two sentences yourself (where, when, how many) to set the level and detail.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: In pairs, write a 90-word news update from RSPB Snettisham about Phil's return.

Presentation: In small groups, sketch Phil's route on a map and present three key stops in 2 minutes.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Reported speech

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How far did Phil travel on his round trip?
   6,800 miles.
2. Who fitted Phil's tracker, and when?
   The Wash Wader Research Group, in January.
3. Which sea area did Phil visit before flying to Siberia?
   The Wadden Sea coasts of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.
4. How did Phil travel back from Siberia to the Wadden Sea?
   He crossed the Arctic off northern Norway, pausing on three small islands.
5. Why do experts say protection must be a global effort?
   Because many birds use a flyway network of wetlands across countries.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: We report what people say with say/said + a clause. With said, we usually move the verb one tense back: present → past; past → past perfect; was/were → had been; will → would. If the fact is still true, we can keep the present, as the text does: "said the Wash is linked". (Examples constructed.)

"Dr Nigel Clark said **the Wash was linked to the east Atlantic flyway**.*"*

"A guide said **Phil was back at RSPB Snettisham**.*"*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence in reported speech: put the words in brackets one tense back.

1. Researchers said Phil ___ via the Wadden Sea. **had flown**
2. An adviser said thousands ___ at the highest tides. **flocked**
3. Staff said the device ___ in January. **had been fitted**
4. Scientists said he ___ in late May. **had been breeding**
5. Locals said many birds ___ those wetlands. **used**