

[Return to Activities Page](#)

WALK A MILE IN ALBATROSS SHOES

Appropriate grade level: 3-8

Subjects: Science, Math, Language Arts

Time required: 1-2 class periods

Hawaii Performance Standards:

Science:

- Describe different physical and behavioral traits that contribute to the survival of a particular living thing.
- Demonstrate an understanding that every species is directly or indirectly interdependent with others in the ecosystem.
- Identify human activities that may create changes resulting in unbalanced ecosystems.
- Explain how living things interact with each other and their physical environment, in constructive ways (making materials for growth) or destructive (causing loss of habitat) ways.
- Demonstrate an appreciation for the environment.
- Develop an awareness of environmental issues.
- Identify measuring instruments that can be used to gather accurate information for making scientific comparisons of objects and events.

Math:

- Describe how to count quantities larger than 1,000 in various situations.
- Compute with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percents to solve problems.
- Identify various sampling techniques used to collect data.
- Estimate measures.
- Collect, organize, and describe data using a systematic approach.
- Find patterns in the environment.

Language Arts:

- Communicate ideas and issues of personal significance.
- Explain own thinking and viewpoints, and provide convincing arguments using supportive facts and information.
- Express self through writing for various purposes and audiences.

Objectives:

- Upon completion of this activity students will recognize the correlation between the trash they dispose of around their school and the environmental hazards that face wildlife, specifically the Laysan albatross.
- Upon completion of this activity students will be able to relate the distance they walk around the school to the distance that the albatross fly for food.
- Upon completion of this activity students will be able to state three ways that they can help the albatross chicks and other wildlife to survive.
- Upon completion of this activity students will clean up one mile of potential wildlife habitat and will make a difference in their environment.

Materials:

Measuring tape, pencil, paper, a cloth bag for each student, a one gallon plastic zip lock bag, weight scale (g)

Procedure:

1. Every year albatross chicks in Hawaii die from ingested plastics. Some of these plastics come from

thousands of miles away. How do they get those plastics from places like San Francisco? The parents ingest plastics on long distance food trips and bring it back to feed the chicks. Adult albatrosses have the ability to regurgitate items in their stomachs and the chicks don't. Chicks get so much plastic in their stomach that there isn't any room left for food! They perish from malnutrition. Show the picture of the stomach contents of just one albatross that died from plastics on the *Other Problems with Humans* link of the web site to emphasize this point. Discuss this environmental hazard with your students and then illustrate it using the following activity. Several concepts such as distance, environmental protection, feeding strategy, and bird biology can be discussed using this activity.

2. Measure a distance of one mile around your school or anywhere that you and your students want to make a difference in the environment. This distance can be used to compare the amount of trash you pick up in one mile to the distance that the Laysan albatross flies for food and the trash they might pick up over that distance. A few options to do this are: Measure the number of feet around your school building and then divide that number into 5280 (the number of feet in one mile) to determine the number of times you will walk around the building, or measure one half mile on a chosen stretch of road with a vehicle and walk up one side and down the other to complete the full mile. After the activity is completed, you might have the students determine how many laps they would have to complete to equal the flight of one of the albatrosses you are tracking.
3. Explain to the students that you are going to walk a mile in an albatross's shoes. That is, if they wore shoes! Students will take a cloth bag (so you don't waste plastic) and pick up any trash that they see along the one mile trail they (or you) have measured. During the walk have students think about how much more trash the albatross might find over its long journey. Would they go that far for food? Discuss some reasons why the albatross might need to go so far for food. Why does the albatross pick up trash anyway? Discuss feeding strategies and have students find trash that might look like a squid or fish near the surface of the ocean.
4. Bring the trash back to your classroom and weigh it. Weigh each individual student's trash using the plastic zip lock bag (weigh it first so you don't include that in your measurement), then add all of the measurements together to figure out the total weight of trash that you collected. Albatross chicks that are presumed dead from plastics can have as much as 400 g of plastic in their stomach. Figure out how many chicks your class possibly saved by picking up that much trash.
5. As a conclusion discuss ways that students can keep trash out of the oceans and out of the environment around them. Have younger students list ways that they can help every day to help keep trash out of the environment. Have older students write a goal list of conservation practices to accomplish until the end of the school year. These might include activities like starting a recycling program in their homes or at school, writing a letter for the school newspaper about their environmental studies and results, creating a display to increase environmental awareness in or near the school, etc. Be sure to have a timeline to check and see if those goals have been accomplished.

Extensions:

To include other birds and wildlife in your discussion, have each student pick a color of trash that they will pick up exclusively. You can illustrate the fact that every type of wildlife has specific tastes and will choose certain types of foods. This means that some species are more likely than to pick up plastics than others are. Are there other hazards that might affect these other animals?

Related Activities:

ADAPTABLE MANDIBLES illustrates feeding strategies and food preferences.

WHERE IN THE WORLD AM I? practices methods to determine albatross flight distance.