



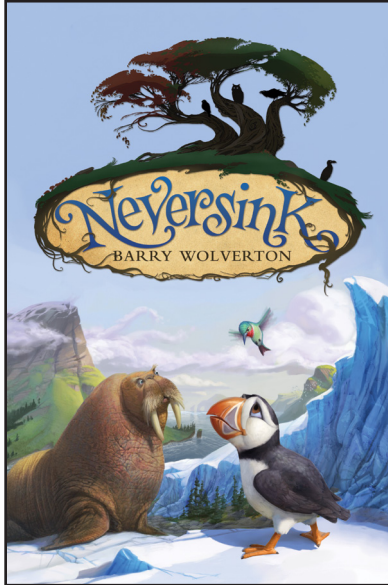
# Neversink

BARRY WOLVERTON



# Neversink Curriculum Guide

Walden Pond Press was fortunate to work with The National Audubon Society's Project Puffin to put together this curriculum guide to use with your students as you read the book *Neversink*. The activities in this guide are recommended for Grades 3 through 6.



*Neversink* by Barry Wolverton  
Hardcover (ISBN: 978-0-06-202791-7)

## About Neversink:

Along the Arctic Circle lies a small island called Neversink, whose jagged cliffs and ice-gouged rocks are home to a colony of odd-looking sea birds called auks. Chief among them is our hero, Lockley J. Puffin. With their oceanfront views and plentiful supply of fish, the auks have little to ruffle their feathers, save for Lockley's two best friends, Egbert, a know-it-all walrus and Ruby a sharp-tongued hummingbird. But all of this is about to change. Rozbell, the newly crowned king of the Owl Parliament, is dealing with a famine on the mainland of Tytonia just across the bay from Neversink. He has long had his scheming eyes on the small colony to the northwest. Now Neversink's independence hangs in the balance. An insurgence of owls will inevitably destroy life as the auks know it—unless Lockley can do something about it. Barry Wolverton's debut is an epic tale of some very un-epic birds, a fast-paced and funny story of survival, friendship, and fish.

## About the Author:

Barry Wolverton makes his debut with *Neversink*, the product of a longtime interest in arctic wildfowl and Scandinavian folklore. He has also written for National Geographic, Scholastic.com, and Discovery Networks. Barry lives in Memphis. You can find him online at [www.barrywolverton.com](http://www.barrywolverton.com).

## Acknowledgements:

Walden Pond Press is grateful to The National Audubon Society's Project Puffin for permission to make use of its extraordinary educational resources. Project Puffin scientists work on the Maine coast to bring Atlantic Puffins and other seabirds back to islands where they once lived but had disappeared, due to hunting, in the late 1800's. The scientists, many of them young and dedicated college students, live directly on the islands where the birds nest, and help protect them from disturbances, while studying and banding them. Since 1973, Project Puffin has restored three puffin colonies, with about 1200 pairs of birds currently nesting, as well as 8000 pairs of migratory Terns, including some on the endangered species list.

For more information about Project Puffin, please see: <http://www.projectpuffin.org>



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# Activity 1: Why Puffins Don't Freeze

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The weather on Neversink is pretty dreadful—rugged, wintry, windy and bleak for most of the year. How does a little puffin like Lockley keep warm in spite of deep Arctic chill? All it takes is a some blubber—a layer of fat beneath the skin. Try this experiment to see what we mean.

**Objective:** To feel how a layer of fat helps insulate the body from the chilling effects of cold water.

**Time:** About half a class period or so

## Materials:

- A can or two of Crisco shortening
- A dozen or more quart-sized zipping plastic bags
- Duct Tape
- Several basins of icy, cold water

**Method:** Measure one cup of shortening and place it in a quart-sized zipping plastic bag. Turn a second bag inside out and put it inside the bag with the shortening, being sure to reverse the zipper tracks. Zip the bags together. For added protection, seal the bags around the zipper with duct tape. Push the shortening around, from the outside, to distribute it evenly in the “mitt.”

For each mitt with shortening make an empty mitt, without shortening. These mitts will be used to compare with the insulated models.

Give each student a chance to place one hand in an empty mitt and one in an insulated mitt (with the shortening). Then ask the student to place both hands in a basin or sink of icy, cold water. What happens? (Since this process doesn't take very long, you can get by with making only a few sets of mitts and taking turns with them.)



Photo courtesy of Stephen Kress  
and [www.projectpuffin.org](http://www.projectpuffin.org)

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**Discussion:** While it is well known that marine mammals such as whales, seals, and polar bears have thick layers of fat to help keep them warm, northern seabirds such as puffins also rely on internal layers of fat to help them survive frigid arctic waters. This fat, combined with their external water-repelling and air-trapping coat of feathers, allows seabirds to live in a seemingly harsh environment. (Older students could research other adaptations to the cold, for birds as well as other life forms.)



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# Activity 2: A Ten-Minute Flapping Puffin

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Puffins are among nature's most unusual creatures. A puffin is small and stubby, about the size of a gallon container, with black and white feathers, bright orange legs and large black, yellow and orange-striped bills. Puffins fly awkwardly. They have to beat their small wings very fast to keep their bodies in the air, getting tossed around all the time by rough winds. Yet they are amazing, as well—great at catching fish, great at making a living in their inhospitable homes. As you make this Puffin Puppet, take a close look to see how this very interesting bird is put together.

**Objective:** Turn an envelope into a simple but fun finger puppet.

**Time:** Ten minutes or so.

## Materials:

- Letter sized envelopes (not business) with pointed, rather than square flaps;
- One envelope for each student
- Transparent Tape
- Scissors
- Crayons or Markers
- Aluminum Foil, feathers, sequins, glue (all optional)

## Directions:

1. Carefully unstuck the glued flaps on an envelope and spread it out in front of you, inside facing up.
2. Fold the bottom flap of the envelope back in place and secure it with two pieces of tape along the sides.
3. Fold the envelope in half from the right to the left, so that the side flaps meet. You can lick the glue on the top flap to seal the two halves of it together.
4. Now turn the envelope 90° so that the side flaps point down. These will be wings.
5. Look at a photograph of a puffin and see the beautiful colors of its beak and face. Draw the puffin's head and wings on your puffin. On one side of the face, draw fish in the puffin's beak. If you have feathers, you can glue them on the puffin's wings, and aluminum foil or sequins can be added to the fish.
6. Carefully cut a sliver of both halves of the puppet so that you can slide your middle and index fingers into the slots that are formed. Move your fingers to make the puppet flap its wings.
7. The puffin flies away to sea—and then it returns to its chick with a beak full of fish!



Photo courtesy of Bill Schlotz and [www.projectpuffin.org](http://www.projectpuffin.org)



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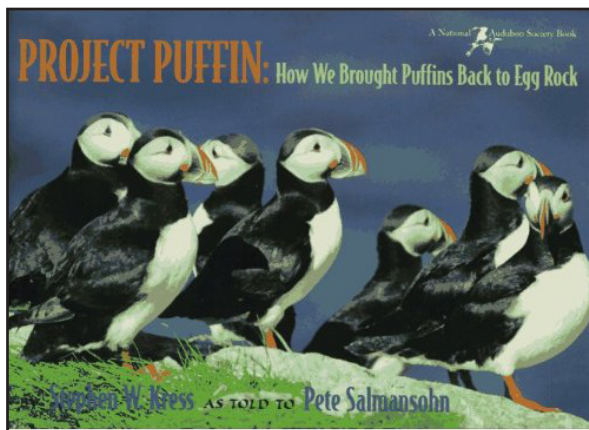
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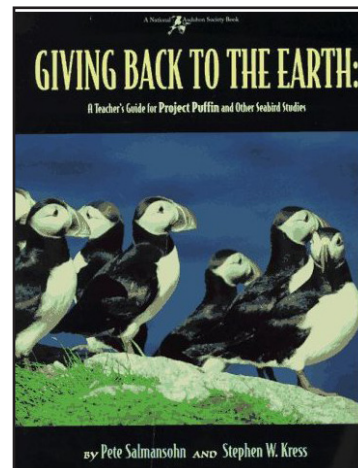


Photo courtesy of Bill Schlotz and [www.projectpuffin.org](http://www.projectpuffin.org)

## To Find Out More About Puffins



**PROJECT PUFFIN:** *How We Brought Puffins Back to Egg Rock* by Stephen W. Kress as told to Pete Salmansohn. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 1997.



**GIVING BACK TO THE EARTH:** *A Teacher's Guide for Project Puffin and Other Seabird Studies* by Pete Salmansohn and Stephen W. Kress. Gardiner, Maine: Tilbury House, 1997.



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