



## Visiting Glacier Bay A Virtual Exploration of Glacier Bay



**Activity:** Visiting Glacier Bay  
**School Subjects:** Life Science  
**Grade Level:** K-2 **Time Requirement:** 45 minutes

### National Standards Addressed

**NS. K-4.3 Life Sciences:** Characteristics of Organisms  
**NS. K-4.3 Life Sciences:** Life Cycles of Organisms  
**NS. K-4.3 Life Sciences:** Organisms and their Environments  
**NS. K-4.4 Earth Science and Space Science:** Changes in Earth and Sky  
**NS. K-4.6 Personal and Social Perspectives:** Changes in Environments

### Lesson Overview

Glacier Bay National Park is a special place for all people to visit and explore. In this lesson, students will join a ranger on a virtual boat trip through Glacier Bay, while learning about the animals, glaciers, and people who make this park their home.

### Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe the best kind of transportation in Glacier Bay
- Identify at least 3 animals that live in Glacier Bay
- Describe the appearance and make-up of glaciers

### Materials

Prior to the program, Glacier Bay National Park will send you:

- Pocket guide to Glacier Bay Animals and Plants
- Model of an orca tooth
- Maps of Glacier Bay
- Jr. Ranger badges



## Background Information

Glacier Bay National Park is filled with towering mountains, calving glaciers, and pristine ocean waters giving home to many species of animals, plants, insects, and more. However, the Glacier Bay that we see and experience today has not been here forever. A thousand years ago, the beaches, waters and glaciers were in a different configuration. A large glacier covered much of the area and a grassy outwash plain stretched before it eventually ending in the ocean. Several clans of the Huna Tlingit made their home here, surviving on the abundance of this rainforest ecosystem including the annual salmon runs, seals and sea otters, spruce trees, berries and more. A few hundred years ago, the glacier which had rested quietly behind the Tlingit villages began to advance rapidly, eventually forcing the Tlingit from their homes in a matter of days. The glacier destroyed everything in its path and completely re-sculpted the land and ocean scape of Glacier Bay. The Tlingit fled across Icy Strait to Hoonah, where they live today.

In the past 250 years the glacier has retreated 60 miles, revealing beaches, oceans, meadows, mountains, and many smaller glaciers. Inspired by the work of ecologist William Skinner Cooper, President Calvin Coolidge created Glacier Bay National Monument in 1925. In 1980, Congress designated Glacier Bay a national park. This protected and preserved for all people the magnificent tidewater glaciers, cultural history, opportunity for research, vast wilderness and the story of life returning to areas recently covered by ice. As the habitats of Glacier Bay National Park change in the wake of the retreating glacier, so do the animals that inhabit them. Every animal that lives in Glacier Bay has special adaptations to survive and even thrive in this special place.

For more on specific animals, please visit our website:

<http://www.nps.gov/glba/naturescience/animals.htm>

Another good resource is the Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series, published by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. It is available at this web address:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=educators.notebookseries>



### Procedure

#### *Prior to the program:*

Introduce Alaska, glaciers, and some of Glacier Bay's animals to the class. Share the maps. Let the students examine the orca tooth and pocket guide. Have students generate questions for the ranger, to be asked as time allows.

#### *During the program:*

Have the students seated at their desks or in a group, wherever they can see the videoconferencing screen. The ranger will share skulls, furs, eggs, and other props in an interactive program. Assist the ranger in calling on students and helping them participate. At the end of the program, hand out Jr. Ranger badges to the students.



## Extension Activities

- Nests:  
Murre eggs are pointed at one end so they don't roll off cliff ledges. Puffins dig burrows to protect their eggs. Have your class design other nests for different kinds of birds to protect their eggs.
- Experiment with ice:  
Float ice cubes in water to see how much is above the water and how much is below. See how long it takes for the ice to melt.
- Tracking:  
Have the students make tracks and follow them. Discuss what people can learn from tracks. Try moving in different ways and compare the tracks.
- Sounds:  
Listen to short audio programs about different Alaska animals on *Sounds Wild* produced by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=soundswild.main>

