Could you live on a remote island?

Level 1 • Pre-intermediate / Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. In pairs, write ten words that you associate with a small island that is far away from the mainland. Write words that describe the island or words for things that you might see there.

b. Can you find any of your words in the article?

2 Find the information

Find the following information in the article.

1. the name of two islands off the coast of Wales
2. the name of an island off the coast of Scotland
3. the name of an island off the coast of England
4. the names of four kinds of seabirds

3 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions. Then, find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>warden</th>
<th>nocturnal</th>
<th>sanctuary</th>
<th>rare</th>
<th>apply</th>
<th>acres</th>
<th>appreciate</th>
<th>volunteer</th>
<th>day tripper</th>
<th>comforts</th>
<th>Mother Nature</th>
<th>soothing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. units for measuring land; each unit is equal to 4,047 square metres __________________________ (para 2)</td>
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<td>2. someone whose job is to look after a particular place __________________________ (para 3)</td>
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<td>3. ask to have a job, especially in writing or by sending a form __________________________ (para 3)</td>
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<td>4. a place where animals can live safely __________________________ (para 4)</td>
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<td>5. not seen or found very often __________________________ (para 4)</td>
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<td>6. active at night, not during the day __________________________ (para 6)</td>
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<td>7. making you feel calm and relaxed __________________________ (para 6)</td>
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<td>8. someone who makes a journey for pleasure in which they go to a place and come back on the same day __________________________ (para 8)</td>
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<td>9. someone who is not paid for the work that they do __________________________ (para 8)</td>
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<td>10. referring to nature and natural forces __________________________ (para 14)</td>
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<td>11. be grateful for something and see that it has good qualities __________________________ (para 17)</td>
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<td>12. things that make your life easier and more pleasant __________________________ (para 17)</td>
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Could you live on a remote island?

Patrick Barkham
20 April, 2019

1 After supper, while Eddie Stubbings was washing up, puffins used to fly past his kitchen window. Later, the Skomer night filled with the strange cry of 350,000 pairs of manx shearwaters, which fly across the small island.

2 “Living on the island was absolutely amazing,” says Stubbings, 40. He and his partner, Bee Bueche, 41, have finished six years working on Skomer, 720 acres of rocks off the Pembrokeshire coast in Wales.

3 When there is a job advertisement for warden of a small island, hundreds of people apply. Most of them hope to escape modern life.

4 These days, people want more contact with nature and many small islands have become sanctuaries for rare seabirds. And so now, wildlife wardens are living on many of the 6,200 small islands around Britain.

5 Stubbings and Bueche left Skomer at the end of 2018, and they are now working on Islay, off the coast of Scotland.

6 Like most people who look after the wildlife of small islands, Stubbings and Bueche love birds. Living on Skomer was “absolutely incredible”, Stubbings says. There were thousands of guillemots, razorbills, puffins and, most of all, the noisy, nocturnal shearwaters. Many people find it difficult to sleep in this noise; Stubbings and Bueche found it soothing.

7 Many people who apply for jobs on Skomer want to be alone, Stubbings says. “You have to tell them it’s not like that. There’s a lot of hustle and bustle,” he says. “You never get five minutes to yourself. People come and knock on your door and ask questions at 8pm, 9pm, 10pm.”

8 Their working day on Skomer began with a phone call to the boatman to see if the weather was good enough for boats to go to the island. Skomer gets 250 day trippers during the main bird-breeding months of May and June and can take 16 overnight guests.

9 As well as counting birds and seals, the wardens have to make beds and organize staff, volunteers and visitors. “People think we’re wild and remote and cut off from the world,” Stubbings says. “The truth is, these days, we’re not. Everyone has got the internet and mobile phones, and there are lots of people on the island.”

10 Stubbings and Bueche’s neighbours on nearby Skokholm, Richard Brown, 38, and Giselle Eagle, 34, have a quieter life: they only have 90,000 pairs of manx shearwaters and only two boats a week that bring 20 visitors to the island.

11 Brown and Eagle live in a lighthouse, surrounded by puffins. “When people think about living on an island, they think they will be alone. But we probably meet more people each year than most people on the mainland,” Brown says.

12 They get a fresh-food delivery by boat once a month. “You can eat well on an island. We have a lot of root vegetables,” Brown says. “We’ve got lots of tinned and dried food if our delivery doesn’t arrive,” Eagle laughs.

13 Brown says, “When I moved to the island, we still had gas lights and no hot water unless you boiled it. These days, we’ve got solar power and solar hot water and a 4G signal.”

14 Dean Woodfin Jones is the warden of Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel, off the coast of England. “Everything we do is controlled by the weather – Mother Nature is in control here,” he says.

15 Twenty-nine people live on Lundy, 1,100-acres of rock. Those people are employed to look after the island.

16 Small talk is very important on small islands, Woodfin Jones says. “We like having a drink in the sunshine or going snorkelling together. There are always little arguments between people, but they are not serious.”

17 “Life on a small island is not for everyone,” Bueche says. “If you want a family, it is difficult.” She says she appreciates the comforts of the mainland more now. “A hot shower! Central heating! A comfortable bed! And if you want a cucumber, you can just go to the shop and buy it! After being on an island, you start to really value these things again.”

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Comprehension check

Choose the right answers to the questions.

1. Stubbings and Bueche live on the island of …
   a. Skomer.
   b. Islay.
   c. Lundy.

2. In the past, they spent six years on the island of …
   a. Skomer.
   b. Islay.
   c. Lundy.

3. Every day in May and June, Skomer gets around …
   a. 20 visitors.
   b. 250 day trippers.
   c. 6,200 tourists.

4. People visit the island to …
   a. buy cucumbers.
   b. see rare seabirds.
   c. have a drink in its pub.

5. Brown and Eagle are wildlife wardens on Skokholm. They live …
   a. on a boat.
   b. in a lighthouse.
   c. on the mainland.

6. A wildlife warden has to …
   a. look after people as well as birds and seals.
   b. be good at small talk.
   c. both a and b.

7. Everything that happens on a small island is controlled by …
   a. the weather.
   b. the volunteers.
   c. the seabirds.

8. More and more people want to live on islands to …
   a. escape modern life.
   b. be in contact with nature.
   c. both a and b.
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5 An expression

1. Find and underline the expression hustle and bustle in the article.
2. Choose the correct meaning.
   a. a lot of loud arguments
   b. a lot of noisy activity
   c. a lot of difficult work tasks
3. Share your answers to these questions.
   • Is there a lot of hustle and bustle in your workplace?
   • In general, do you enjoy the hustle and bustle of everyday life, or do you try to get away from it?

6 Discussion

• How far is it to the sea from where you are now?
• What is the nearest island or group of islands?
• Does anyone live there?
• What birds and animals live there?
• How easy or difficult is it to get there?
• Is it a place that day trippers or tourists visit? Why? Why not?
• Have you ever been to a small remote island?
  o If so, describe your experience.
  o If not, is there a small island that you would like to visit?
• What would you miss if you lived on a remote island?

7 Group task

Work in small groups to complete the following task.

• You are going to live on a remote island for a year. Brainstorm things you would like to take with you.
• Make a list of ten to 20 items that you all agree on. Remember, you must be able to take them to the island on a small boat.
• Compare your lists with other students, and say why you would want to take the things on your list.

8 Webquest

Search for images of the islands in the article. Talk about what you see on the images. Use as many of the words from the article as possible.
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**KEY**

2 **Find the information**

1. Skomer; Skokholm
2. Islay
3. Lundy
4. guillemots, razorbills, puffins, shearwaters

3 **Key words**

1. acres
2. warden
3. apply
4. sanctuary
5. rare
6. nocturnal
7. soothing
8. day tripper
9. volunteer
10. Mother Nature
11. appreciate
12. comforts

4 **Comprehension check**

1. b
2. a
3. b
4. b
5. b
6. a
7. a
8. c

5 **An expression**

2. b