

# A TRIP FOR SISKINS

WILDLIFE SEARCH & RESCUE

A READ TOGETHER  
BOOK



BY CARISSA TAYLOR

SISKIN



# A TRIP FOR SISKINS

Your child is ready to read this book if they are reading passages with the following letter sounds and sight words.

## LETTER SOUNDS:

short i (as in "trip")  
short a (as in "map")

th, sh, wh, ch

all hard consonants

## SIGHT WORDS:

the, from  
we, she  
me, be  
to, into  
a, what  
her for

**READ  
TOGETHER**

This is a "read-together" book that will take you on a journey across all seven continents! Your child will read the readable text, and you'll read the rest. There is some supplementary non-fiction text that isn't entirely necessary to read-aloud unless your child wants to know more about each continent and animal.

child reads black text

adult reads white text  
optional text in gray

## Vocabulary:

*Habitat* - An animal's home. A place in the wild where an animal can find food, shelter, water, and a mate.



This is a siskin. We'll learn more about this and other bird species in this book!

Words: 155



**SISKIN**





CONTINENT: EUROPE  
COUNTRY: SWEDEN

This is the clinic. We fix critters.



**WELCOME :**

## Wildlife Rescue and Rehab Clinic

Location: Kopparberg, Sweden

Welcome, or as we say here in Sweden:

"Välkommen!"

This is our farm and veterinary clinic. Here we care for injured animals, before returning them back into wild and the habitats where they belong.

As humans continue to develop more and more of the countryside, the number of human-wildlife encounters increases. Often, these interactions can be positive, especially when humans have more opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the world around them.

But sometimes human development can destroy animal habitat and can even lead to animals being injured by vehicles, forest fires, or pollution. Which is where we come in.

Let's see who needs help at the clinic today!



**CONTINENT: EUROPE**  
**COUNTRY: ENGLAND**



**FOOD: ALDER CONES  
AND CATKINS**



**TREES: SPRUCE IS THEIR  
FAVORITE FOR NESTING**



**FOUND:**

## Eurasian Siskin

Scientific name: *Spinus spinus*

This bird is called a siskin. She came to us with a broken wing, but by the time she had healed, her mate had migrated to a warmer climate for winter. We want to return her to the wild, but we'll need to find her mate first.

We've chartered a special wildlife flight to take us around the world in search of this siskin's flock.

At each stop we'll need to be on the lookout for the type of trees siskins like to nest in, and their favorite food.

Nesting Tree: Spruce  
Food: Alder cones and catkins

Let's hope we can reunite her with her flock and her mate before it's time to nest and lay eggs!

This is a siskin. She flits from twig to twig. She misses her pal.



**CONTINENT: EUROPE**  
**COUNTRY: SWEDEN**

We will zip-zip in this. Sit and click in for the trip! This map has big bits with habitats to visit.

## **NOW BOARDING:** Wildlife Rescue and Rehab Plane



*Location: Kopparberg, Sweden*

Welcome to our flight! Let's take a peek at this map of the world before we depart. The big green bits are landmasses called continents. Each continent is made up of many countries, there are seven continents in total.

Which continent do you live on?  
Where do you think will we find the siskin's mate?



Dip into the drip,  
drip, drips!

## DESTINATION: SOUTH AMERICA

Good afternoon, this is your captain speaking.  
Welcome aboard!

First stop, South America. We're headed for the  
Amazon Rainforest. As you might predict, its weather  
lives up to its name. Expect some fog and a lot of  
precipitation.

The Amazon Rainforest is massive – at 1.4 billion  
acres (that would cover half the entire U.S.A.!) it  
spans seven South American countries, and is home  
to a whopping 1,300 of the world's 10,000  
described bird species!

Will we find the right habitat for a siskin?

Okay, buckle your seatbelts. We're coming  
in for a damp landing in the world's  
largest rainforest!

### Siskin Habitat:

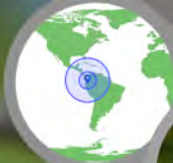
- ~ Spruce trees for nesting.
- ~ Alder cones & catkins  
for eating.



Spruce trees



Alder cones & catkins



# Wire-Tailed Manakin

*Pipra filicauda*

Length: 12 cm

Weight: 10-18 grams

Diet: Frugivore (fruit-eater)

Manakins, small but vibrant members of the songbird order, live in the low branches of tropical rainforests and wetlands in the interior of Brazil, Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, and Peru.



**FOOD: RINDREA**



**TREES: RAINFOREST SPECIES**

Although the males of most bird species are competitive, wire-tailed manakin males are uniquely cooperative, spending 90% of their time in male-only groups called "leks." In these leks they perform dances designed to flash their vivid colors, thereby impressing potential mates. Show offs.

Once they've found a mate, manakins gather leaves and fashion shallow, cup-shaped nests in the forks of branches. To stabilize the nests, manakins employ a particularly ingenious method: they secure them with sticky spider webs.

**CONTINENT: SOUTH AMERICA**  
**COUNTRY: ECUADOR**



Drip, drip, drip. It's damp!  
This isn't a siskin. It's a manakin.

### Siskin Habitat:

- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & catkins for eating



Spruce trees

Alder cones & catkins

This trip twists and dips!  
Will this be it?

### DESTINATION: AFRICA

Well we didn't find siskins in the Amazon, so we're charting a new course. Perhaps we'll have better luck at our second destination. We're aiming for another rainforest: this one in Africa.

Gabon is located in western Africa, right on the equator. Nearly 90% of Gabon is covered in forest, and there are over 670 bird species there, so it seems like a great place for our little siskin to be spending some time.

All right, we're passing over the agricultural land at the rainforest fringe, so buckle up for landing. There's still a bit of poaching here, but if we're lucky, we'll see some elephants or monkeys!

I just hope we can find the tree species we need. The last rainforest didn't have the right type for our siskin to make a nest ...





# Mandrill

*Mandrillus sphinx*

Size: 1 meter  
Weight: 12kg (females), 25kg (males)  
Diet: Omnivore. Primarily fruits, seeds, nuts.



**FOOD: CUSTARD APPLE**

In a few pockets of rainforest in western equatorial Africa, lives the largest and arguably most flamboyant of the monkeys: the mandrill. With vivid blue and red patches on their faces and rumps, mandrills are easy to spot. Unfortunately their brilliant colors, combined with their noisy social chatter, make them easy prey for hunters.



**TREES: MOABI AND OTHER RAINFOREST TREES**

Given their vulnerability to poachers, and compounded by forest clearing for agriculture and settlement, mandrill populations have declined. However, protected areas may be helping.

Mandrills have a few odd habits. First, they store food in cheek pouches for a later meal. Second, they beat the ground with their fists when angry. Finally, and most bizarrely, they have developed a unique way of detecting illness: by smelling one another's poo.


**CONTINENT: AFRICA**  
**COUNTRY: GABON**




This is a bit big!  
It's a mandrill.

Siskin Habitat:

- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & catkins for eating



Spruce trees



Alder cones & catkins

If we zip to a slick strip of land, will we visit a siskin?

## DESTINATION: ASIA

Seeing as the rainforests haven't seemed to attract the migrating siskins, let's try a different habitat: the terraced rice farms in Asia.

I've charted a course to Vietnam in southeast Asia. Vietnam is the second largest exporter of rice in the world, and its terraced rice paddies attract a lot of birds. Despite being 30 times smaller than the United States, Vietnam is home to almost as many bird species: over 800!

Let's hope our siskin is one of them!





**FOOD: LOCUSTS**



**TREES: FEW. PALMS  
BORDERING GRASSLANDS**

# Paddyfield Pipit

*Anthus rufulus*

Size: 14-21 cm

Weight: 12-50 grams

Diet: Insectivore (esp. beetles, locusts, aphids, termites, mantis, wasps crickets)

Paddyfield pipits, as their name implies, inhabit open grasslands, including rice paddies and other agricultural lands. A ground-dwelling and ground-nesting species, pipits spend little time in trees, but rather forage for insects in grass and at the margins of freshwater bodies.

Pipits are "cryptically" colored birds; their brown and buff coloring is designed for a single mission - camouflage. However, this crypticism makes pipits laborious to identify by visual characteristics alone. Thus, their songs, which are primarily performed in-flight, are used to identify each species.

Some pipits will deliberately place ants on themselves so that the ants will clean their feathers - a behavior called "anting."

**CONTINENT: ASIA  
COUNTRY: VIETNAM**



Did we miss it? This is a pipit.

### Siskin Habitat:

- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & cones for eating



Spruce trees

alder cones & cones

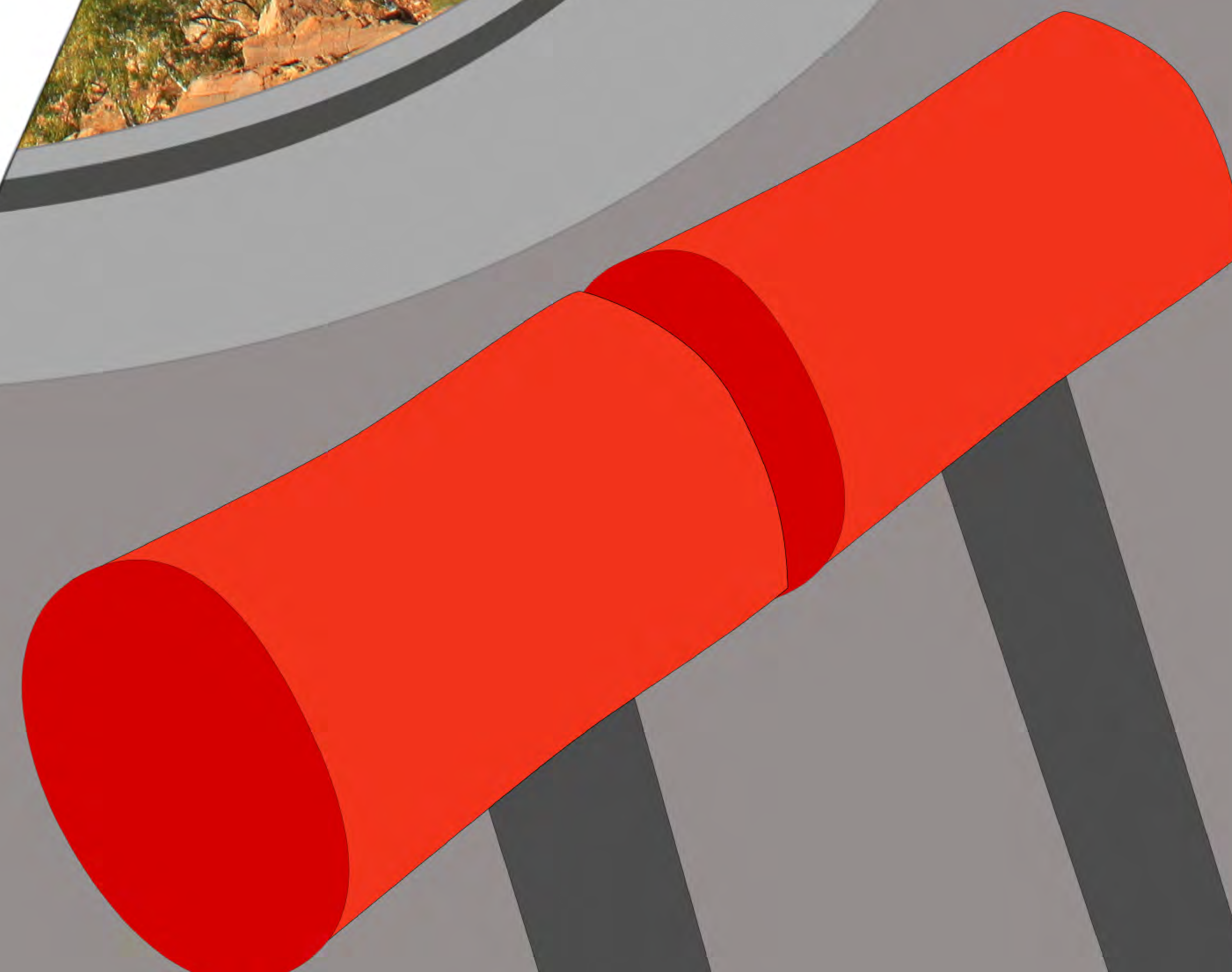
It's a skip past the map's middle!

## DESTINATION: AUSTRALIA

Yes, we're headed almost directly south now, winging down to the southern Hemisphere. The imaginary line running across the exact middle of the planet is called the equator, but we're hop-skipping past that this time to land in Australia: "the land down under." Perhaps our little flock of siskins has migrated further than we thought!

Australia is the only country on the planet to span an entire continent. With a wide variety of habitats ranging from deserts to eucalyptus forests, to rainforests and marshes, Australia is home to an amazing diversity of over 850 bird species.

Everyone's got a 'mate' in Australia!  
Let's see if we can find our siskin's here!





CONTINENT: AUSTRALIA  
COUNTRY: AUSTRALIA



FOOD: MILLIPEDE



TREES: FEW, MOSTLY  
MARSHLAND

# Masked Lapwing

*Vanellus miles*

Size: 30-40 cm

Weight: 230-400 grams

Diet: Primarily arthropods, worms, mollusks, and crustaceans, but also seeds, leaves, and frogs.

Masked lapwings are ground-dwelling birds which reside in the grasslands, marshes, and mudflats in much of Eastern Australia. The name lapwing refers to the odd lapping sound of their wing-beats.

With their distinctive bright yellow facial-flap (known as a wattle), masked lapwings are easily distinguished from other wading birds.

Although they are notoriously defensive of their nests, and will swoop any animal or person who gets too close, this doesn't deter masked lapwings from nesting in urban areas, where indeed they are often found.

Lapwings have a protective yet translucent third eyelid called a "nictitating membrane" which opens and closes horizontally.

Is the siskin in a mask? No ...

### Siskin Habitat:


- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & catkins for eating



Spruce trees



alder cones & catkins



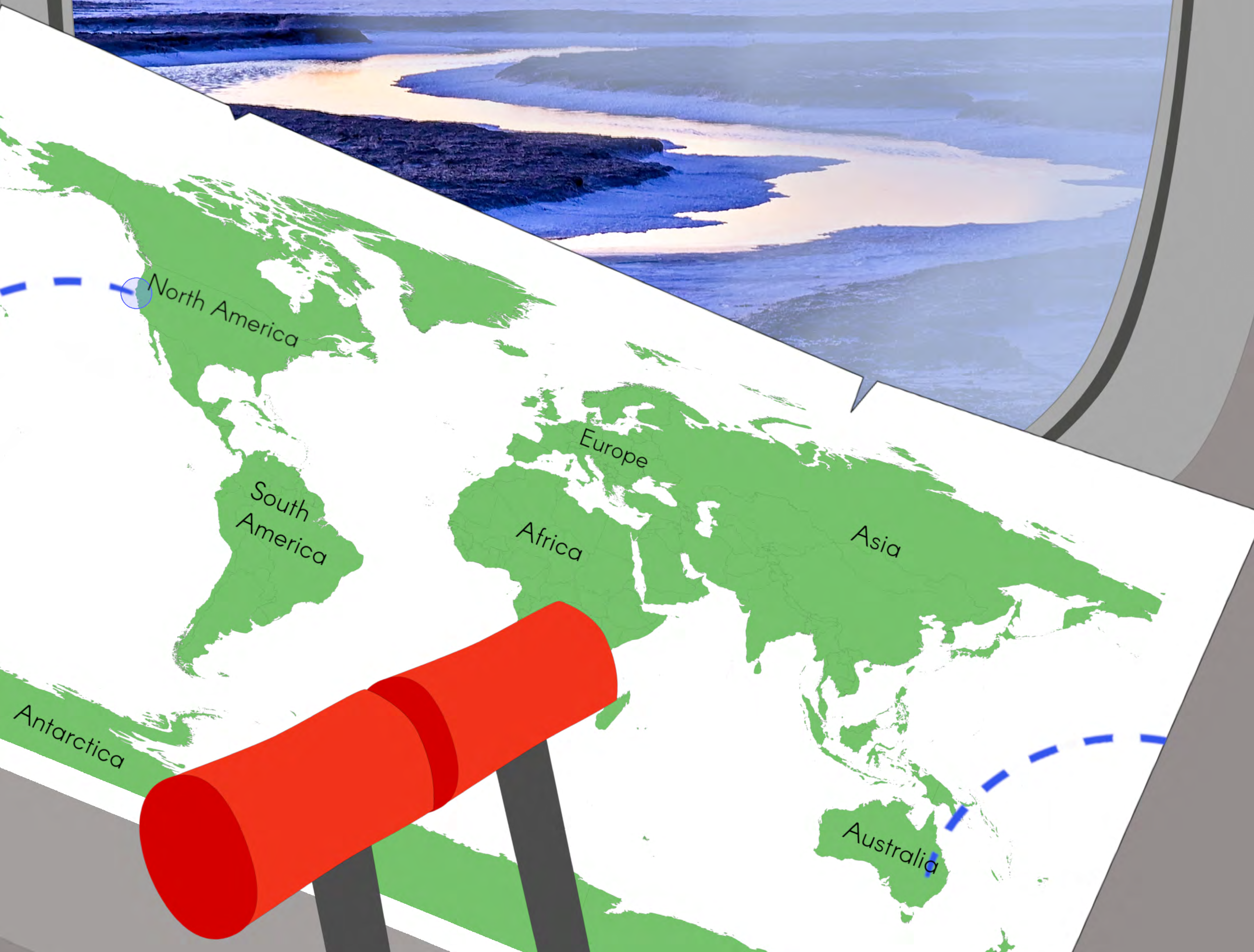
Splish! Swish! What if this mist hid the siskin?

## DESTINATION: NORTH AMERICA

While we had no luck with our first swampy stop, we do know that birds love water. So let's try another wetland, this one in California. After our 7,500 mile flight, we'll want to stretch our legs, so this time let's pick an *estuary*: the marshy area where a river meets the sea. We'll search for our bird, and then we can explore the beach!

It's a long flight from Australia as we'll cruise over the entire Pacific Ocean. We'll also be crossing the International Date Line, which means that even though we'll be in the air for over 12 hours, we'll *technically* land in the U.S. at about the exact same date and time we took off from Australia. Far out!

There are over 1000 bird species in the United States. Let's hope one of them is our siskin!





# Black-Necked Stilt

*Himantopus mexicanus*

Size: 35 cm

Weight: 150-180 grams

Diet: A highly seasonal diet which shifts as they migrate, and includes adult and larval insects, crustaceans, worms, mollusks, tadpoles, small fish, and aquatic seeds.

The migratory nature of black-necked stilts sees them summering in the freshwater marshes or coastal mudflats of the southern and western United States, and wintering in open areas in Mexico, Central America, and Peru.



**FOOD: FLY LARVA**



**TREES: FEW. MOSTLY MARSHLAND**

**CONTINENT: NORTH AMERICA**  
**COUNTRY: UNITED STATES**



Hmm ... this skips in silt.  
It's a stilt.

### Siskin Habitat:

- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & cattails for foraging



Spruce trees



Alder cones & cattails

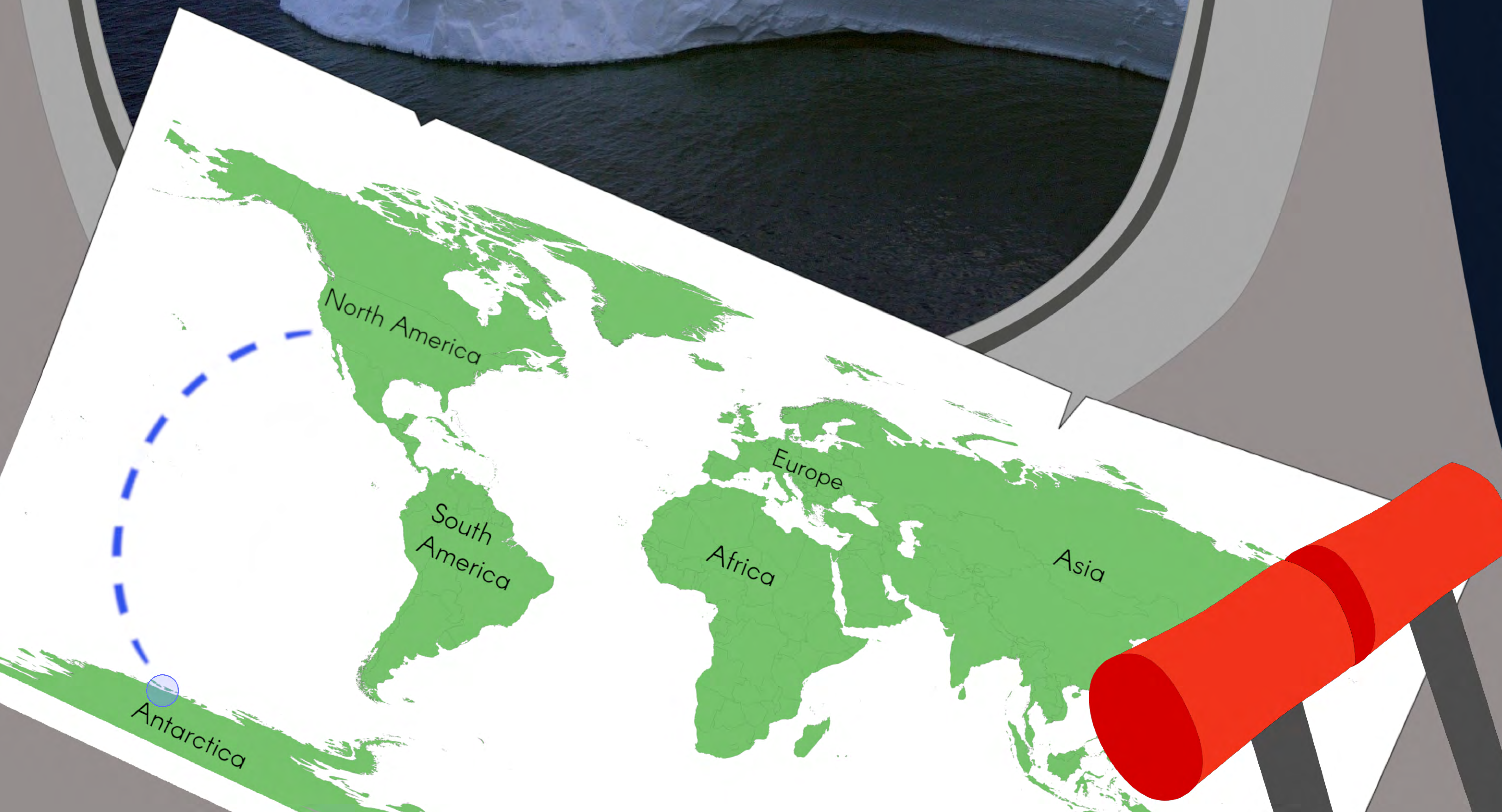
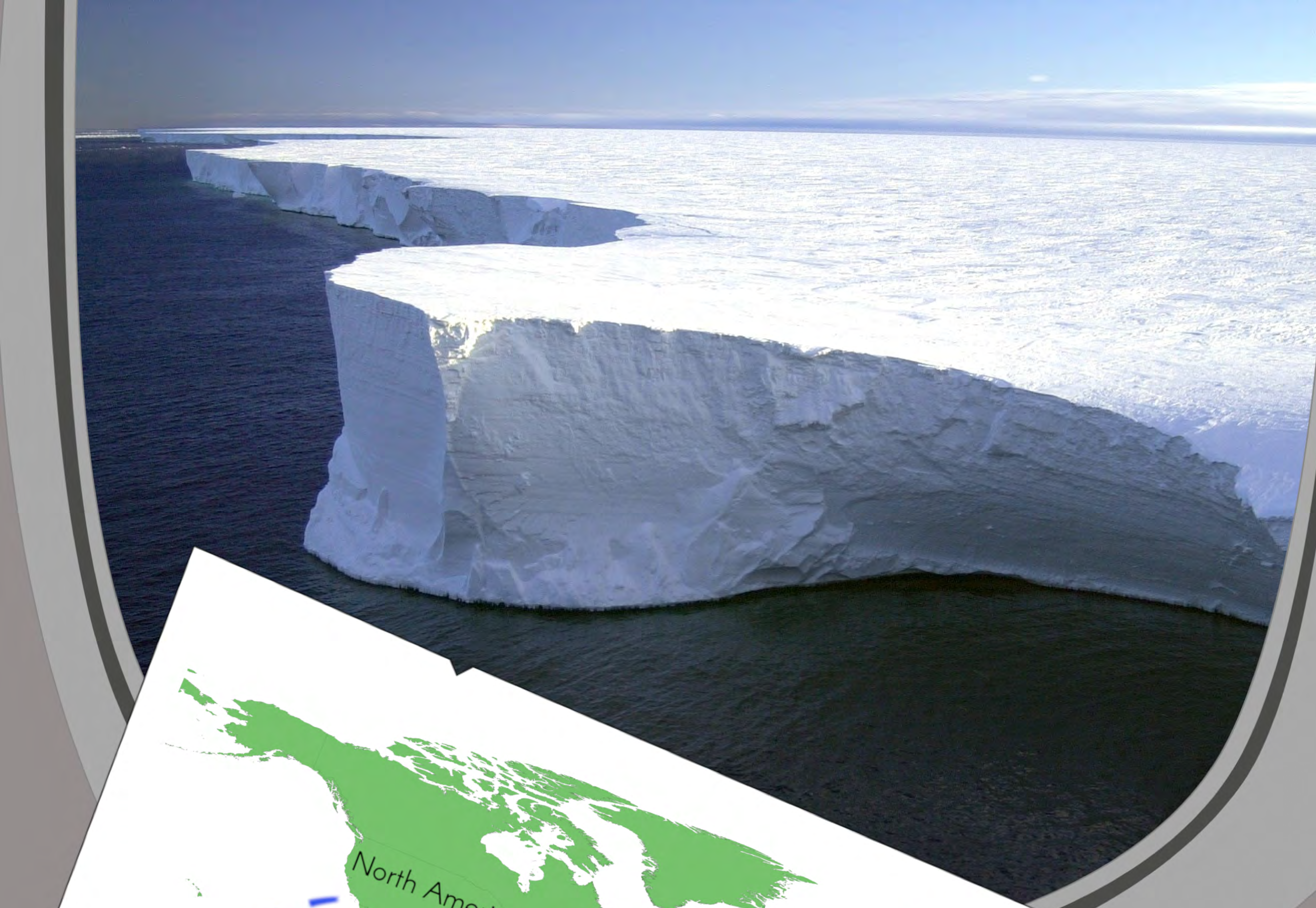
The wind whips.  
This trip will chill me!

### DESTINATION: ANTARCTICA

Well, this is a long shot, but in this search we're leaving no stone unturned, no continent unvisited. Which means our next stop is going to take us to one of the most extreme environments on planet earth: an icy continent at the South Pole. That's right! We're headed to Antarctica.

The continent is covered in ice sheets, and while ice freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, the interior of the Antarctic can get down to *negative* 144 degrees Fahrenheit! That would freeze your lungs in just a few breaths. So let's stick to the coastline shall we?

There are no trees on the continent, but there *are* some grasses, lichens, and moss on the islands off the coast, and plenty of fish in the sea. So perhaps our siskin is just nabbing a snack before returning home to nest?





# Emperor Penguin

*Aptenodytes forsteri*

Height: 114 cm

Weight: 35-45 kg

Diet: Carnivore. Eats primarily fish, along with some krill and squid.

The largest of all penguins, Emperor Penguins live on the coastal fringes of Antarctica, about 1,200 miles away from the South Pole. Each year, adult Emperor Penguins make a long march inland about 50-100 miles to lay their eggs.

The conditions at the inland rookeries are harsh, with temperatures dipping below -70 degrees F, but penguins lay their eggs inland out of necessity. The ice on the coast breaks up in the summer months, leaving the eggs vulnerable to the sea and all the predators there.

Once laid, the fathers carefully balance the eggs on their feet. Then, while the mothers make the long march back to the sea to eat, the fathers huddle together for warmth, balancing the eggs for two months, keeping them off the ice until they hatch.



**FOOD: FISH**



**TREES: NONE**

**CONTINENT: ANTARCTICA**  
**COUNTRY: NONE**



Brrrrr! It is brisk!  
Is this kid a siskin?




### Siskin Habitat:

- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & catkins for eating



Spruce trees

alder cones & catkins



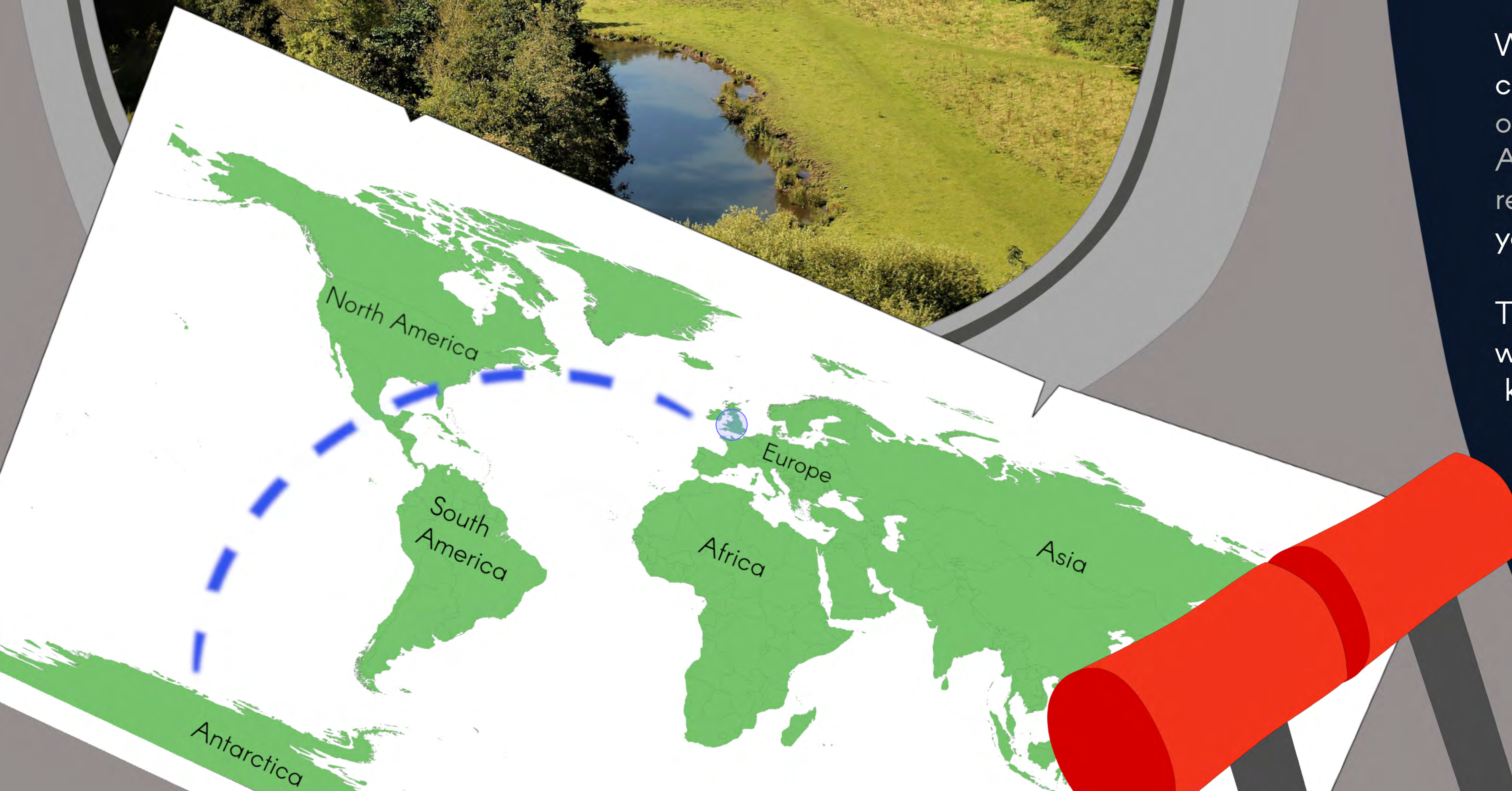
We zipped from rim to rim.  
Which bit is the siskin in?

**DESTINATION: EUROPE**

Well, we've now officially traversed every continent save one. Some folks don't consider this one its own continent because it's attached to Asia. In fact, the species name of our little siskin reflects this, as it's called a "*Eurasian Siskin*." Can you guess which continent we're winging toward?

That's right, we're headed back to Europe, where we picked up our siskin in the first place. While we know the flock is migratory, maybe it migrated a bit closer to home than we previously thought.

Keep an eye out for our siskin's flock and also for alder trees with cones and catkins that the siskins like to consume. I know they grow around here somewhere ...





**FOOD: ALDER CATKINS**



**TREES: ALDER, SPRUCE, PINE AND OTHERS**

# MATCH FOUND

## Eurasian Siskin

Scientific name: *Spinus spinus*

Length: ~12cm

Weight: 11-18 grams

Diet: Omnivore. Eats primarily tree seeds from the cones and catkins of conifers, alder, and birch.

Eurasian siskins are social birds, congregating in flocks in forests across Europe. Northern and eastern populations migrate south to escape the harsh winters, but many flocks in Southern and Western Europe are year-round residents. They live in forests and parklands, building round nests high in conifer trees out of twigs, bark, grass, moss, and feathers.

Siskins engage an unusual, yet helpful practice in order to de-escalate fights between members of their flocks. When two males fight, one bird will sometimes offer food to the other, almost as if to apologize for fighting. Siskins will also feed their mates, and of course their young chicks.



**CONTINENT: EUROPE**  
**COUNTRY: ENGLAND**



This is it! This is the siskin!  
We did it! It's him!

Siskin Habitat:

- Spruce trees for nesting
- Alder cones & catkins for eating

Spruce trees      Alder cones & catkins



**TOGETHER AGAIN**

# COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

## STORY QUESTIONS:

1. What was the problem in this story?
2. How did we find the siskin's mate? Which continent was he on?
3. What was your favorite continent or animal? Why?
4. Did you learn any new animal facts?

## CONNECTIONS:

1. Which habitat in the story is most similar to where you live? Which is most different?
2. What's your favorite bird? Do they live in your area year-round or do they migrate seasonally like siskins do?



SISKIN

Words: 155



# REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The photos in this book were taken by the following very generous and talented photographers, who donated the images to the Creative Commons. Please support their work:

Markus Baumeier  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/markus53-10480/>

Nadine Doerle  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/nadinedoerle-1421566/>

Jabea Tonga Etonde  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/tonga-22767/>

Jerzy Gorecki  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/photos/paysage-vue-besides-pologne-arbre-3645486/>

Bernd Hildebrandt  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/barnil-773830/>

Thiago Jayassu  
<https://www.pexels.com/@jayassu>

Juniorgirotto  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White-tailed\\_monakin#/media/File:Robo\\_de\\_arame.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:White-tailed_monakin#/media/File:Robo_de_arame.jpg)

Holger Krisp  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Halleday>

Rosina Kaiser  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/rosinakaiser-20455/>

Kraus  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/mkraus-12273803/>

Kym  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/budgme-67656/>

Zetong LE  
<https://unsplash.com/@zetong>

Michelle Maria  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/miamichelle-16549/>

Annette Meyer  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/nenniezweidrei-10084616/>

István Mihály  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/mhy-333962/>

Monika  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/mirifomat65-87415/>

Tim Ours  
<https://unsplash.com/@timours>

Siggy Nowak  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/memarycatcher-168384/>

Jonathan Petersson  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/grizzlybear-se-5258591/>

Alex Popovkin  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rinorea\\_sp.\\_Violaceae,\\_Atlantic\\_forest,\\_northeastern\\_Bahia,\\_Brazil\\_\(940393216\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rinorea_sp._Violaceae,_Atlantic_forest,_northeastern_Bahia,_Brazil_(940393216).jpg)

David Reed  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/davidreed-7590327/>

Manfred Richter  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/manfredrichter-4055600/>

Katja Schulz  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crane\\_Fly\\_Larva\\_\(29146021264\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Crane_Fly_Larva_(29146021264).jpg)

Grand Scient  
[https://pixabay.com/fr/users/grand\\_scient-720827/](https://pixabay.com/fr/users/grand_scient-720827/)

SK Yeong  
<https://unsplash.com/@skyeong>

Skeete  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/skeete-272447/>

Quang Nguyen vinh  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/quangpraha-7201644/>

Torben Wrieter  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/clodenoel-963126/>

Зина Чаушева  
<https://pixabay.com/fr/users/zinka-1843198/>

## FOR MORE ON BIRDS AND CONTINENTS:

National Geographic Kids  
<https://www.natgeokids.com/>

Audubon Guide to North American Birds  
<https://www.audubon.org/bird-guide>

IUCN Red List of Threatened Species  
<https://www.iucnredlist.org/>



**SISKIN**

Thank You!



If you enjoyed this phonics reader,  
please help keep them free for  
those in need.



donate



find more free early readers at: <https://carissa-taylor.blogspot.com>