Mighty Migration Games

Sea Turtles and Brine Shrimp

Many animals migrate around the open ocean. They are traveling from the places they find food to the places where they have their babies. California Grey Whales make the 12,000 mile round trip from Alaska to Baja California every year. Leatherback Turtles travel as far as 6,000 miles from the coast of California to Indonesia and Malaysia.

But there is another migration few of us know about. It happens up and down through the layers of the ocean. As darkness falls, trillions of tiny animals including squid, plankton, and brine shrimp swim hundreds or even thousands of feet up through the layers of the ocean to the surface of the water. The dark protects them from being seen by predators as they eat. At daybreak, when the light returns on the surface, they go back down to the safety of deeper, darker waters. This is the largest animal migration on the planet, and it happens every day!

Here are two Mighty Migration Games for your whole family. Both are fun to play and give you a chance to learn about the fascinating journeys a couple of our favorite ocean dwellers make in order to eat.

Sea Turtle Migration Game

From Eggs to Jellies

This game can be played by one person alone or more people. All you need to play is a lot of sock balls. If you don’t have socks or enough socks, anything that can be bunched into a ball will do.

If you want to “eat the sea jellies” into your clothes, wear a shirt that is tucked into the waistband of your pants. If you are wearing a dress, put a belt around your waist.

1. Show your kids a globe or map of the Earth. Find where we live in California. Take your finger all the way across the Pacific Ocean to Indonesia. Leatherback sea turtles travel that distance from their feeding grounds off the coast of California to their nesting beaches in Indonesia. You’ll be amazed to know that the journey is 6,000 miles.

2. Begin the game by choosing a couch or chair to be the nesting beach. The nesting beach is where the baby turtles hatch. At the edge of the couch (nesting beach) is the ocean.

3. Choose a second place inside your home, as far away as possible, to be the feeding ground. Scatter all of your sock balls around the feeding ground. Pretend they are sea jellies, a sea turtle’s favorite food.
Sea Turtle Migration Game
From Eggs to Jellies

4. All players are now Sea Turtles. Players begin their journey at the edge of the ocean, next to the chair or couch, where they have just buried their eggs on the beach.

5. Jump into the water and pretend to be a sea turtle swimming through the ocean. Using breast-stroke arm movements, swim through the entire house. If you live in a small place, swim around and around and around. You are swimming 6,000 miles. A sea turtle uses its strong front flippers to swim and so can you!

6. When you reach the place designated as the turtles’ feeding ground, “eat” the sock ball jellies.

All the eggs hatch at once. The baby turtles dig themselves out of the sand and run together and burst out of their nest as a group, running for the water as fast as they can to avoid being eaten by hungry sea gulls or crabs.

7. Swim back through the house to the “beach” you came from. Turtles lay their eggs on the very same beach every time. This beach is also the beach where they hatched when they were babies.

8. When you finally get back to your nesting beach (the couch or chair you started from,) “lay your eggs” in a pile on the sand by untucking your shirt, taking off the belt or dumping out the bag. Hint: the jellies you ate have become your eggs.

Congratulations, Turtles! You made it!

Now that you know the way, try it as a race. Race a member of your family or race the clock.

Start at the beach where you just laid your eggs.

Turtles get ready! Get set! Swim!
Brine Shrimp Migration Challenge
Darkness, Darkness, Darkness—Daylight

Brine shrimp travel up and down in the deep parts of the ocean. During the day, they need to stay hidden so as not to be eaten by fish and other predators. At night, they come up to the surface of the water to feed. Sometimes the journey can be a mile or so, both up and down. Brine Shrimp are smaller than your little toe, about a third of an inch, so a mile for them is a really long distance. Brine Shrimp live in all of the oceans of the world and travel in really big groups up and down the Vertical Column, through all the layers of the Ocean. Sometimes trillions of individual brine shrimp travel together to eat.

Here’s your chance to travel up and down through the water like the brine shrimp and outwit the predator fish.

You need at least two people to play this game.

1. One person stands up straight, spreads their arms out sideways, and closes their eyes. This person is the Fish who is hungry for Brine Shrimp.

2. The other players, one or more, lay flat on the floor. They are the Brine Shrimp, down in the darker layers of the oceans waters.

3. The Fish says, “Darkness, darkness, darkness,” over and over. This is the signal that under cover of darkness, the Fish can’t see. The Brine Shrimp get up off the floor and start jumping up to the surface of the water to eat.

4. Suddenly, the Fish opens their eyes and yells out, “Daylight!”

5. The Fish tries to tag as many Brine Shrimp as possible before they are seated back down on the floor, back in the safety of the darker layer of the ocean.

6. Take turns being the Fish or let a grownup be the Fish forever. Adapt this game to the abilities of the players. Have fun traveling up and down the layers of the ocean in your own home.