The Atlantic Herring

Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Atlantic herring are small, silvery fish with a bluish or greenish-blue back. They swim together in big groups called schools. In the western North Atlantic Ocean, they live from Labrador, in Canada, to Cape Hatteras in North Carolina.

Herring eat zooplankton, which are tiny floating animals, and krill. Many other animals eat herring: fish, sharks, marine mammals and seabirds. That makes the herring an important part of the food web of the northwest Atlantic Ocean.

A female herring can lay 30,000 to 200,000 eggs on rock, gravel or sand at the bottom of the ocean. A school of herring can lay so many eggs that they cover the ocean floor like a thick carpet. The eggs usually hatch in 7 to 10 days.

Herring grow quickly, up to 14 inches long, and they can live up to 15 years.

1. **What color is an Atlantic herring?**

2. **What do herring eat?**

3. **Where does a female herring lay her eggs?**

4. **Why do you think herring are important to the food web?**

Answer key

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1. What color is an Atlantic herring?
   Silvery, with a bluish or greenish-blue back.

2. What do herring eat?
   Zooplankton, which are tiny floating animals, and krill.

3. Where does a female herring lay her eggs?
   On rock, gravel or sand at the bottom of the ocean.

4. Why do you think herring are important to the food web?
   Sample answer: many animals, such as fish, sharks, marine mammals and seabirds, eat herring, so they would lose some of their food without them.