

## ANIMALS

### Aquatic - Ocean

Oceans animals have unique living situations in all zones of the ocean. The ocean is salty and often cold. Many animals have special adaptations to handle this difficult environment. Most marine mammals have blubber to survive in the cold water. The ocean can support very large life forms. The blue whale is the biggest animal on earth. It can be over 100 feet long!

Animals in the deep sea live in a tough environment. One creature, the angelfish, deals with the darkness by attracting its prey with a lure lit up by light-producing bacteria. When the prey is drawn to the lure, the angelfish captures it with its big mouth for a tasty meal.

### Deserts

Animals in the desert must survive in a hostile environment. Intense heat, searing sun, and lack of water are just a few of the challenges facing desert animals. Animals that live in the hot desert have many adaptations. Some animals never drink, but get their water from seeds (some can contain up to 50% water) and plants. Desert animals don't need to feed very often which is why almost all of them are very small. A variety of rodents including mice and the shrew live in these conditions. Medium sized animals found living in the desert biome include rabbits, rattlesnakes and porcupines. There are relatively few large mammals in deserts because most are not capable of storing sufficient water and withstanding the heat.

The majority of desert animals are nocturnal. This means they sleep during the heat of the day and they are active at night when the sun goes down. Some animals rarely spend any time above ground. Spadefoot toads spend nine months of every year underground. Ants are quite plentiful in the desert biome. They create underground tunnels where they are able to stay out of the heat. The desert biome is also where you will find the tarantula. These spiders are very dangerous and they don't seem to mind the harsh conditions.

The gila monster thrives in the harsh desert conditions. It is a very aggressive type of reptile. It feeds on eggs and small mammals. This creature needs the heat for its body to stay regulated. It can be active both during the day and the night. They are very dangerous to humans due to the toxic venom that is produced when they bite.

### Forests - Rainforests

The tropical rainforests support a greater number and variety of animals than any other biome. One of the reasons for this great variety of animals is the constant warmth. Tropical rainforests also provide a nearly constant supply of water and a wide variety of food for the animals. Small animals, including monkeys, birds, snakes, rodents, frogs and lizards are common in the tropical rainforest. Many of these animals and a multitude of insects never set foot on the ground. The animals use the tall trees and understory for shelter, hiding places from their predators, and a source of food.

Because there are so many animals competing for food, many animals have adapted by learning to eat a particular food eaten by no other animals. Toucans have adapted by developing long, large bills. This adaptation allows this bird to reach fruit on branches that are too small to support the bird's weight. The bill also is used to cut the fruit from the tree.

The sloth uses a behavioral adaptation and camouflage to survive in the rainforest. It moves very, very slowly and spends most of its time hanging upside down from trees. Blue-green algae grows on its fur giving the sloth a greenish color and making it more difficult for predators to spot.

### Grasslands

It is believed that there are at least 80 species of animals that live in the grassland biome. There are over 300 species of birds that either permanently live there or that migrate in and out of the area. The animals that live here have learned how to adapt to the dry conditions and the wind. Small creatures do very well in the grassland biome. They include grasshoppers and beetles.

There is quite a bit of diversity found among the animals living in the grassland biome. They include those that burrow under the ground, those that graze and eat the grass, and predators (those that consume other animals that live in this biome). It is a cycle of life that is evident here for all to benefit from. Predators include the coyote, bobcat and gray wolf. Plant eaters include bison, prairie chickens and crickets.

### Tundras

Animals in the tundras are adapted to handle long, cold winters and to breed and raise young quickly in the summer. Animals such as mammals and birds also have additional insulation from fat. Many animals hibernate during the winter because food is not abundant. Another alternative is to migrate south in the winter, like birds do.

The musk ox stays year round. It grows two layers of fur, one short and the other long. Air is trapped in the short layer and warmed by body heat. This acts as insulation. Long fur protects it from wind and water. The hooves of the musk ox are large and hard which allows it to break the ice and drink the water underneath.

The arctic fox is another animal that is able to survive the tundra. It is a fairly small animal with a very thick coat. It usually weighs about 6 pounds and is about 12 inches in length. They are solitary animals that will do very well in the tundra due to their adaptive nature. It is able to make burrows underground to escape the severe cold temperatures found there. They are scavengers so they are willing to consume anything they find in order to survive. It is typical of them to find remains that polar bears and other animals have left behind. Other food sources include berries, birds, eggs, insects and fish. There are thousands of arctic fox that live in the tundra.

**Match definition to word.**

- |       |                         |   |
|-------|-------------------------|---|
| _____ | 1. angelfish            | A. greater number and variety of animals than any other biome   |
| _____ | 2. spadefoot toads      | B. sleep during day and active at night                         |
| _____ | 3. toucans              | C. grows two layers of fur, one short and the other long        |
| _____ | 4. predators            | D. long, large bills  |
| _____ | 5. musk ox              | E. biggest animal on earth                                      |
| _____ | 6. nocturnal            | F. spend nine months of every year underground                  |
| _____ | 7. tropical rainforests | G. those that consume other animals                             |
| _____ | 8. blue whale           | H. attracts prey with a lure lit up by light-producing bacteria |

**Fill in the blanks from the word bank.**

1. Most marine mammals have \_\_\_\_\_ to survive in the cold water.
2. The majority of \_\_\_\_\_ animals are nocturnal.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ is a very aggressive type of reptile.
4. Tropical rainforests also provide a nearly constant supply of \_\_\_\_\_ for the animals.
5. The sloth uses a behavioral adaptation and \_\_\_\_\_ to survive in the rainforest.
6. It is believed that there are at least 80 species of animals that live in the \_\_\_\_\_ biome.
7. Animals in the \_\_\_\_\_ are adapted to handle long, cold winters.
8. Many animals \_\_\_\_\_ during the winter because food is not abundant.

**Word bank**

blubber  
grassland

camouflage  
hibernate

desert  
tundras

gila monster  
water

## References

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