



Staying Alive:
Animal Adaptations

“Adaptation helps organisms do the things they must do to survive in their environments. Hard shells, warm fur, and sharp thorns are examples of how an organism’s form or body can adapt if for survival. These are called physical adaptations. Behavior also helps animals survive. Monarch butterflies migrate. American shad swim in schools for protection.”¹

Every animal in the world needs to survive. Animals might have special colors or special parts on their body to help them survive. They also might behave a certain way to help them stay alive. These physical characteristics and behaviors are called adaptations. Adaptations help an animal survive in its habitat.

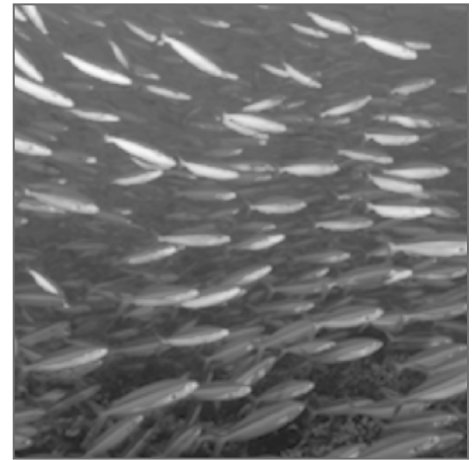
Big eyes, webbed feet, or special colors are some examples of a physical adaptation. This means that the animal has a unique body part. These body parts help them survive where they live. For example, an animal that lives in the water might have webbed feet to help it move in the water. Some animals have big eyes to help them see both their predators and prey.



Ducks use their webbed feet to swim.



The great horned owl has large eyes to help it see its prey.



This school of fish scares away predators.

Animals also have behavioral adaptations. This means they behave or act in a certain way. For example an animal might move in a particular way that helps it stay safe. Small fish group tightly together and form a school. This large group of fish looks like one big fish to its predator. The predator will stay away from the large group.

Animals have lots of ways to adapt to their habitat. Their adaptations are often what make any animal amazing.



Glossary

adaptation: something that helps a living thing to live in a particular place or in a certain way

physical adaptation: how a certain part of a living thing (such as fur color or webbed feet) or an ability (such as super speed or being able to see at night) gives it a better chance of survival

behavioral adaptation: a special way that an animal acts that helps it to survive, such as migration or traveling in flocks or schools

Written by Expeditionary Learning for Instructional Purposes

¹From “Adaptations: Designs for Survival,” New York State Department of Environmental Conservation:

www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation_hudson_pdf/hrlpadapt.pdf (last accessed 10/28/12)