

Animal Behavior Adaptations

Week 29 — Wednesday | How Animals Act to Survive

Reading Time

Not all adaptations are physical features like fur, teeth, or flippers. Many animals have **behavioral adaptations** — things they do that help them survive. One common behavioral adaptation is **migration**, when animals travel long distances from one place to another. Many birds migrate south for the winter because insects and seeds become hard to find. Monarch butterflies travel thousands of miles from Canada to Mexico every autumn. Each new generation follows the same route, even though no single butterfly makes the entire trip.

Another important behavior is **hibernation**. When food becomes scarce and temperatures drop, some animals like bears, groundhogs, and bats enter a deep sleep-like state. Their body temperature, heart rate, and breathing slow down dramatically, allowing them to live off stored body fat for months. Other animals don't fully sleep but become less active and eat less — this is called **torpor**. Some birds, like hummingbirds, enter short-term torpor every single night to save energy.

Hunting and defense behaviors are also critical adaptations. Predators (animals that hunt other animals) use different strategies. Lions hunt in groups called **prides** to take down large prey. Owls use silent flight to sneak up on mice. Some animals use **mimicry** to look like something else for protection. The harmless hoverfly mimics the black and yellow stripes of a dangerous bee, so predators avoid it. Baby birds call loudly for food, while other young animals stay silent and still to avoid attracting predators — both behaviors help them survive!

Reading Questions

1. What is a behavioral adaptation?

2. Why do monarch butterflies migrate?

3. What happens during hibernation?

4. Explain the difference between mimicry and camouflage. Give an example of each.

Vocabulary Grid

Write a definition or draw a picture for each word.

 **Migration**

 **Hibernation**

 **Torpor**

 **Predator**

 **Prey**

 **Mimicry**

Physical or Behavioral Adaptation?

Read each adaptation. Write P for physical or B for behavioral.

Adaptation	Physical (P) or Behavioral (B)?
A polar bear's thick white fur.	
Birds flying south for the winter.	
A chameleon changing its skin color.	
A bear sleeping through the winter.	
A fish's streamlined body shape.	
Lions hunting together in a group.	
A hummingbird's long beak for nectar.	
An owl flying silently at night.	

Predator vs. Prey Adaptations

Fill in the chart comparing how predators and prey adapt.

Adaptation Type	Predator Example	How It Helps the Predator
Hearing		
Sight		
Speed/Stealth		
Teeth/Claws		

Adaptation Type	Prey Example	How It Helps the Prey
Camouflage		
Speed		
Group Living		
Warning Colors		

Draw a Predator and Its Prey

Draw one predator and one prey animal. Label at least two adaptations for each that help them in their relationship.

Experiment Analysis

1. Why is migration a helpful behavioral adaptation for birds?

2. How is hibernation different from everyday sleep?

3. Why do some animals hunt alone while others hunt in groups? Which strategy do you think is better and why?

4. Design your own imaginary animal. Give it 3 physical adaptations and 2 behavioral adaptations. Explain how it would survive in its habitat.

True or False — Circle Your Answer

- ☐ 1. Behavioral adaptations are things animals do to survive.
- ☐ 2. Migration means staying in one place all year round.
- ☐ 3. During hibernation, an animal's body functions slow down.
- ☐ 4. Predators are animals that are hunted by other animals.
- ☐ 5. Mimicry is when an animal looks like another animal or object.
- ☐ 6. Monarch butterflies migrate to escape cold weather.
- ☐ 7. Lions are an example of animals that hunt alone.
- ☐ 8. Camouflage and mimicry both help animals hide or deceive.

Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: migration hibernation predator prey mimicry camouflage torpor pride

- 1. Traveling long distances seasonally is called _____.
- 2. A deep sleep to survive winter is _____.
- 3. An animal that hunts other animals is a _____.
- 4. An animal that is hunted is called _____.
- 5. Looking like a different animal to avoid danger is _____.
- 6. Blending into the environment is _____.
- 7. A short-term energy-saving sleep is _____.
- 8. A group of lions is called a _____.

Think About It

If the climate suddenly changed and a habitat became much colder, what behavioral adaptations might animals develop to survive? Could they adapt quickly enough? Explain.
