



Peninsula Humane Society & SPCA

Lesson Plan: California Animal Adaptations

Appropriate for 3rd and 4th graders

Objective:

Students will be able to identify how and why an animal might adapt to their environment to survive.

Materials:

California Animal Adaptations worksheet and 7 readings

Vocabulary:

Adapt – to change over time in response to changes in the environment

Adaptation – a characteristic of form or behavior that helps an organism survive

Behavioral adaptation – an animal's actions or things it does which helps it survive in a specific environment, including both learned and instinctive behaviors

Camouflage – coloration or patterns that allow animals to blend into their surroundings

Conservation – careful use and preservation of our natural resources

Ecosystem - a combination of individual habitats where life needs are met

Hibernation – the act of passing the winter in a state of dormancy or sleep

Instinct – inborn tendency to behave in a way characteristic of a species; natural, unlearned, predictable response to stimuli

Learned behavior – behaviors that are taught for the animals to survive

Migration – the act of moving from one place to another

Physical adaptation – a body or structural part that helps a plant or animal survive in a specific environment

Population - a group of organisms of the same kind that live in the same place

Introduction:

- Go over the vocabulary words above. Ask the class to try to explain what they think each word means before reading them the definition.

- Ask the students what they do to adapt to the environment. For example: In the winter we wear more layers to keep warm and, in the summer, we stay in the shade and drink cold beverages to stay cool.
- Tell the class that animals also adapt to their habitat, or place where they live, to survive.
- Next, ask the class what animals they have seen change their behavior throughout the year and why they think that animal does it. For example: I often see squirrels collecting and saving food during the warmer months because food sources are scarce during the winter.

Activity:

- Split the class into 7 groups. Give each group one of the readings which focuses on an animal species and their adaptations.
- Either print out copies for everyone in the group to silently read or have a few people from each group read out loud.
- After they have read about their animal, they can complete the “animal adaptations worksheet” either individually or with their group.
- Once everyone has finished the worksheet each group can share with the class what animal they learned about and its physical, learned, and/or behavioral adaptations as well as any other interesting findings.