

Endangered Animals

Get ready to read!

What I already know or I think I know...

Words to know...

evolve

adaptations

endangered

conserve

protect

threat

Snow Leopard

Get ready to read!

What I already know or I think I know...

Words to know...

harsh conditions

snowshoes

survival

powerful

cliff

draught

More words to know...

vegetation

livestock

herders

pasture

decline

hide

After reading...

Why do you think the snow leopard is nicknamed the ghost of the mountains?

Snow Leopard

The snow leopard is nicknamed the ghost of the mountains. If you have never seen one before, they are a very big cat (weighing between 60 and 120 pounds) that lives in Central and South Asia.

Snow leopards have evolved to be able to withstand some of the harshest conditions on our planet. They have a thick coat of dense fur. Their fur not only keeps them warm but also gives them a way to blend in with their snowy surroundings. The white, gray and black spotted coat is perfect for helping the snow leopard blend into the rocky and snowy mountains. Another adaptation snow leopards have are their large paws. These work like snowshoes so that they are able to walk on top of the snow without sinking. Their tails are also important to their survival in the regions where they live. First of all, it helps them keep their balance as they chase their prey in rocky regions. It also helps them keep warm at night as they are able to curl their tails around their bodies as they sleep. It acts like a giant scarf! Their powerful legs also help them survive in their environment. Sturdy legs make them able to climb on the rocky surfaces and cliffs. They can jump high and far with the help of their body.

These mammals are carnivores that hunt their prey. Some of the animals they hunt are Himalayan blue sheep, wild goats and Himalayan marmots. They are also known to eat livestock. Another part of their diet is vegetation such as grass and twigs.

Snow leopards are listed as vulnerable animals which means that they are likely to become endangered if efforts are not made to protect them. These animals live in rugged areas where it is difficult for humans to travel through. They are threatened with extinction because they are often hunted for their hide and bones. Also, herders will kill snow leopards to prevent them from attacking their livestock. Another problem is that hunters will often kill their prey. Finally, climate change plays a part in their decline. As areas experience drought, herders will take their animals deeper into the mountains to find water and pastures. This makes it easier for snow leopards to attack the herds.

Asian Elephant

Get ready to read!

What I already know or I think I know...

Words to know...

protect

tusks

communicate

vibrations

predator

poach

More words to know...

herbivore

crop

migration

habitat

primary

route

After reading...

How are elephant's ears like fans? Why is this an important feature they have?

Asian Elephant

The Asian elephant is the largest living land animal in Asia. These social animals like to live in groups of six or seven. They are known for being intelligent animals.

Asian elephants have adaptations that help them survive in their environment. They tend to live in hot climates and must find ways to cool themselves off. Their giant, floppy ears are able to flap back and forth to work as a type of fan. Their trunks allow them to squirt water or dirt on themselves to help them cool down. Layering on dirt and mud can help protect their skin from a sunburn. Because they eat food that can be tough, such as bark and roots, their teeth can fall out. Their bodies are able to grow new teeth when needed. Male Asian elephants have tusks that allow them to dig for water, salt and rocks. They can also use them to uproot trees and branches. Asian elephants have poor eyesight and are not always able to spot danger. They have evolved to be able to communicate using a series of vibrations. When they are in danger of attack, they can warn each other without letting the predator know they have been spotted.

These mammals are mostly herbivores. They can spend more than two-thirds of their day eating! Foods they eat include bark roots, leaves and small stems. They also like to eat crops such as bananas, rice and sugarcane. Because they need to drink at least once a day, they are always close to a source of water.

Asian elephants are listed as endangered. They are often poached for their tusks and skin. When they are killed for their skin, poachers will often also sell their meat. Sometimes Asian elephants are captured so that they can be used to move heavy objects. The primary cause of their endangerment is the loss of habitat. As the human population in South Asia grows, more of the elephant's land is being taken. The elephants are not able to move along their traditional migration routes because of this and many animals are now living outside of protected areas.

Polar Bear

Get ready to read!

What I already know or I think I know...

Words to know...

marine

distance

prevent

traction

threat

carnivore

More words to know...

retreat

Arctic Circle

powerful

charge

insulative

ingested

After reading...

What are some reasons seals make a good meal for polar bears?

Polar Bear

Wow! Have you ever been close to a polar bear at the zoo? The polar bear is the largest bear in the world – it can weigh as much as ten men. They are closely related to brown bears even though they look and live differently.

Polar bears can be found in the Arctic Circle. They are marine mammals that spend much time at sea in the Arctic. These large animals are the only marine mammals that can run large distances on land. They prefer to live on ice but have to retreat onto land when it melts as the weather changes. When this happens, they are the largest carnivores on land.

Polar bears have evolved to live in extremely cold and icy conditions. They have two layers of fur plus a thick layer of fat that prevent them from losing heat. Their huge paws allow them to walk on thin ice without falling through. Plus, they help them swim by acting like paddles. Polar bears have black footpads on the bottom of each paw that help them grip the ice and prevent them from slipping. Their powerful claws are used to catch slippery seals and to help them gain traction on ice as they walk.

These animals are carnivores. They mostly eat seals – their high fat content is good for the polar bears. They will eat other food if needed. However, on land, many animals are able to outrun the polar bear. In water, many animals are able to outswim the polar bear. They will charge a group of walruses with the hope of catching a younger or weakened walrus. Polar bears also eat birds, eggs, rodents, fish, berries and kelp.

Polar bears are listed as vulnerable – they are likely to become endangered in the future. The primary threat to polar bears is climate change. They use sea ice for traveling, hunting and resting. As this ice melts, polar bears are forced to spend more time on land. Pollution also impacts their population. Another problem is oil and gas development in areas where they live. Oil spills can make their fur less insulative and as polar bears lick their fur to clean it, the oil is ingested and can lead to kidney failure.

Green Sea Turtle

Get ready to read!

What I already know or I think I know...

Words to know...

migrate

survive

retractable

serrated

juvenile

ingest

More words to know...

cartilage

intentional

protect

reduce

mature

ingested

After reading...

How do plastic bags endanger green sea turtles?

Green Sea Turtle

One of the largest sea turtles you will find in the ocean is the green turtle. It can grow to be five feet long and weigh over 600 pounds! The name comes from the green you see on their cartilage and fat – not their shells.

Green turtles live in tropical and subtropical seas. They can be found in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. They migrate long distances between feeding grounds and beaches where they lay their eggs.

Green turtles have evolved to have adaptations that help them survive in the ocean. First of all, their hands and feet act like flippers in the ocean to help them swim and dive. They also have claws to help them crawl on land. Their necks are not retractable - this means that their heads do not go into their shells like some turtles. This feature enables them to swim faster and more effectively. Their serrated jaws help them chew sea grasses and algae.

These marine animals are carnivores when younger and herbivores when they are adults. Juvenile green sea turtles eat worms, jellyfish and sponges. Mature green turtles eat sea grass, seaweed and algae. Eating a green diet helps their fat look green which is where their name comes from!

Green turtles are labeled as endangered. Humans are their biggest threat – sometimes this threat is intentional and others it is accidental. In some areas, the green turtles and their eggs are hunted for food. Other times, green turtles are accidentally caught by fishing nets – since they need to be above water to breathe, they will suffocate if they are held underwater in the net for too long. Sea turtles need beaches for nesting. As more vehicles travel on the beach and as more nesting areas are destroyed by humans, they do not have a safe place to nest. Another threat they face is plastic humans create that ends up in the ocean. A floating plastic bag can look like a jellyfish or algae and can be accidentally ingested by a green turtle.

Today organizations are working to help protect green turtles so that they can live to be 70 years old. There are efforts to reduce plastic pollution and to protect the habitats of sea turtles.