

## NATURE

## Activity N06

### Theme

Class activity (CA). Looking at animals from around the world and asking why they live where they do.

### Objectives

Drawing attention to how animals are adapted to their habitats and to the importance of habitats for wildlife and biodiversity.

### Curriculum Strands

SESE, Science—Plant and animal life; Variety and characteristics of living things; Developing and increasing awareness of plants and animals from wider environments

### Skills

Questioning, observing, predicting, sorting, identifying

### Time

40 minutes

# Animal Action!

## ANIMALS AND THEIR HABITATS



### WHAT YOU NEED

- A map of the world (a rough outline map is sufficient)
- Animal pictures and habitat pictures—two copies of each picture. You may find the images in books or magazines. Enfo also has a good range of animal

- posters ([www.enfo.ie](http://www.enfo.ie)). There is a suggested list of animals with facts about each animal attached to this worksheet.
- Removable adhesive putty (e.g. blu-tac)

### WHAT YOU DO

- 1 Divide the class into groups and give each group a picture.
- 2 Ask the students looking at habitat pictures to write down all the features of the habitat and those with animal pictures to write down all the features

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of their animal. They should only record information that is supported by evidence in the picture.

- 3 Ask the habitat groups to describe their pictures in turn. Where does the class think the habitats go on the map? Place the duplicate picture of each one in the right place using the putty.
- 4 Ask each animal group in turn to read out the features of their animal. Which habitat does the class think is home to each animal?
- 5 Why do the students think the animals go in these habitats? What would happen if they were moved around?
- 6 Move some of the pictures of the animals to different locations (the panda to the African plains, for example). Would their characteristics still work well for them? Are any features actually a disadvantage when they move location? How?
- 7 Together with the students make a list of all the ways the animals on the map have adapted to their habitats. Put it up beside the map and leave it up for a few days so that the class can think about it.

### Go further

- 1 Make your own map of the world, using colour to indicate the different habitats you have identified. You could use paint, crayon, screwed-up sweet papers or other collage materials, for instance. How big are these habitat areas? Do you find them in other parts of the world too? Can you think of other animals that like to live in them?
- 2 Ask each group to find five facts about the animals on the map and their habitats and to write the facts on slips of paper and read them out to the class. Afterwards mount the slips of paper around the edges of the map.
- 3 Draw or make an imaginary animal perfectly adapted to life in a 'habitat' you know well (e.g. classroom, playground, shopping centre or football pitch).
- 4 You may wish to name your animal and write a short verse to introduce it.

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### ANIMAL ACTION! NOTES

Here is some basic information on a few animals that might be suitable for use in Animal Action. You may, however, want to choose animals for this exercise based on your particular interests.

#### **Polar bear** (*Ursus maritimus*)

Polar bears live in the Arctic, which spans parts of Russia, Canada, USA, Norway and Greenland. Arctic temperatures can often be as low as -20°C. It can be dark there for up to four months at a time. The polar bear has two layers of fur, a thick layer of blubber (11.5cm), small ears and a small tail. All these features prevent heat loss. The polar bear has excellent hearing and sense of smell. It has good eyesight both on land and underwater. Its paws are webbed for swimming and it has sharp biting and tearing teeth. The polar bear's main food is the ringed seal, which it stalks or ambushes at the seals' breathing holes in the ice.

Reference:  
[www.polarbearsalive.org](http://www.polarbearsalive.org)

#### **Panda** (*Ailuropeda melanoleuca*)

The giant panda lives at an altitude between 1,200m and 3,500m in mountain forests in south-western China (Shaanxi, Sichuan, Gansu). More than 99% of what it eats comes from the branches, stems and leaves of bamboo, but it may eat fish or meat very rarely. It feeds for 10-12 hours every 24 hours, mainly at dusk or at night. It has powerful jaws and flattened, ridged teeth for crunching bamboo. The inside of its stomach is muscular and splinter-proof. It has a specially shaped paw for grasping bamboo stalks.

References:  
[www.bearbiology.com](http://www.bearbiology.com) and  
[www.animaldiversity.org](http://www.animaldiversity.org)

#### **Arabian Camel**

(*Camelus dromedarius*)

The Arabian camel is native to the North African desert. A camel's ears have fur inside, it has long eyelashes and its nostrils can close to protect it from sand. Leathery pads stop its feet from sinking into the sand. Its diet is dates and grains, but it can survive on seeds, dried leaves or even bones! A camel can drink as much as 100 litres of water in ten minutes. It stores energy in the fat in its hump and can go without eating for 5-7 days.

Reference: [www.arab.net](http://www.arab.net)

#### **European bison or wisent**

(*Bison bonasus bonasus*)

The European bison or wisent is native to the temperate coniferous forests of Eastern Europe. It is now found in reserves on the Polish-Russian border (at Bialowieza). The wisent feeds mostly on grasses but also eat bits of trees, some moss and other plants. It prefers a forest at least 20 years old. The wisent needs to drink almost every day. It may eat snow in winter. The species almost became extinct in the early twentieth century. Fota Wildlife Park in County Cork is part of a wisent breeding programme.

References: [www.fotawildlife.ie](http://www.fotawildlife.ie)

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### **Jaguar** (*Panthera onca*)

The jaguar is found in South and Central America. It may live in tropical forests or in grasslands if the cover is good enough to hide. The jaguar's coat usually features a ring-shaped pattern of brown and yellow colours (with the odd black spot) but occasionally a jaguar is born black all over. The jaguar has strong shoulders and front legs and retractable claws on its front paws. Its back legs are longer than its front legs, which helps with jumping. It has a rough tongue for rasping off skin and meat, and has loose skin on its stomach to protect it from kicks from other animals. It hunts by ambushing its prey, stalking or swimming. It likes to live near fresh water. The jaguar eats meat, such as fish, frogs, turtles and pigs or other mammals. It may lie in wait for prey in a tree.

Reference: [www.dublinzoo.ie](http://www.dublinzoo.ie)

### **Giraffe** (*Giraffa camelopardalis*)

The giraffe's habitat is the open grassland of sub-Saharan Africa where there are scattered trees. The giraffe uses its height (up to 5.3m) to get to the hard to reach leaves of the trees. It has a long tongue and rubbery lips to eat them. The giraffe has big eyes. Its coat is short and tan-coloured with darker brown patches. When a calf is new born it hides with its mother in the shade. The giraffe uses its horns and strong skull for fighting.

Reference: [www.wildlife.com](http://www.wildlife.com)

### **Red Kangaroo** (*Macropus rufus*)

The red kangaroo's habitat is the dry inland desert, scrubland or grassland area of Australia. It feeds on grass, shrubs and herbs, but it does not need to drink much because it gets much of the water it needs from this food. It feeds in the early morning, dusk or night time.

The red kangaroo is the biggest species of kangaroo and can grow 2.7m tall. Males are reddish, but females may be bluish-grey. The red kangaroo's long tail helps it balance when it hops and acts like a third foot when it stops. It can jump 6m in one hop and uses very little energy while covering long distances this way. It can travel at up to 60km per hour. Babies are about the size of a peanut when they are born. They climb up to the mother's pouch, where they live and drink milk until they are big enough to survive.

References: [www.red-kangaroos.com](http://www.red-kangaroos.com)