

Habitats

A photograph of three polar bears in a snowy, icy environment. One bear is in the foreground, looking towards the camera. Two other bears are in the background, one slightly to the left and one further back. The ground is covered in snow and ice, with long shadows cast by the bears.

By Christine Hjorth

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Animals live in a variety of habitats. These habitats meet their basic needs and many of their characteristics have adapted to suit the climatic differences of the habitats. For example, animals who live in cold climates typically have thick fur coats. Whereas, animals that live in a desert climate do not. Let's look at three types of habitats and some animals that live there: aquatic, arctic, and tropic.

Aquatic Animals

Aquatic animals are animals that live all or most of their lifetime in a body of water, such as an ocean, lake, or river. All fish are aquatic animals. They live in many different climates and geographic areas. Some fish are oceanic, which means they live in salty water of the ocean.

A marlin can be found in warm oceans about the world. They have a long sword-like structure that is know as a “bill”. They use their bill for a specific reason...hunting! They slash their spear at the fish they are chasing and try to impale them or stun them.



Most aquatic animals breathe using gills, which is an organ that allows them to get oxygen while being underwater. Some aquatic animals have evolved to live above water and have developed lungs. These animals hold their breath while under water and then take periodic trips to the surface to breathe air.

A good example of this type of aquatic animal would be a whale. These gigantic marine mammals live in oceans around the world.

A killer whale, or Orca, can hold its breath for up to 15 minutes before having to surface to get air.



Orcas hunt in a very systematic way. They work together, each doing a different job, to corral or disorient schools of fish, so that they can catch them more easily.

Arctic Animals

Animals who make the Arctic their home have adapted to this harsh environment. The arctic is very cold and mostly covered with snow and ice. Therefore, some of the adaptations include thick insulation, such as blubber or thick fur/feathers, to help with the thermodynamics of having to stay warm in such a cold place.

Arctic animals are typically white in color so they blend into the snow to avoid being caught by predators. They also have specially adapted feet that help with the mechanics of walking on ice and not slipping.



Polar bears are found in the arctic. These majestic animals can be eight to ten feet tall! They are the largest kind of bears.

Polar bears live on land and on ice, which is know as pagophilic. On the ice is where they hunt for seals, which is their favorite food.

Polar bears typically give birth to two cubs per litter. Cubs who are under one year old stay close to their mother, watching and learning as she hunts.



Animals of the Tropic

Tropical rainforests are found in the tropic area of the Earth. The rainforests are home to a prolific amount of animal species. It is a very hot and very humid environment, with high competition for food.

Animals have adapted well to live in the tropics. Some animals, such as sloths, are nocturnal. They hunt at night to avoid the heat of the day.

Energetic spider monkeys have a prehensile tail that allows them to navigate the treetops successfully. Their main diet is fruit, but they also eat leaves, flowers, and insects.



Jaguars have adapted by becoming athletic swimmers and climbers. They are opportunistic predators, meaning they have a wide diet allowing them to find more food consistently.

A jaguar's spotted coat is fantastic for blending in with their surroundings.





Lastly, poison dart frogs are also found in the tropics. They have adapted to this habitat by being bright colors. Their colors warn predators to stay away because they are toxic.

Words with **-ic** in this book:

-ic

basic

pagophilic

climatic

prolific

characteristic

energetic

aquatic

athletic

geographic

opportunistic

oceanic

fantastic

specific

toxic

periodic

gigantic

systematic

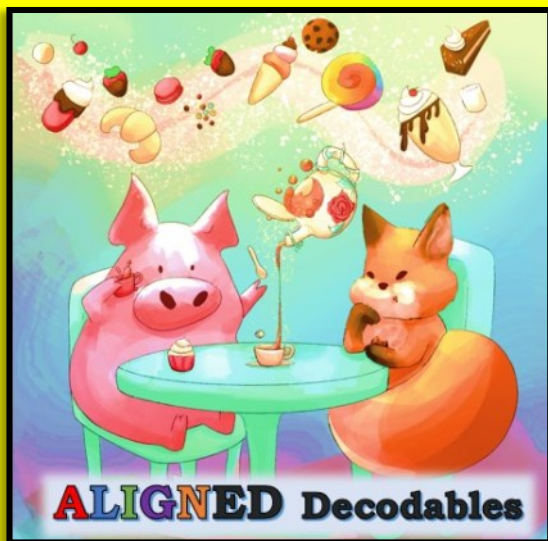
thermodynamics

mechanics

majestic

Comprehension Questions

1. Where do animals that are aquatic live?
2. What does the book say is a polar bear's favorite food?
3. Based on these sentences, and what you know about animals, what do you think the word “periodic” means? “Some aquatic animals have evolved to live above water and have developed lungs. These animals hold their breath while under water and then take periodic trips to the surface to breathe air.”
4. What do you think was the best adaptation found in this book?



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