



# Animal Habitats

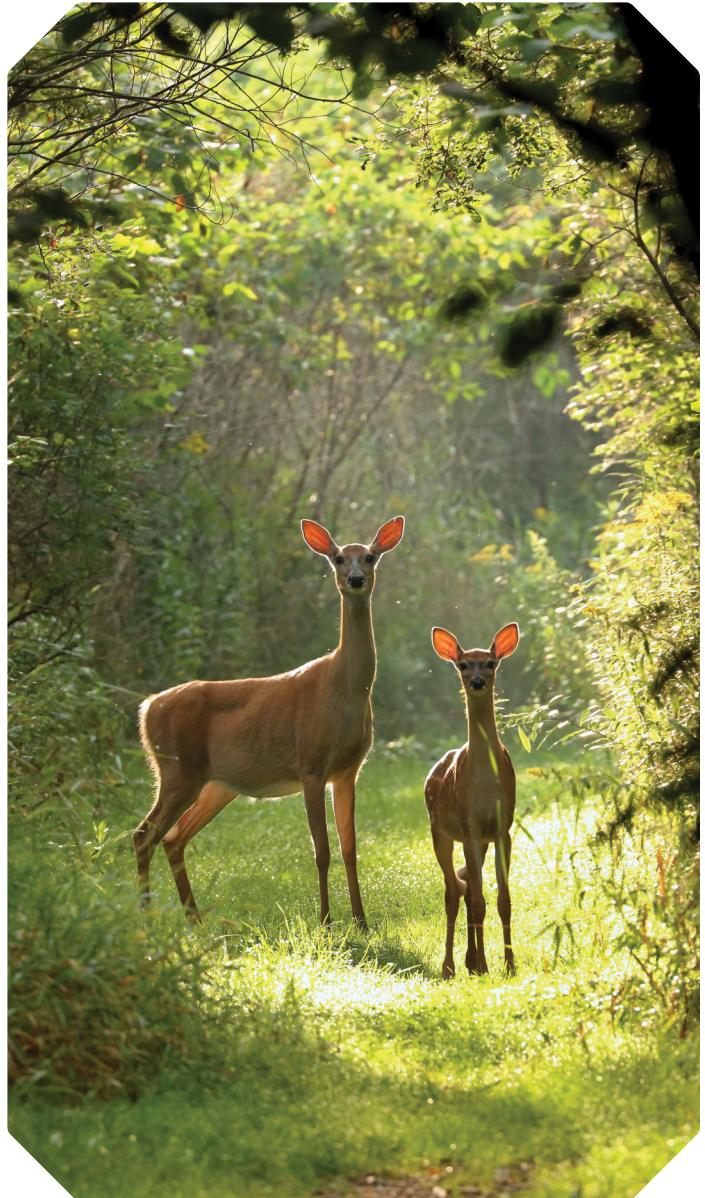
Imagine meeting a monkey or exploring the desert with a kangaroo. These animals live in the wild, so we don't get to spend time with them in their natural homes—their habitats. Find out more about where animals live, how they play, and how we can help them!

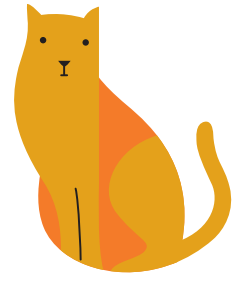
## Steps

1. Find out about wild animals
2. Investigate an animal habitat
3. Create an animal shelter
4. Explore endangered habitats
5. Help protect animal habitats

## Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll know more about wild animals and how to protect their homes.





### Tip Before Takeoff

Just as you're careful around pets, be even more careful when you're around wild animals—and never feed or approach them.

## Step 1: Find out about wild animals

Act like a scientist as you explore animals. When scientists study animals, they use their powers of observation to learn about them. This means they pay close attention by using their senses to look, listen, smell, and sometimes even touch animals. They find out where animals live, when they sleep and eat, and how they communicate. They might use tools such as a magnifying glass or binoculars to get a closer look, a ruler to measure, and a stopwatch to keep time. To remember what they learn, scientists record or write their findings down.

### Choices—do one:

**Compare tame and wild animals.** First, look at a pet or tame animal, such as a dog, cat, or farm animal, for 15 minutes. Think about what it looks like, what it eats, and how it acts. Then, with an adult's help, find a video about a wild animal that is similar. For example, if you observed a dog, you might find a video about wolves. If you observed a goat, you might find a video about deer. Compare the tame animal with the wild animal. Do they look or act the same? What's different? Write down or draw at least three observations.

**Create a show about wild animals.** With help from an adult, watch a video or read a book about wild animals and take notes. Look for things like what they eat, where they sleep, and how they survive. Then create a video, skit, or puppet show to share what you learned with your friends or family.

**Explore wild animals near your home, meeting place, or school.** Go out in nature to observe animals such as birds, squirrels, and lizards. Take notes about what you observe. Then pick three wild animals that are known to live in your area (even if you didn't see one in person) and learn about them. Find out why they live there, where they sleep, what they eat, and if they have any contact with humans.







## Wild Pets

Some people have wild animals as pets, but it can be dangerous for the human and the animal. For example, dogs have been friends with humans for thousands of years, but wolves—close relatives of dogs—are still wild and can cause harm. People who keep wild animals usually need special permission and training to know how to stay safe. It's also harmful to remove wild animals from their natural environment. That's because they are part of an ecosystem where plants, animals, and insects work together with nonliving things (water, rocks, soil, and sand) to survive.

# Step 2: Investigate an animal habitat

An animal’s habitat is its home. It can be in different areas, such as an ocean, desert, forest, or even a snowy place. In their habitats, animals have things like food, shelter, and space to help them survive. Some animals have special features that help them in their habitat: A fish has gills to help it breathe underwater, a wood frog can freeze itself solid during winter until spring arrives, and a camel has long eyelashes to protect its eyes from the desert sand and hot sun.

## Choices—do one:

**Visit a zoo or animal sanctuary.** While there, choose a habitat, such as a beach, jungle, or desert. Find the answers to these questions for five animals that live in your chosen habitat.

- Where in the world does the animal naturally live?
- How does its fur or skin help the animal live in this habitat?
- How does it stay clean?
- How does it move around in its habitat?
- What kind of food can it find?
- What animal or animals hunt it?

**Explore an animal habitat near where you live.** It could be part of a park, garden, forest, beach, or desert. Figure out what the



animals there have in common. First, make a list of each one’s features. Circle the things the animals share, then trade ideas

with your friends about why they have each feature. For example, fur or skin can help animals keep warm in cold climates. Paws can help the animals grip and climb in their environment. Tails may help them balance while running and leaping. Coloring can help them blend into their environment and hide from danger.

## Play an animal-habitat match game.

Scientists group animals by their habitats. Do the same by finding pictures of animals and sorting them into groups by their habitat. Then you can group them by how they look, move, or take care of their young. See if your groups are the same as scientists’. Talk about it with your friends and try to make up different ways to group animals.




## More to Explore

Many animals are in danger of disappearing forever. We can help them by taking better care of the environment and using fewer resources, such as by not wasting water or causing pollution. We can also help by planting trees. Preserving forests and trees can save millions of species. Plant a tree, save wildlife!



# Classification

Scientists use a system called “classification” to group animals so they can understand them better. There are seven levels used, starting with the kingdom and narrowing down to the species. The animal kingdom is divided into two main groups—those with backbones and those without. Check out the classifications below. Compare what’s different between humans and domesticated (pet) cats, which are both in the mammal class. Then explore how a common octopus, which has no backbone, is classified.

	 <b>Humans</b>	 <b>Domesticated Cats</b>	 <b>Common Octopus</b>
<b>Kingdom</b>	Animalia	Animalia	Animalia
<b>Phylum</b>	Chordata	Chordata	Mollusca
<b>Class</b>	Mammalia	Mammalia	Cephalopoda
<b>Order</b>	Primates	Carnivora	Octopoda
<b>Family</b>	Hominidae	Felidae	Octopodidae
<b>Genus</b>	Homo	Felis	Octopus
<b>Species</b>	Homo sapiens	Felis catus	Octopus vulgaris







## Step 3: Create an animal shelter

You've observed how animals act in their habitats and found out why they live there. Now explore the shelters they build. Each habitat has unique challenges for animal builders!

### Choices—do one:

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#### **Create a story about a baby animal home.**

Learn about how different animal parents take care of their babies. For example, emperor penguins hold their chicks under their feathers to keep them warm. Orangutan mothers make new nests for their babies every day. Write or draw a story about your favorite animal parent and baby in their home and share it with a friend or family member.

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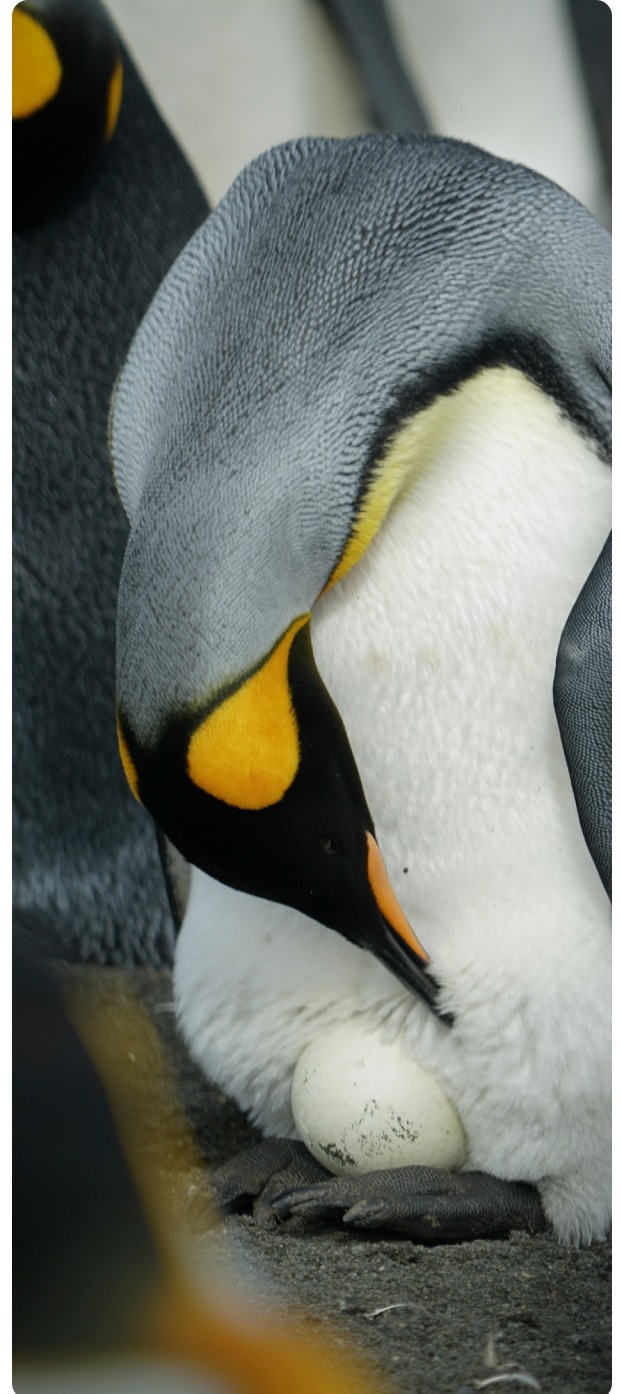
**Make your own animal house.** Meerkats live in large underground burrows with several entrances. Beavers make dome-shaped homes called lodges with branches and mud. Find out more about these animal homes and try sketching a meerkat burrow or building a beaver lodge from sticks and mud. Share your “home” with others and explain how and why it works.

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#### **Design a shelter for an imaginary animal.**

First, create your own imaginary animal by combining the features of your favorite ones. For example, you may like tigers, spiders, and

butterflies and end up with an animal that has stripes, spider legs, and wings. Then draw a picture of your imaginary animal in its habitat. Think of ways it can keep itself safe. Be creative!





## Step 4: Explore endangered habitats

Habitats are at risk when they are destroyed by natural disasters, when people take over the land, or when trees are cut down. The habitat becomes endangered, which means it may disappear. Losing those habitats also threatens the wildlife that lives there.

Choose one of the endangered habitats below and answer these questions:

- Why is the habitat in danger?
- What is happening to the animals?
- What are people doing to help the habitat?
- Are the animals able to adapt?  
(This means something changes to help them find and catch food, move around in their environment, or defend themselves.)

### Choices—do one:

**Explore the Arctic Circle.** This region stretches across eight countries and has many different landscapes, from sea ice and mountains to large, flat, treeless areas. It's extremely cold and home to lots of animals, such as polar bears, Arctic foxes, and



whales. Almost half of the fish eaten in the United States comes from the Arctic Circle.

**Explore the Gulf Coast.** This area includes five U.S. states near the Gulf of Mexico: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Florida. The Gulf Coast is home to marine mammals, sea turtles, and sharks. Millions of birds migrate through here each year.

**Explore the Amazon.** The Amazon is a tropical rainforest in South America that is home to the largest variety of living things on our planet, including jaguars, monkeys, otters, dolphins, birds, and butterflies. It's important to our survival because it helps provide us with food, water, medicine, and oxygen.







## Marine Life and Oil Spills

Oil spills—when oil leaks contaminate a body of water due to an accident or human error—have affected marine life in both the Gulf of Mexico and the Arctic Circle. Think about how oil can coat the fur on seals or the feathers on seabirds, making it difficult to swim or fly. Try this out with a feather: Fill a pan or bowl with plain water and add the feather. Does it float or sink? Take the feather out. Add two tablespoons of cooking oil to the water. Swish the feather around in the oil and water mixture so it gets coated. Does it feel heavier? Does it float? Now try cleaning the feather using dish soap and a wet sponge. Once it's dry, does it still feel as light as it did before? Were you able to remove all the oil? Do you think the feather will float now?



## Step 5: Help protect animal habitats

Just like humans, animals need a place where they can make a home. They need space to move and ways to find food and water. As you learned earlier, many animals' habitats are in trouble. By protecting habitats, you help take care of our planet.

### Choices—do one:

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**Host a habitat awareness party.** Choose a habitat and have fun dressing up like one type of wildlife that lives there. Tell your story about the habitat, the wildlife, and how the habitat may be at risk. Is there deforestation or pollution? Learn ways to help protect the habitat and wildlife. If there's an organization that protects the habitat or your chosen type of wildlife, share its name and mission. The more people know, the more they can do to help!



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**Help clean up an animal habitat.** Trash and litter can destroy animal habitats and harm animals. With your Girl Scout friends, research or ask an expert to recommend an area that needs cleaning. It could be the woods, a stream, a beach, or a park. Get permission to spend a few hours making it nicer for our animal friends.

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**Create a backyard shelter.** Get permission to make a shelter in your backyard or ask someone to use their land. Research what kind of shelter is best for the wildlife in your area, then build something. It can be as simple as making a toad house out of a clay pot turned upside down, planting a garden with plants that attract butterflies or bees, or building a birdhouse. Keep track of any animals that come to visit and what they do.





## Endangered Animals

An endangered animal is in danger of dying out because there are so few of them left.

Sometimes this happens naturally, but most of the time, a species is pushed to extinction because of human activities.

When the government lists an animal as endangered, it becomes illegal to harm it. People worked hard to protect the bald eagle, which became an endangered animal in 1967.

It worked. Today, the bald eagle's population is stable and no longer endangered.





Made possible by the Elliott Wildlife Values Project.

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First published in 2023 by Girl Scouts of the United States of America  
420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798  
[www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org)

