

BEHAVIOURAL ADAPTATIONS FACTSHEET

Animals have developed adaptations that allow them to live in all sorts of strange and difficult environments. These adaptations have evolved over thousands of years and have usually occurred alongside other animals, meaning these animals have formed relationships that are critical to their survival. Furthermore, many animals have evolved alongside plant species and the climate, meaning that their survival is also dependent upon many the factors in their local environment.



In order to adapt to their particular environments, both animals and plants have had to evolve different features. Below you will find examples of some of the ways animals have adapted to their environments through their behaviour. Not all the behaviours of a species are adaptations. We define an adaptation as something that has a particular advantage for a species, which is then passed down to the next generation.

BEHAVIOURAL ADAPTATION DEFINITION — BEHAVIORAL ADAPTATIONS ARE CHANGES TO THE WAY AN ORGANISM BEHAVES (INCLUDING THEIR ACTIONS OR DAILY ACTIVITIES) TO HELP THE ORGANISM SURVIVE.

BEHAVIOURAL ADAPTATIONS

- **Animal migration** - Animal migration is example of a behavioural adaptation. Grey whales migrate thousands of kilometres every year from the cold Arctic Ocean to warmer waters near Mexico. Their calves are born in these warm waters, and then together they travel to the nutrient-rich waters of the Arctic.
- **Hibernation** - Hibernation sees animals hide away in a secluded, sheltered place over the cold months of winter and then emerge when the spring comes to feed and breed.
- **Hunting in groups** - By hunting as a team, animals like wolves expend less energy when hunting.
- **Acting dead** - Some animals, like the opossum, pretend to be dead so that other animals won't chase them.
- **Living in groups** - Many species of animals live in groups. Living in groups has many benefits, including warmth, sharing resources like shelter and food, sharing roles like rearing young, and company.
- **Getting other species to raise their young** - Certain cuckoo birds are famous for their nest parasitism, which means they lay their eggs in the nests of other species who then hatch and rear the hatchling cuckoos. The young cuckoos are typically larger and more aggressive than the hatchlings of the host nest, and often cause the hatchlings of the host species to die, either from hunger or by pushing these hatchlings (or the eggs before they have hatched) from the nest. This is an excellent behavioural adaptation for the cuckoo, but a terrible one for the host species.