

HABITATS AND ADAPTATIONS

“On Your Own” at the Virginia Aquarium



1. The area where an animal normally lives is called its *habitat*. The plants and animals living in a habitat make up a *community*. If you are studying just one kind of plant or animal in a community, you are studying a *population*.

- Each animal has a role in its community. This role is called its _____.

2. In the Owls Creek watershed, you will find salt marsh and forest habitats. *Developed areas* are places in the watershed where people have cleared the land or have built structures. Most wild animals in the watershed live in the marsh, creek, and forest habitats, but some may tolerate “city life,” making their homes in man-made habitats.

- Name an animal that has adjusted to life in the city. _____

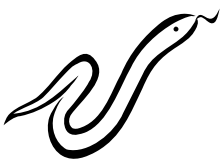
3. You’ll meet some animals that live in the Owls Creek watershed and identify behavioral and structural adaptations that make these animals well suited to life in the marsh, creek, or forest.

4. Find the *Recipe for a Marsh* exhibit gallery. The gallery has three sections – Plant Room, Mud Room, and Water Room.

a. Look for the venomous snakes in the Plant Room. You will see a cottonmouth, a copperhead, and a canebrake rattlesnake.

Behavioral adaptation

- Copperheads are able to blend into their surroundings.
- That adaptation is called (Circle your answer)
 - A. Camouflage B. Blending C. Mixing



Structural adaptation

- A rattlesnake rattles its _____ when it feels threatened (but before it strikes).

b. Look for the tree frogs in the Plant Room.

Structural adaptation

- What structural adaptation does a tree frog use to climb trees in the forest? (Circle your answer)
 - A. Eyes on its head
 - B. Toe pads that work like suction cups
 - C. Moist skin



c. Look for the fiddler crabs in the Mud Room.

Structural adaptation

- Fiddler crabs have _____ to dig burrows in the mud.



5. Find the Bird Exhibit area and examine the tall bird in the glass case. It is a great blue heron.



Structural adaptation

- **What adaptation does it have to wade out in the creek in search of fish?**
(Circle your answer)
A. long neck B. bill C. long legs
- **Great blue herons have lightweight _____ that keep it from sinking in the mud.**

6. Go outside to the aviary to see birds that live along the coast in Virginia. Try to identify the birds listed below. Put a check mark next to the names of the ones you think you have seen.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| _____ great blue heron (long legs, long neck) | _____ great horned owl |
| _____ great egret (like the heron, but white) | _____ brown pelican |
| _____ wild turkey | _____ turkey vulture |
| _____ duck (several species in aviary) | |

- **Circle the names of the birds above that are adapted to swim or feed in water.**

7. Find the otter habitat.



- **What are the otters doing while you are watching them?**

- **Besides their webbed feet, what other structural adaptations do the otters have that make them excellent swimmers?**

Key
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- Each animal has a role in its community. This role is called its niche.

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- Name an animal that has adjusted to life in the city. squirrel, rat, pigeon

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- That adaptation is called (Circle your answer)
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Structural adaptation

- A rattlesnake rattles its tail when it feels threatened (but before it strikes).

b. Look for the tree frogs in the Plant Room.

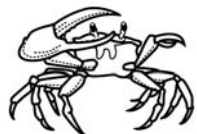
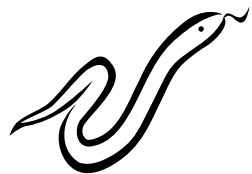
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- Fiddler crabs have claws to dig burrows in the mud.



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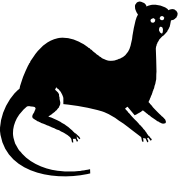
• **Great blue herons have lightweight _bones_ that keep it from sinking in the mud.**

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streamlined bodies, long tail