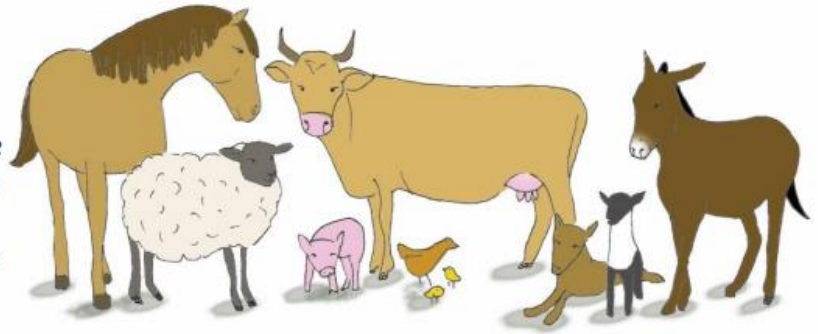# Animals and their Habitats

Introduction

There are many different types of animals in the animal kingdom, in fact scientists predict there are approximately 7.77 million species across the world altogether. They can be split up into different groups so that they can be identified or classified more easily.

Some animals are domestic animals. These are animals which have been domesticated by humans and so are tame and live close to humans. Some of these animals have been tamed to help us. Examples of these types of animals are cats and dogs as well as sheep and cows.
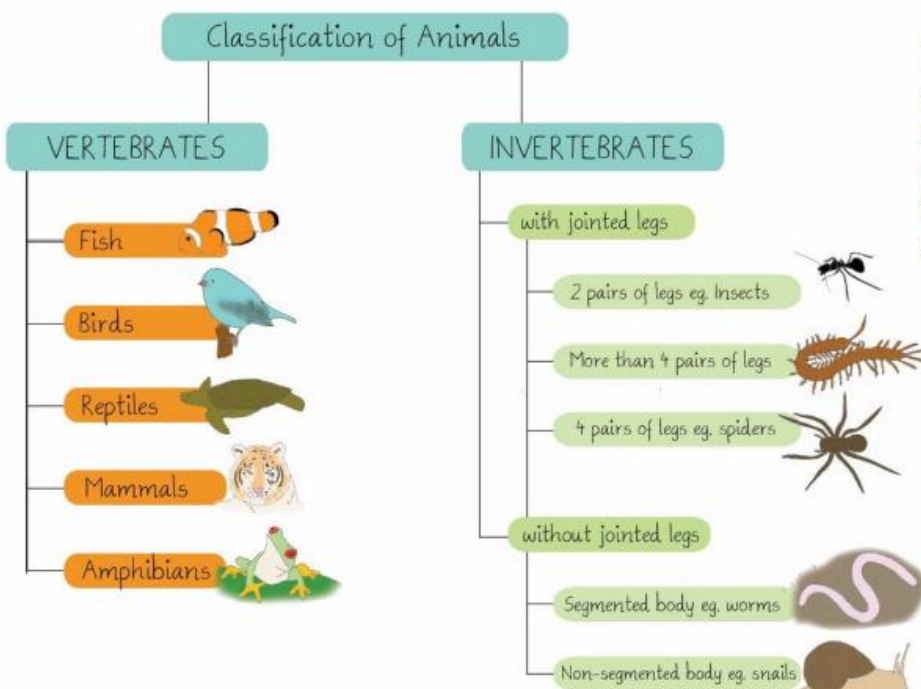
Other animals are known as wild animals. These animals are those which are not domesticated and live in their natural habitat.

How do we classify animals?

Animals are grouped together by their characteristics or their features. We generally follow a chart that helps us identify how to group a new species. Firstly we need to decide if an animal is a vertebrate or an invertebrate. A vertebrate has a backbone and an invertebrate does not. When we have decided this we can follow the chart to identify which group the animal is in.

When a new species is found it is given a common name and a scientific name. The common name is the name we tend to know the animal by, whereas, the scientific name is created so that each species has an accurate name for scientific use world wide. For example, when studying a bluegill sunfish in one country, it may have a different common name in another country, but it always has the same scientific name of *Lepomis macrochirus (le-pom-is ma-cro-tris)*.

Classification of Animals

VERTEBRATES
- Fish
- Birds
- Reptiles
- Mammals
- Amphibians

INVERTEBRATES
- with jointed legs
  - 2 pairs of legs eg. Insects
  - More than 4 pairs of legs
  - 4 pairs of legs eg. spiders
- without jointed legs
  - Segmented body eg. worms
  - Non-segmented body eg. snails

This means that when scientists want to compare research from different places, they can ensure that they are talking about the same species.

Habitats

A habitat or biome is a place where an animal lives. There are many different types of habitats across the world and they vary from country to country. Biomes are often defined by the type of plants that live there, the climate and the geography of the area. Habitats can be on land or in water. There are three main groups of habitats; terrestrial (on land), freshwater and marine.

Marine Habitats

Marine habitats are ocean habitats and around 71% of the world is covered by oceans meaning that this is the biggest group of habitats. Even though the oldest species of animals are found in the seas and oceans, most of this habitat is unexplored due to the depth of the oceans and seas we have. Marine habitats include rock pools, sea beds, shallow seas, estuaries and deep oceans.
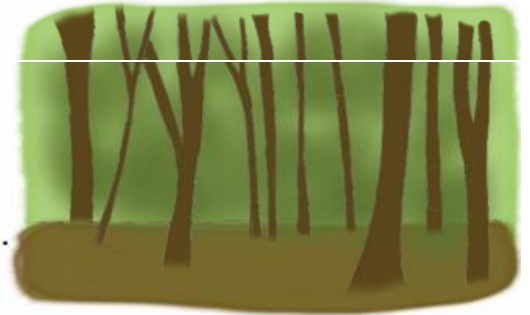
Freshwater Habitats

This is the smallest group of habitats that can be found. Only a tiny percentage of the water on Earth is freshwater. Freshwater habitats come in the form of lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, bogs, swamps and wetlands.

Terrestrial Habitats

Terrestrial habitats are land habitats. There are many different types of land habitats across the world. Some of these types include anywhere from parklands, deserts, mountainous regions, forests and farmland amongst others.

Ecosystems

In each of these habitats there will be thousands of species of animals and plants all living together. We call this an ecosystem. Some habitats have a balanced ecosystem which means that all the animals and plants interact well with the non-living things such as air, water and mineral soil, and all the animals and plants can live in harmony. However there are too many ecosystems that are no longer balanced because of pollution and human population which are disrupting the harmonious balance.

Glossary

biome – a community of plants and animals

common name – a more familiar name given to a plant or animal

invertebrate – an animal that has no backbone, such as a worm or starfish

marine – habitats that involve water such as oceans and seas

scientific name – a name given to only one species, a scientific name is known across the world for a particular species

terrestrial – habitats on land

vertebrate – animal that has a backbone, vertebrate groups include mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians

Animals and Their Habitats – Follow Up Work

What is the text about? What is its purpose?

_____

_____

Does the layout help the reader? If so, how?

_____

_____

Why are the headings underlined?

_____

What are the pictures for? What are their purpose?

_____

Is it true or false that a fish is classed as an invertebrate? How do you know?

_____

_____

Could the information be presented in a more effective way? How?

_____

_____

Why are the words *Lepomis macrochirus* written in italics in the text?

_____

_____