

Animal Fact Cards

Mountain Goat and Klipspringer

Mountain Goat

The mountain goat is not a true goat; it is a goat-antelope. Its body can be from four to five feet long (1.3-1.6 m) and its tail will measure 6 to 7 inches (15-20 cm). It can be found on the mountain slope rocky areas (scree) and among the boulders above the tree line in the Rocky Mountains. It can be seen in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Utah. It has been introduced in South Dakota as well.

It is very well adapted to its cold, harsh environment. It has a thick, woolly under-fur and a long, hairy, white coat. The white coat is very thick and stiff on the neck and shoulders where it forms a ridge or hump, and it extends down its legs like pants. Its long hair sheds off rain and snow. Its hooves have a hard, sharp rim that surround a soft, spongy inner pad. Its hooves give the mountain goat a good grip on rocks and ice. Both male and female goats have beards and black pointed horns.

The mountain goat is slow moving but surprisingly sure-footed as it climbs to dizzying heights and on small ledges as it searches for grass, sedges, and lichens to eat. It will also eat leaves and shoots of trees and will travel to search out salt licks. In the winter, the mountain goat will come down to areas where the snow is not as deep. In severe weather, it is known to take shelter under overhanging rocks and in caves.

It lives in herds of up to ten animals and the females produce one or two kids in the spring. The young kids are amazingly active and within half an hour after birth are able to leap about among the rocks

Klipspringer

The klipspringer antelope lives on rocky outcrops and cliffs in eastern and southwestern Africa. It is small, only up to three feet long. It has strong legs and blunt-tipped hooves that have the consistency of hard rubber with a resilient spongy pad underneath. The klipspringer stands on the tips of its hooves. The way the hooves are constructed give it an extremely good grip on the rocks. It is able to jump from rock to rock where it stands on ledges just a few inches wide. As it leaps from rock to rock, its long, thick, bristly coat cushions it from being hurt by bumps. It has rough, gray-brown fur, and the males have short, spiky horns.

Flowers and fruit form the bulk of the klipspringer's diet. It will feed in the morning and evening and will stand on its hind legs to reach the leaves, flowers and fruit it likes. It will also eat succulents, moss, and some grass. It will drink water when it is available.

The klipspringer is sometimes found in small parties, but more often, they are found in pairs. The klipspringer is territorial. Pairs will mark out their territory with a scent that comes from a gland in front of their eyes. They have one young at a time and can have up to two a year. The male and female klipspringer stays together for life

Animal Fact Cards

Mountain Lion and Lion

Mountain Lion

The mountain lion is also known as a cougar or puma. Its range is southwestern Canada, western United States, Mexico and South America. Its habitat includes mountainsides, forests, swamps and grasslands. The mountain lion can vary greatly in color and size throughout its range, although tawny and grayish-brown are its main colors. The length of its body can range from three to five feet (1 -1.6 m) and its tail can be from 23 to 33 inches long (60 – 85 cm).

The mountain lion is a solitary animal who likes to occupy a certain territory. Female lions can occupy the same territory as a male, but males will not exist in the same area as each other. It is normally active in the early mornings and evenings but may be out at any time. Mule deer and other deer are among its favorite prey. It will scream rather than roar as it pounces on and kills its prey. It kills with a swift bite to the nape of the neck of its prey. It will also eat rodents, hares, and sometimes domestic cattle. If it catches more than it can eat, it will hide the remains under branches to eat later.

The female can have up to six kittens a year. The kittens are spotted when they are first born, but lose their spots during their first few months. At six or seven weeks old, they can eat solid food brought to them by their mother. They will remain with her for one to two years

Lion

Although it is often called the king of the jungle, the lion lives on plains and in woodlands, not in dense forests. It can be found on the open savanna in Africa, south of the Sahara Desert, and in northwestern India. It is powerfully built with a broad head, thick strong legs and a long tail tipped with a tuft of hair that hides a claw-like spine. The male is larger than the female and has a heavy mane on its neck and shoulders. It is the world's second largest cat, after the tiger. Its body can be from four to six feet long (1.4-2 m), with its tail 26 inches to 3 feet long (67 cm-1 m). The lion's body color can vary from tawny-yellow to reddish-brown, and the mane may be light yellow to black.

A lion spends 20 or more hours a day resting. It will generally hunt during the day and is one of the few cats that hunt in groups. Lionesses do most of the hunting. Some of the lionesses will lay in wait while others drive the prey towards them. They attack by stalking their prey. They get as close to it as possible before making a brief, swift chase before pouncing on it. They kill the prey by a bite to the neck or throat. They eat mammals such as gazelles, antelope, and zebras. They may even cooperate to kill larger animals such as buffaloes and giraffes. Smaller animals, birds, lizards, and alligators may also be eaten.

Lions live and hunt in groups called prides. Prides usually consist of up to three males and up to 15 females and their young in a territory that they defend against intruders. Usually two or three cubs are born to a lioness. Once they are over four months old, they go everywhere with their mothers, including hunting for food. At around 18 months old, the males are driven from the pride, but females remain with their family.

Animal Fact Cards

Bison and Water Buffalo

Bison

Bison can be found in North America mostly in National Parks. Until the mid-1800s, when European settlers came across America's Great Plains, they were one of the world's most abundant grazing animals. In the 50 years that followed, so many bison were shot that they came close to extinction. Since then, groups have worked to build the herds back up so they are no longer in danger of becoming extinct.

The males may be as tall as 5 ½ feet at the shoulders. Their shoulders are humped and covered with shaggy, brownish-black fur that grows thickly on the head, neck and forelegs and make it look bigger than it really is. The female looks similar to the male but is smaller. The young are more reddish-brown in color. Both male and female have short, sharp horns.

American bison are often called buffalo and are very sociable animals. They live in herds that vary from a family group to several thousand. They feed in the morning and the evening, and during the day they rest, wallowing in the mud or dust to rid themselves of parasites. Their food source consists of pasture grasses.

The females give birth to a single calf away from the herd. Within an hour or two, they rejoin the herd.

Water Buffalo

Water buffaloes can be found in India and S.E. Asia. They live in swamps and grassy areas. They spend much of their time submerged in lakes and rivers with only their muzzles showing above the water. They also wallow in mud. When the mud dries, it hardens on their bodies and gives them some protection from the insects that torment them. Water buffaloes feed early in the day and late at night on the abundant grass and vegetation that grows near and in lakes and rivers.

They are large animals that have wide, spread out hoofs. They stand five to six feet tall at the shoulder. Their horn span is the widest of all the animals of their type. Their horns are crescent-shaped and flattened and can measure as large as 4 feet along the outer edge. Because the horns are hollow, they are less heavy than they look. Their large bodies are thinly covered in long, rough, black hair with a clump of coarse hair in the middle of their foreheads.

Water Buffaloes are outgoing and live in herds of various sizes. The females (cows) produce one or two calves a year and they live for about 18 years.

Domesticated and submissive, they have been used as beasts of burden in India and Southeast Asia since about 3000 B.C. People not only use them to do heavy work, but also as a source of milk and leather.

Animal Fact Cards

Black Bear and Polar Bear

Black Bear

Black bears can be found in many parts of North America, including northern Mexico. They live in wooded areas, swamps and in national parks where they raid campsites for food. Their body size can be up to five to six feet long.

Black bears actually vary in color from glossy black to dark brown, and from reddish-brown to almost white. Many times, they have a small, white patch on their chests. Black bears usually hunt at night and are seen only occasionally during the day. They have a keen sense of smell, but their hearing and eyesight are only fair. They will roam for long distances in search of food such as fruit, berries, nuts, roots, and honey. They will also eat insects, rodents and other small mammals, and stranded fish. They eat ample amounts of food in order to hibernate in the coldest weather. However, they are light sleepers and can be easily awakened.

Black bears are solitary animals and are only together as mother and cubs. A mother will have a litter of one to four cubs in January or February.

Polar Bear

Polar Bears can be found in the Arctic regions along the coasts and ice floes. It is the world's largest bear. Males can weigh more than 1,300 pounds and females can weigh over 650 pounds. The bears can grow up to eight feet long.

They have a creamy-white coat of dense fur that keeps their skin dry and their furry paws give them a non-slip grip on the ice. Polar Bears are superb swimmers and have been seen in open water hundreds of miles from land.

During the summer, the bears often eat berries, leaves of tundra plants, and rodents. In the winter, they wander over the frozen sea, attacking seals as they surface to breathe. Besides seals, they also eat seabirds, arctic hares, caribou and musk oxen. Polar bears are amazingly fast and can easily outrun caribou at short distances.

Polar Bears are usually solitary animals except during mating season that is in midsummer. The females hibernate in ice dens during the winter where they give birth and emerge in the spring with their young. The males usually remain active all year long. Mother bears must protect their cubs because adult males may attack them. Mothers will have between one to four cubs about every other year.

Animal Fact Cards

Harpy Eagle and Red-tailed Hawk

Harpy Eagle

Harpy eagles are found in Central America and tropical South America. They live in lowland tropical rainforests.

They are the world's largest eagles and can be up to three and half feet long. They have huge feet, each the size of a man's hand with deadly sharp talons. Their broad wings are short for a bird their size and allow it to maneuver through dense forests.

The harpy eagles fly from tree to tree looking and listening for prey. They can give chase through the branches with great agility and can snatch prey from the treetops. They eat monkeys opossums, lizards, tree porcupines, coati, and sometimes large birds, but they specialize in attacking sloths. The female is larger than the male and can lift animals weighing as much as they weigh.

The harpy's nest is a platform of sticks placed high in the tallest trees. Because their nests can be up to 150 feet above the ground it has been hard to observe their egg-laying and care of their young, but it is believed that they lay two eggs. The young are believed to stay with their parents for up to a year and for this reason they only have young every other year. Harpy eagles are becoming rarer because of the destruction of their habitats. They have also been sought after and shot by hunters, further declining their numbers.

Red-tailed Hawk

Red-tailed hawks can be found in North and Central America and in the West Indies. They can tolerate a wide variety of habitats as they can be found in deserts, forests, open plains, and mountains. They are powerful, hefty, aggressive birds with loud voices. They can vary in size being anywhere from 18 to 24 inches long.

They have a distinctive chestnut-colored tail. They prey mainly on rodents and rabbits. They will also feed on snakes, lizards, birds, and insects. They hunt on the wing or from a perch, swooping down on their prey.

They live in pairs and build their nests out of twigs high in trees, or in the desert, on a cactus plant. The female hawk remains on or near the nest for some weeks before laying her clutch of one to four eggs. Her mate feeds her through this period. Both parents share the incubation (sit on the eggs) and the young birds are able to feed themselves at four or five weeks old.

In Canada, red-tailed hawks are summer visitors, but in most of the United States, they stay all year round

Animal Fact Cards

Northern Leopard Frog and Golden Arrow-poison Frog

Northern Leopard Frog

Northern leopard frogs can be found in most of North America except on the Pacific coast. They have a varied habitat, living in areas of fresh water to salty marshes, from mountain meadows to salty coastal swamps. They range in size from two to five inches long.

They have large spots on their green bodies with prominent ridges on their backs. The intensity of their spots varies too.

They can adapt to almost any habitat near a permanent body of water and can adapt their diet as well. Insects, spiders, and crustaceans are their main food, but these very hungry frogs will eat almost anything it can find, including other small animals.

They are primarily nocturnal but will sometimes search for food during the day. If they are threatened or disturbed on land, they will quickly leap away in zigzagging jumps to seek shelter in water.

There must be water for them to breed. Each female lays about 20,000 eggs that lie on the bottom of the water on submerged vegetation until they hatch about four weeks later. The tadpoles metamorphose to adult form in six months to two years, depending on temperature and conditions.

Arrow Poison Frog

Arrow Poison Frogs can be found in Central and South America. They live on the rain forest floor with predators all around. These tiny frogs do not hide because their brilliant colors warn potential enemies that their skin contains poison so deadly that they are used by local tribesmen to poison the tips of their arrows for hunting. Their bright colors also warn predators to keep away. Males use their bright colors to defend their territories, as well as warn predators that they are poisonous.

They only grow to be one and 1 ½ inches long. There are more than 100 species of these frogs. The most dangerous was discovered in Columbia in 1973.

They are sometimes at a disadvantage with their eating habits because arrow poison frogs require the tiniest of insects, which can be difficult to obtain. They eat ants termites, small insects, and small spiders.

Arrow poison frogs have an unusual life cycle. The female lays up to six eggs, which are surrounded with a gelatinous substance, on the damp ground. When the tadpoles hatch, the tadpoles wiggle onto the male frog's back, and he carries them to a hole in a tree where a little water has collected. This is where the aquatic tadpoles complete their development in about six weeks.

Animal Fact Cards

Snowshoe Hare and Black-tailed Jackrabbit

Snowshoe Hare

Snowshoe hares can be found in Alaska, Canada and the Northern United States. They live in the Arctic in forests, swamps and thickets. Their bodies are 14 to 22 inches long.

They are also known as the varying hare because this animal has a dark-brown coat in the summer that turns white to match the snow in the winter, except for a patch of black on the tips of their ears. This coat is of undoubted camouflage value, although in fact only the visible tips of the hair are pure white. They are usually active at night and in the early morning.

The snowshoe rabbit feeds on juicy green plants and grass in the summer and twigs, shoots and buds in the winter. The population of these animals fluctuates tremendously on a roughly 10-year cycle, due to the availability of food and predator interactions.

They have their young in the spring, when each female will usually have four young that are born fully furred, with their eyes open.

Black-tailed Jackrabbit

Black-tailed jackrabbits can be found in the United States from Oregon east to South Dakota and Missouri, and south to Northern Mexico. They live in the prairie, on cultivated land, and in dry bushes. They range in size from 18 to 24 inches long.

Their long ears and large, black-striped tail identify these animals. They have powerful, elongated hind legs that allow the jackrabbits to move with a fast, bounding gait. For short amounts of time, they can get up to speeds of 35 miles per hour. They will run rather than hide if they are threatened.

In the summer, the jackrabbits eat succulent green plants and grass, and in the winter, they eat more woody vegetation. They will also ingest their fecal pellets in order to obtain additional nutrients when the material is passed through the digestive system a second time.

There may be several litters a year, with one to six young in each. The young are borne fully furred, with their eyes open, in a shallow depression in the ground.

Animal Fact Cards

Northern Elephant Seal and Harp Seal

Northern Elephant Seal

The northern elephant seal can be found on the Pacific coast of North America from Vancouver Island to central Baja California. They like to breed on offshore islands. The male elephant seal may weigh a massive 6,000 pounds. Much of that weight comes from a thick layer of blubber. The females rarely weigh more than 2,000 pounds.

Northern elephant seals feed on fish and squid and make long, deep dives. Adult males haul out for breeding in late November and fight for dominance in the social hierarchy. The high-ranking males mate with the most females. Males have a very large nasal chamber which creates a snout that resembles an elephant's trunk. With the snout they can make loud, vocal threats against their rivals. In fact, elephant seals got their name from their size and from the male's bulbous, trunk-like nose. Females give birth to a single pup. The bond between the mother and pup is very strong and she rarely leaves the breeding colony as she feeds her young and protects them from other adults. She exists on her blubber until her pup is weaned. Weaned pups gather in a group on the beach, where they remain for another month, living on fat reserves built up while suckling.

Harp Seal

The harp seal can be found in the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans from the northern USSR to Scandinavia and Greenland and in Newfoundland. They survive in sub arctic and arctic waters. They can be five to six feet in length. Their black heads and the dark band that runs along their flanks and over their backs identify harp seals. The rest of their bodies are usually pale gray, but this is highly variable.

Expert, fast swimmers, the harp seals spend much of the year at sea and make regular north-south migrations. They can also move fast over ice if it is necessary. Their main foods are fish and crustaceans. They are well known for being able to dive long and deep. They are generally a outgoing species, and only old males live alone.

Females form whelping groups on the ice and give birth to their young in late February and early March. The pups are suckled for two to four weeks, growing rapidly on the nourishing milk, which is rich in fat. They are then left by their mothers who go off to feed for a few weeks before migrating north to summer feeding grounds. Courting males fight rivals with their teeth and flippers.

Animal Fact Cards

Caribou/Reindeer and Whitetail Deer

Caribou/Reindeer

Caribou, also known as reindeer, can be found in Northern Europe to Asia from Scandinavia to Siberia and in Alaska, Canada, and Greenland. Its habitat is the tundra and they can grow up to seven and a half feet long, excluding its tail. They vary in color from black to brown to gray to almost white. They are the only deer species in which both males and females have antlers, although those of the female are smaller. Their antlers are unique in that the lowest, forward pointing tine is itself branched. Their hooves work like snowshoes, preventing them from sinking into the snow. This helps them survive in the far north, where the snow can lie for up to six months a year.

The females are gregarious (social) and gather in herds with their young, but adult males are often solitary. Some populations migrate hundreds of miles between their breeding grounds on the tundra and winter feeding grounds farther south. In the summer, reindeer feed on grass, leaves, twigs and lichen, a moss-like plant that grows on trees and rocks. In winter, caribou feed mainly on lichens, scraping away the snow with their hooves to expose their plants.

In the autumn, the males fight to gather groups of females. The females produce one offspring, occasionally two. Young caribou are able to run with the herd within a few hours of being born.

Whitetail Deer

As one of the most adaptable animals in the world, the whitetail deer are found in near arctic regions to the tropics. It can be found in Canada, the United States, and in Central and South America. It can live in forests, swamps and open brush land. One of the main reasons the deer can live in so many diverse places is that it feeds on various kinds of food including grazing on many different kinds of grasses, weeds, leaves, bark, fungi, nuts, lichens, and fallen fruit.

The whitetail deer is slender and energetic. Its coat is reddish in the summer and gray in the winter. The deer got its name from a patch of white fur on the underside of its tail. When it is threatened, it runs for cover, holding up its tail. The flash of white acts as an alarm signal for other deer.

A whitetail deer is a shy, elusive animal and does not usually congregate in large herds. However, in severe winter weather, it may congregate in a group in a sheltered spot out of the wind.

In the breeding season, the males will engage in savage battles over mates. The females usually produce only a single offspring, but older females may have a litter of two or three. Young deer are able to walk immediately after birth.

Animal Fact Cards

Komodo Dragon and Gila Monster

Komodo Dragon

The Komodo dragon is the world's largest lizard. It can be found in Komodo and in neighboring Indonesian islands. Its habitat is in grasslands and near water. It has a heavy body, long, thick tail and well-developed limbs with talon-like claws. It can grow up to 10 feet long. Its teeth are large and jagged, and it has a forked tongue that can be flicked in and out of its mouth. It uses its tongue to taste the air for living prey or dead remains. Despite its size, it is a good climber, can move surprisingly quickly, and swims well. It is active during the day and preys on animals as big as hog deer and wild boar, as well as on small deer and pigs.

The female Komodo lays about 15 eggs, which she buries in the ground.

Komodo dragons once roamed over a large part of Indonesia, but now live on only a handful of the islands. There are about 5,000 left, and they are protected by law.

Gila Monster

The Gila monster is one of the only two poisonous lizards in the world (the other is the Mexican beaded lizard). They can be found in the southwestern United States in Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and in Mexico. They live in deserts and other dry areas on the ground. It takes shelter under rocks or in a burrow that it digs itself or takes over from another animal.

It is a frightening, heavy-bodied lizard. Its body is bright orange and black in a gaudy pattern. It has beadlike scales on its back and has a short, usually stout tail. Its tail works like a camel's hump, storing fat for times when food is scarce.

It hunts for small mammals, the eggs of birds and reptiles, and other lizards after dark, gripping them in its jaws and injecting venom as they chew. The venom is produced in glands in its lower jaw. It enters the mouth through grooved teeth at the front of the lower jaw where it flows into the prey as the lizard chews. Although its bite is extremely painful, it is rarely fatal to humans.

Gila monsters mate in the summer and the female lays three to five eggs some time later, in the autumn or winter.

Animal Fact Cards

Snow Leopard and Jaguar

Snow Leopard

The snow leopard can be found in Central Asia in Pakistan and Afghanistan, north to the USSR, and in the Himalayas, east to China. They live in the mountain slopes at altitudes of up to 20,000 feet and in the forest. In the summer, it lives in alpine meadows above the tree line, amid the snow and glaciers; but in the winter, it follows the migrations of prey animals down to the forest and scrub at about 6,600 feet.

Its soft, gray fur is exceptionally thick, and it has an extra long tail that it wraps around its body to keep warm. They can grow up to seven and half feet long, including their tails. It is a powerful, nimble animal capable of huge leaps over ravines.

It stalks prey such as ibex, markhor, wild sheep and goats, boars, and ground-dwelling birds such as pheasants, partridges and snow-cocks. In the winter, it will also eat domestic livestock. Farmers sometimes kill them and they are hunted for their fur.

Snow leopards live alone but their young sometimes accompany females. They are constantly roaming around their huge territories and are active mainly in the early morning and late afternoon.

The female gives birth to two or three cubs and the young get to accompany their mothers on hunting trips when they are about two months old.

Jaguar

The jaguar can be found in the southwestern United States, in north Mexico, and in Central and South America. It lives in forests and swamps and is the largest South American cat. It is a heavily built cat and can weigh up to 325 pounds. During the 1950s and 1960s, huge numbers of jaguars were hunted for their beautiful fur. The jaguar has a deep chest and massive, strong limbs. Its coloration varies from light yellow to reddish-brown, with characteristic dark spots. It can climb trees and often lies in wait for its prey. Unlike most cats, it is a good swimmer and seems to enjoy going into the water. They often hunt along riverbanks, attacking otters, turtles, and even large snakes. They also eat peccaries, capybaras, mountain sheep, deer, rodents, ground-living birds, caimans, and fish. Like lions, it cannot sustain high speeds and depends on getting close to prey for successful kills.

It is normally a solitary animal but male and female jaguars will stay together for a few weeks when breeding. The female will have a litter of one to four young. They are born in a secure den in vegetation, among rocks or in a hole in a riverbank. The female is aggressive in the protection of her babies from any intruder, including the father. Jaguars are capable of killing people, but attacks are rare, and the cats normally avoid humans.

Animal Fact Cards

Black Spider Monkey and Japanese Macaque

Black Spider Monkey

The black spider monkey can be found in the forests of northern South America to Brazil and Bolivia. Its body can be from 15 ¼ to 23 ½ inches long and their tails can be from 23 ½ to 31 ½ inches long. Its extremely long limbs and tail make it very graceful, agile, and acrobatic enabling it to maneuver easily through the trees.

It has a very light build, a small head and has the most highly developed tail that it uses as a fifth limb to grasp branches or food items as it moves through the trees. Its tail can support the monkey's whole weight.

It also has an amazing reach as it hangs in the trees by its tail. Part of the underside of the tail has fine grooves that are like a human fingerprint which help it grip the branches. The monkeys often swing through the trees using their hands like hooks to hang onto the branches. It also uses its tail to gather food and to hold items like fruit, while it takes the skin off with its teeth.

Black spider monkeys hardly ever come to the ground and eat in trees, mostly on fruit and some nuts. They live in groups of 15 to 30 monkeys in a home range, but split into smaller parties while searching for food during the day. Most feeding is done in the early morning and the afternoon.

The female gives birth to one young after an average gestation of about 20 weeks. The young relies on its mother for 10 months or so.

Japanese Macaque

The Japanese macaque is found in Japan in high-altitude forests. Its body can be from 19 to 29 inches long and its tail another 9 to 11 inches. It is the only monkey found in Japan and the only primate other than humans to be able to withstand the near-freezing temperatures of a cold, snowy winter. In some parts of its range, it spends long periods soaking in thermal pools up to its neck.

It is a medium-sized, well-built monkey. It has dense fur and long whiskers and beard. It is active on the ground and in trees and it mostly eats nuts. Berries, buds, leaves, and bark.

Its social group consists of up to 40 monkeys living together, led by an older male. The relationship between mother monkeys and their daughters is extremely important and the daughters stay associated with their mothers as long as their mothers are alive.

Females give birth to one young after a period of 6 to 7 months.

Animal Fact Cards

Blue Whale and Killer Whale

Blue Whale

The blue whale can be found worldwide, in all oceans. It is the largest animal that has ever lived. Some blue whales weigh more than 150 tons, which is twice as much as the heaviest dinosaurs. It can grow to be 82 to 105 feet long. Its body is sleek (smooth) and despite its enormous bulk, it is graceful in the water.

The blue whale has an enormous mouth, with several hundred baleen (whalebone) plates hanging from its upper jaw. When it takes in water and closes its mouth, the plates filter krill (tiny shrimp-like plankton) and other small animals from the water. It is highly selective as to the type of plankton it will eat. It has 64 to 94 grooves on its throat that open to let its mouth expand when it feeds. It feeds mainly during the summer months, which it spends in the nutrient-rich polar waters. It can swallow up to 4 tons of krill and other fish every day.

In autumn, when ice starts to cover its feeding grounds, the blue whale migrates towards the equator but eats virtually nothing while in the warmer waters. It will mate during this period and after a gestation of 11 to 12 months, the calves are born in warm waters the following year. Females give birth every two or three years.

Even though blue whales have been protected since 1967, populations of this extraordinary animal are still low, and it is in danger of extinction.

Killer Whale

Weighing up to nine tones, the black and white killer whale is the largest member of the dolphin family. It can be found worldwide, particularly in cooler, coastal seas. It is among the most widespread mammals on earth, living in coastal waters as well as in the open ocean.

It grows to be 23 to 33 feet long. It is a strong yet smooth animal, with a rounded head and no beak. The dorsal fin of the male is almost 6 ½ feet high. While the fins of females and juveniles are much smaller and curved, they are still larger than those of most other dolphins. Adults have 40 to 50 teeth.

The killer whale is an avid predator and feeds on fish, squid, sea lions, birds, and even other whales. They often attack seals, especially pups, because they are easier to catch than adults are. It will sometimes throw itself onto the beach to catch pups near the water's edge. When killer whales hunt as a group, they can attack larger prey such as walrus and other whales. Despite its name, a killer whale has never been known to attack humans.

It is one of the most intelligent animals in the dolphin family and has a complex social life based on extended family groups. Killer whales communicate by sound (echolocation). They often travel in formation, sometimes bobbing out of the water to scan the surrounding sea. Extended family groups live together and cooperate in hunting. It has no regular migratory habits but does travel in search of food.

Animal Fact Cards

American Alligator and Nile Crocodile

American Alligator

The American alligator can be found in marshes, rivers, and swamps in the Southeastern United States. It can grow up to 18 feet in length and is the largest reptile in the Western Hemisphere. It was declared an endangered species in the 1960s due to it being hunted and its habitat being depleted. It was protected after effective conservation laws were passed and its numbers are now increasing.

The American alligator will eat anything it can overpower, from birds to turtles. It will hunt when the temperature is above 70° F. When it is colder, it will become sluggish. During the summer, it will often wallow in water-filled hollows called "gator holes," but in the winter, they hibernate in shallow dens.

The alligators will usually mate in shallow water in April. The female finds a nest site near water and scrapes whatever plant debris is available with sweeping movements of her body and tail. She packs the vegetation together to form a mound, with a cavity with more vegetation. She guards the nest while the eggs incubate for about 65 days. The hatching young call out to their mother, prompting her to open the nest and free them. They remain with her for up to 3 years.

Nile Crocodile

The Nile crocodile can be found in freshwater, mainly in large rivers, lakes, and marshes in Africa and Madagascar. It can grow to be 15 to 17 feet long. Its skin is in demand and its natural habitats are being destroyed, causing the reduction in the number of Nile crocodiles.

It preys on large mammals and birds that come to the water's edge to drink. After seizing its catch, the crocodile drowns it by holding it underwater. It then twists off chunks of flesh by spinning its own body in the water while holding onto its prey. The adult crocodiles swallow stones, which remain in the stomach and act as a stabilizing counterweight when the crocodile is in the water.

The Nile crocodile spends its nights in water and comes out onto land just before sunrise in order to bask in the sun during the day. IT leads a rather leisurely existence and does not need to feed everyday.

The male defends a territory and enacts a courtship display at breeding time. The female lays 25 to 75 eggs in a pit near the water. She covers her eggs well and guards them during the 3-month incubation period. When the young are ready to hatch, they call to the mother from the nest. She uncovers them and carries them in her mouth to a safe nursery area where she cares for them tirelessly for another 3 to 6 months. The offspring feed on insects and then progress to crabs, birds, and fish before taking on an adult diet.

Animal Fact Cards

Meerkat and Black-tailed Prairie Dog

Meerkat

The Meerkat can be found in the savanna, bush and open country of Southern Africa. Its body size can be from 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ to 12 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches long, with its tail being another 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. It has a long body and short legs are typical of many mongooses. Its coat is grayish-brown to light gray on color, marked with dark bands across its body. It has dark ears and nose and a light-colored head and throat. The fur on its belly is thin and helps the Meerkat regulate its body temperature. It sits up to sun itself or lies on the warm ground to increase its temperature and reduces it by lying on its belly in a cool, dark burrow.

The meerkat is an outgoing animal that lives in family units. Sometimes several families live together in a group of up to 30 or more. The colony occupies a home range, which contains shelters, such as burrows or rock crevices, and feeding sites. A typical community contains between 20 and 30 animals belonging to several different families. It can dig well and will make burrows containing many tunnels and chambers. The meerkat is active in the daytime when it forages for food in pairs or small groups. It will sit on its hind legs to watch for prey or danger. It can run fast for short distances but cannot run or jump well.

It eats a wide variety of food including insects, spiders, scorpions, centipedes, small mammals, lizards, snakes, birds and their eggs, snails, roots, fruit and other plant material.

The meerkat has a good sense of smell, good hearing and excellent eyesight. It must keep a constant watch for their main enemy, birds of prey. It will instantly dive for a burrow or other cover if alarmed.

It will breed between October and April. The female will give birth to 2 to 5 young, in a grass-lined underground chamber. The young are born blind, but their eyes open 12 to 14 days after birth.

Black-tailed Prairie Dog

The black-tailed prairie dog can be found on the grassland prairies of the central United States. It is 11 to 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and its tail is another 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches long. It has four sharp teeth, golden brown fur, powerful short legs and arms.

It is not a dog at all, but a large ground-dwelling squirrel with a dog-like bark. It lives on grassy plains, digging burrows beneath the surface. A network of prairie dog burrows, called a township has a ventilation system and sleeping quarters. One township can house thousands of animals. None of the burrows are alike. Prairie dogs dig tunnels as deep as fifteen feet deep, and make sure they have enough room for everyone in the family. Prairie dogs do not just let any stranger into their burrows, so they "kiss" and "hug" when they meet to identify each other as family.

Members of a prairie dog town take turns keeping watch. If the watchdog sees danger, they sound an alarm call by stretching their heads into the sky and barking. An alarm call sends all of the prairie dogs into the burrow to hide until the danger is gone. Eagles, foxes, and coyotes commonly prey upon the prairie dogs.

The prairie dog will emerge during the day to graze on grass and other vegetation and can often cause serious damage to cattle ranges. As they are feeding, they frequently get side tracked by socializing and chattering with one another.

Females give birth to litters of up to 10 young during March, April or May. After being weaned, the young disperse to the edge of the town.

Animal Fact Cards

Sun Bear and Grizzly Bear

Sun Bear

The sun bear can be found in Southeast Asia, Sumatra, and Borneo in dense tropical and subtropical forests at lower levels.

It is the smallest bear and one of the most intelligent. Its body only ranges in size from 3 ½ to 4 ½ feet long and has a very short tail that is hard to see. The sun bear has sleek black fur with a yellow crescent-shaped mark that looks like the sun on its chest and a short, grayish or orange muzzle. It has a strong, stocky body and powerful paws with long, curved claws that help it climb trees.

It spends much of its life in trees, sleeping and basking in the sun during the day in nests made of leafy branches. It searches for food at night. The sun bear uses its strong claws to tear at tree bark to expose insects and their larvae, bees, honey, and termites that it likes to eat. The sun bear has an unusually long tongue that it uses to slurp up insects. It also preys on birds, small rodents, earthworms, fruit and coconut palm.

The females usually have two young that are cared for by both parents. Litters of two are born blind and helpless on the forest floor. Cubs can walk at two months and remain with the mother for two years as they learn how to survive.

Grizzly Bear

The grizzly bear also known as big brown bear can be found in the forests and tundra in the mountainous areas of the Western United States, Alaska, and Canada. It can grow up to 9 feet long and can stand more than 10 feet high on its hind legs.

A grizzly bear can vary in color from very light cream to dark brown or nearly black. It is a large predator that has a distinctive hump on its shoulders and long claws about the length of a human finger. The long guard hairs on their back and shoulders often have white tips and give the bears a "grizzled" appearance, which explains the name "grizzly."

It is an immensely strong bear and among the biggest carnivores. It is strong enough to drag away a horse. Even though it lives mainly in forests, it is not a good climber. It can run at high speeds over short distances, however.

It lives alone or in family groups and is active during the night or day. Its diet varies greatly from area to area. It will eat almost anything including fruit, nuts, roots, and seaweed as well as insects, fish, small animals, deer and it can catch and kill other bears. Alaskan brown bears feed heavily on migrating salmon. In the late summer and autumn, it will fatten up on vast quantities of fruit and berries in preparation for the winter sleep, a period of inactivity, not true hibernation.

In late winter, the females give birth to two to four cubs that are born blind and tiny. They stay with the mother for a year, sometimes longer.