
Pelt Properties



Purpose:

- In this activity students will identify adaptations visible in pelts and determine how they help the animal survive in its particular habitat. They will use teamwork to do so and creativity to demonstrate their understanding.

Objectives:

- Students will recognize adaptations evident in pelts by observing two or more mammal pelts in groups of 2-3 and correctly identifying three major adaptations for one.
- Students will relate an animal's specific adaptations to its environment by correctly selecting the appropriate habitat for one of the pelts and justifying it by the animal's adaptations.
- Students will illustrate how key adaptations support survival in a particular habitat by designing a pelt with at least two adaptations suitable for a habitat of their choosing.

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Appropriate grades: 3-8

NGSS and Common Core Standards:

3-LS4-3: Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.

4-LS1-1: Construct an argument that plants and animals have internal and external structures that function to support survival, growth, behavior, and reproduction.

MS-LS4-2: Apply scientific ideas to construct an explanation for the anatomical similarities and differences among modern organisms and between modern and fossil organisms to infer evolutionary relationships.

Materials:

- Five or more pelts (provided)
- "Animal in Situ" pictures (12)
- Oregon Habitat pictures (8)
- Pelt Properties worksheets, laminated (8)
- Fine-tipped wet erase markers (not provided)
- Paper (not provided)
- Coloring pencils or crayons (not provided)

Activity:



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<p>Introduction</p>	<p>Introduce students to pelts, or the fur from animals, all belonging to animals that live in Oregon. Explain that they will be identifying the special properties of each pelt, or its adaptations, to discover how each helped the animal survive.</p> <p>If appropriate, explain that an adaptation is a structural, behavioral, or physiological trait that helps an animal to survive in its particular habitat. Have the class list adaptations that they can think of without specifically referencing the pelts.</p> <p>Demonstrate the appropriate way to handle a pelt: Using two fingers, always touch or brush the fur going in the same direction as the fur, never against it.</p>
<p>Body</p>	<p>Divide the class into groups, ideally with 2-3 students each. Distribute one pelt, the “Animal in Situ” associated picture, and a “Pelt Properties” double-sided worksheet to each group. Give them 1-3 minutes to study the pelt and list any characteristics and the associated benefits on the worksheet.</p> <p>Suggested characteristics to emphasize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color • Patterns • Thickness of fur • Number of distinct hair types <p>Once time is up, have groups rotate to a new pelt. You may either have them leave their worksheet behind, flipped to the backside, so the next group can record their own observations, or take their worksheet with them. Give them 1-3 minutes to study the new pelt and record observations.</p> <p>Repeat the rotation as many times as you feel appropriate. When they have finished with the last pelt, have each group report to the class what they noticed about the pelt that they are currently with. Other groups should mention any observations they made that were not included.</p> <p>Introduce the idea that the differences may be due to where the animal lives, or its particular habitat.</p> <p>Show the pictures of various Oregon habitats. Based on what the students have discovered, have each group select the habitat that they think their current pelt is best adapted for survival in. They should justify their choice using the</p>



	<p>adaptations they have discovered rather than prior knowledge.</p> <p>Reveal whether each group selected a correct environment for their pelt.</p> <p>Distribute paper and drawing materials. Have students create their own unique animal for one of the habitats. They should include at least two adaptations the class has discussed that would allow that animal to survive in their chosen environment.</p>
Closure	<p>Going habitat by habitat, have students show their animal to the class. They should explain what adaptations they chose and why.</p>

Modifications:

- Elementary School:** If the class has not yet learned what an adaptation is, frame the discussions around “characteristics that help the animal” rather than adaptations. Use an example pelt in the introduction to demonstrate what types of characteristics they should be looking for. Simplify habitat selection to “Freshwater,” “Ocean,” or “Land.”
- High School:** Have the students research the evolutionary history of the showcased animals to find living or fossil relatives and explain how the showcased animals adapted to their particular habitat.



Pelt Properties

Animal: _____

Characteristic

Benefit



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