

Neighborhood Meals

Inside the rainforest at the California Academy of Sciences, visitors can observe animals like the Macaw and Vine snake using special body parts and behaviors — called Adaptations — to eat their food. A goal of the Academy is to better understand adaptations all around the world.

You can help us by exploring the question: **How do your local animals get their meals?**

Materials for investigation:

- pencil
- paper or science notebook
- optional – camera device

Prepare for Observation:

1. Copy 1 or more Adaptations Charts for observing animals on a piece of paper or in your science notebook.

Animal Name: _____

	Prediction	Evidence
What it eats		
Which body parts help it eat		
How it finds or catches its food		

Part 1: Observing local animals' Adaptations (30-60 min)

1. Pick a location – you can watch animals from almost anywhere. Some ideas:

- from a window
- on the sidewalk
- in a yard
- in a nearby park



2. Look out for animals! Try to pick one that will stick around for several minutes. Animals that disappear but then come back are good too. **Think big like Coyotes or Squirrels - think small like Ladybugs.**

3. Found an animal? Fill in the “Prediction” column **before** you observe it eating. *Below are an Academy educator’s predictions after observing a skunk in his backyard. Its small face and body helped him with his guesses.*

Animal Name: Skunk

	Prediction	Evidence
What it eats	Ants, Flowers, Spiders	
Which body parts help it eat	Mouth, Paws, Teeth	
How it finds or catches its food	Walks Around Looking, Hides and Sprays Prey	



4. Start gathering evidence: **What do you notice?**

Observing animal adaptations is a skill that takes practice and patience.

To help you can:

- make notes
- do a scientific sketch
- take photos/videos

5. Record your evidence in the “Evidence” column.

Our educator watched the skunk for 10 minutes and filmed it looking for food low in the grass. Because it was hidden, the educator could not see actual eating so he wrote down what he did observe instead. His notes are shown here in the final chart:

Trouble gathering evidence? Try observing more than once and at different times of the day. **Remember the important thing is that you have fun practicing close observation.** When you finish, do some research about what and how your animal eats.

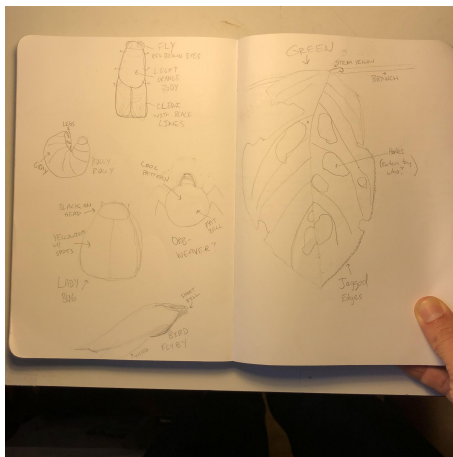
ANIMAL: SKUNK

	PREDICTION	EVIDENCE
WHAT IT EATS	ANTS FLOWERS SPIDERS	SOMETHING LOW IN THE GRASS MAYBE PLANT ROOTS?
WHICH BODY PARTS HELP IT EAT	MOUTH PAWS TEETH	LOOKED LIKE IT USED ITS NOSE A LOT PULLED WITH TEETH
HOW IT FINDS OR CATCHES ITS FOOD	WALKS AROUND LOOKING HIDES AND SPRAYS ITS PREY	SNIFFS IN THE DIRT. DIGS WITH FRONT PAWS OR MAYBE WITH ITS FACE. HARD TO TELL!

Here are other examples of how the educator looked for evidence of the adaptations of different animals.

Scientific Sketches:

(some animals were seen for seconds only -- DO YOUR BEST)



Take Images:



Part 2: Design your own creature!

Now it's your turn to design your own creature to live in your neighborhood.

1. The first step in designing your creature is to think about what it eats.

What is your creature going to eat?

2. Think about adaptations it needs to eat and catch its food.

Some questions to think about when designing:

- Does it see its food? Hear it? Smell it?
- What size is the food?
- Does it need to chew or can it swallow things whole? Or something else?
- Does it use its limbs to eat? How?
- Where does it eat? Is it easy or difficult for your creature to get its food?

3. Draw your creature and its food.

Be sure to label any adaptations, body parts, and actions, to help it eat its food.

Part 3: Classroom Reflection Questions

Discuss as a whole group or with a science partner. Your partner can be a family member if you did the activity together.

1. Think about 1 animal you observed.

- Tell a short story of how that animal survives
- What adaptations did you learn more about?
- Did you gather any evidence that surprised you? Explain.

2. Think about your animal creature.

- What was it like to make your creation?
- Describe your favorite adaptation you designed

Part 4: Share your observations

We, the Academy educators, would love to know more about the living and made up things where you did your observations. If you want to share any noticings, sketches, or photos/videos of the animals you observed or created we would be delighted to see them. You can share them through your teacher or send them to us at this email address: distancelearning@calacademy.org

