

Predator!

Predators, prey and decomposers

A predator is an animal that hunts, kills and eats other animals. An apex predator is at the top of a food chain and isn't hunted by any other animal. The animals that predators hunt and kill for food are called prey. A decomposer eats dead plants and animals, releasing nutrients into the soil for plants to take in through their roots. Some bacteria, fungi, insects and worms are decomposers.



Lions are apex predators. They eat large mammals, such as zebras and young elephants.



Shrews are both predators and prey. They eat insects and worms, and are eaten by birds of prey and some mammals, such as foxes.



Worms are decomposers and prey. They eat dead plants and animals. They are eaten by birds and some small mammals, such as shrews.

Prey adaptations

Prey animals can be herbivores, carnivores or omnivores. They must constantly be on the lookout for predators. To survive, they must escape from or defend themselves against animals trying to eat them. Prey have important adaptations that help them to avoid being caught and eaten. These adaptations can include alarm calls, defences such as spines, stings, venom and horns, or camouflage so they can hide from the animals hunting them. They sometimes have eyes on the sides of their heads so they can see predators approaching.

Predator adaptations

Predators have many physical features that help them to hunt and kill other animals.



Cheetahs have strong legs and slender bodies for speed. They are the fastest land animal and hunt antelopes and gazelles.



Great white sharks have sharp teeth and strong jaws to capture their prey. They feed on marine mammals, as well as fish and seabirds.



Buzzards have sharp claws to capture and carry away prey. They eat small mammals and other birds.



Praying mantises are camouflaged. They sit still and wait to ambush their prey of lizards, frogs and small birds.



Leopards have forward-facing eyes so they can track and pursue their prey. They stalk gazelle, wildebeest and rodents.



Barn owls use their excellent sense of hearing to find their prey. They hunt mice and shrews at night.

Food chains

Food provides energy for all living things. Energy is needed for life processes, including breathing, growth and movement. Food chains show how energy passes from one plant or animal to another. Most plants make their own food. They are called producers. Animals that eat other plants or animals are called consumers.

