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Information

Snow Leopard



Location Northern, central and southern Asia.

Habitat Rocky, alpine areas of the Himalayas.

Diet Snow leopards are carnivores that can hunt and kill animals up to four times their own weight, such as bharals, tahrs and markhors. However, unlike other cats, they also eat a lot of vegetation, such as grass and twigs.

Adaptations Snow leopards have large nostrils to allow them to breathe more easily in the thin mountain air. Their oversized paws increase their grip on snowy mountain sides and their extra long tails help them to balance. To keep out the cold, the snow leopard has small, rounded ears and long, thick fur. Its coat also provides camouflage.

Characteristics They are lone hunters, with a large territory. They actively hunt at dawn and dusk and are ambush predators.

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Yak



Location Northern Tibet and western China.

Habitat Alpine areas of the Himalayas.

Diet Yaks are herbivores that feed on the alpine grasslands in the mountains.

Adaptations Yaks have a thick layer of body fat and long fur that hangs around their legs to keep them warm. Their lungs and hearts are large to provide them with enough oxygen in their blood at higher altitudes. Yaks cannot lose body heat through their sweat glands because they don't work.

Characteristics They live in herds and will feed high in the mountains in the summer, before migrating to the mountain lowlands to feed in the winter. They are timid animals that will run away from danger.

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Himalayan marmot



Location Himalayan regions of Nepal, Pakistan, India, western and southern China, and the Tibetan plateau.

Habitat Dry, alpine grasslands of the Himalayas.

Diet Marmots are herbivores that eat grasses and plants as well as fruit or grain.

Adaptations Marmots dig unusually deep burrows so they can hibernate through the winter. Their thick, dense coats, short ears, stocky bodies and insulating fat layers all help to keep them warm.

Characteristics They burrow into the soft soil of the alpine zone and are active throughout the day. They live and forage in large groups.

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Dall sheep



Location Alaska and northwestern Canada.

Habitat Steep slopes near to alpine grasslands in the mountains of Alaska, the Mackenzie Mountains in the Yukon Territories and northern British Columbia in Canada.

Diet Dall sheep are herbivores that eat thick, alpine grass in summer and moss and lichen in winter.

Adaptations Dall sheep have a white coat to provide camouflage in snowy conditions. Their flexible hooves allow them to move quickly on steep, rocky slopes to escape predators. They have large ears that rotate to help them detect danger more easily.

Characteristics Dall sheep live in groups and rely on safety in numbers. Having lots of sheep in the same place allows them to keep watch for predators easily, so that the group can escape quickly if danger comes.

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Pika



Location Asia, North America and eastern Europe.

Habitat Rocky mountain slopes above the tree line, where they can make their burrows in cracks in the rocks.

Diet Pikas are herbivores that eat a large variety of plants such as grass, flowers, leaves, moss and lichen.

Adaptations Pikas have thick fur coats to keep out the cold. When it is warmer, they are only active during the day. Their furry paws allow them to grip rocks in the snow. Instead of hibernating, pikas store food away in their burrows, which is known as 'haystacking'.

Characteristics Pikas live in large groups in burrows. As these burrows are made in rocky cracks in boulder fields, the burrows are often connected underground so they can move around freely with little danger.

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Guanaco



Location South America.

Habitat High grasslands of the Andes mountains, the Atacama Desert and parts of Patagonia.

Diet Guanacos are herbivores that eat cacti flowers and lichens, which contain moisture. These plants provide them with enough water to survive.

Adaptations Guanacos can run quickly and have two padded toes on each foot to allow them to travel over loose gravel with ease. The skin on their necks is thick to protect them from predator bites. Like camels, guanacos retain moisture from the food they eat because water is scarce in their habitats.

Characteristics They live in herds made up of one male, a group of females and their young. They run at speeds of up to 35 mph on steep, rocky ground when escaping from danger.

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Bharal



Location High plains of China and Mongolia through to the Himalayan regions of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, and Pakistan.

Habitat Alpine grasslands and mountain slopes.

Diet Bharals are herbivores that eat mainly grass as well as herbs and shrubs.

Adaptations Bharals have a bluish grey coat that acts as camouflage. They stand still, rather than running away from predators, and have little body odour so they are hard to detect. Their hearts and lungs allow them to store more oxygen in their blood to cope with the thinner mountain air.

Characteristics They live in herds and can climb cliffs that are almost vertical. They stand motionless and use their camouflaged coats to blend into the rock face.

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Himalayan brown bear



Location Himalayas.

Habitat Subalpine forests and alpine meadows.

Diet Himalayan brown bears are omnivores, so they will eat grasses, fruits and berries as well as mammals such as sheep and goats.

Adaptations Himalayan brown bears have thick fur coats to keep warm. They hibernate during the winter to avoid the worst of the cold. They have long, strong claws to dig into frozen earth and strong shoulder muscles for tearing up logs and earth to find food.

Characteristics They are lone hunters, so cubs live with their mothers until they are old enough to hunt by themselves. They are mainly active during the day but eat their meals at dawn and dusk.

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