

Animal Atlas: Meet the animals of Asia and the Middle East

By Rachel Williams and Emily Hawkins, "Atlas of Animal Adventures," adapted by Newsela staff on 09.06.17

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A family of elephants in Sri Lanka, a country in South Asia. Photo from: Jason Edwards/National Geographic Creative. Illustrations: Lucy Letherland, "Atlas of Animal Adventures"/Newsela.

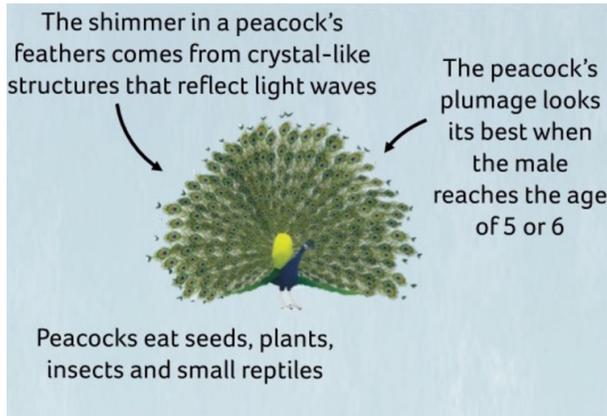
Reaching almost halfway around the globe, Asia is the world's largest continent. Its lands are home to many creatures. They range from mighty Siberian tigers to affectionate orangutans and rare giant pandas.

Tracking With The Siberian Tiger In Russia

Winters in far-eastern Russia are long and harsh. Snow and ice grip the land, and temperatures can drop to -40° Fahrenheit. A female tiger must provide plenty of food to keep her young cubs going through the cold months. When the tiger cubs are between 3 and 6 months old, their mother begins teaching them to hunt. With her cubs tumbling playfully at her heels, the mother leads them through the dark, snowy forest. They catch the scent of a young deer. When the tiger stops suddenly, so do the cubs. They cock their heads to one side, listening. The tiger must get within 60 feet of her prey before pouncing. When she is close enough, she leaps forward. She seizes the deer with a quick bite to the throat. The cubs have had their first hunting lesson.

Parading With The Peacocks In India

Few birds take courtship as seriously as the Indian peafowl. Often called peacocks,

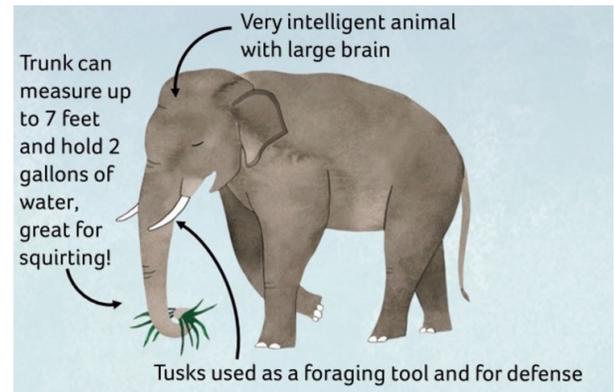


the males of this species are also the national bird of India. Male peacocks are especially proud of their aquamarine tail feathers. These feathers are covered in colorful "eye" markings of blue, gold and red.

These birds have a showy mating ritual. With his back to the female, the male raises his tail into a full fan. Then he turns to face his potential mate. He shakes his magnificent plumage. He slowly moves toward her. Scientists have studied the mating habits of these birds. They have proven the female chooses her mate based on how much she likes the male's tail feathers.

Gathering With The Elephants In Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a country in South Asia. Every year, Asian elephants here gather for a large social event. They meet at the ancient reservoir in the Minneriya National Park. Each summer for hundreds of years, herds of elephants have made the trek. They come to bathe and feed. They also socialize and find mates. It is the largest gathering of Asian elephants in the world. During the dry season, the park's green grasses provide the elephants with plenty of food. The reservoir's waters are deep enough for even the largest members of the herd to take a cool bath.



Mountain-Climbing With The Giant Pandas In China

It is nearly summer in the foothills of China's Qinling Mountains. The giant pandas here are climbing to higher ground. They seek one thing: juicy bamboo leaves. During the spring, these bears ate wood bamboo shoots in the valleys below. As June arrives, though, these plants provide fewer nutrients. The panda must climb higher to find a fresh supply of arrow bamboo leaves. Bamboo is almost the only food giant pandas eat. It is astonishing that these large creatures can live on such a basic diet. Compared to



other bears, they do not move very far or very fast. In fact, they spend up to 17 hours a day munching bamboo! Their laziness helps them save energy.

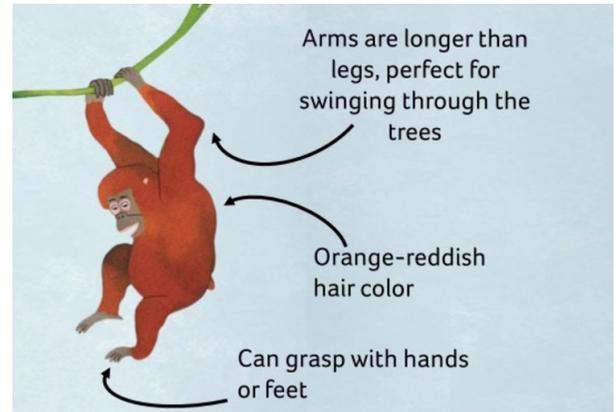
Bringing Up Baby With The Orangutans In Borneo

Very few orangutans still live in the wild. Most of these gentle apes live on the island of Borneo.

Orangutans are very human-like. Like people, the bond between these mothers and their young is very strong. Orangutan mothers carry their babies constantly for the first four months. The youngsters are totally dependent on their moms for food and transport. In fact, many young orangutans will be carried until they are 5 years old!

This kind of strong bond is rare among most animals.

Experts think orangutans have such long childhoods because they have so much to learn before they can live on their own. Mothers teach their babies what to eat, where to find it and how to stay safe. Even when they finally become independent at around the age of 10, orangutans will often come back to visit their moms.



Quiz

1 Read the list of sentences from the article.

1. *A female tiger must provide plenty of food to keep her young cubs going through the cold months.*
2. *During the dry season, the park's green grasses provide the elephants with plenty of food.*
3. *During the spring, these bears ate wood bamboo shoots in the valleys below.*
4. *Mothers teach their babies what to eat, where to find it and how to stay safe.*

What two MAIN ideas does this evidence support?

- (A) Animals in Asia live through many different kinds of weather. The Siberian tiger lives in the coldest part of Asia.
- (B) Asia is a large continent with many interesting animals. Animals learn how to find food and survive in the different parts of Asia.
- (C) Asia is home to many large animals that hunt. The seasons affect how animals can get their food and water.
- (D) Animals learn how to find food from their mothers. Most animals in Asia, like elephants and giant pandas, only eat plants.

2 Which detail would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?

- (A) They range from mighty Siberian tigers to affectionate orangutans and rare giant pandas.
- (B) Snow and ice grip the land, and temperatures can drop to -40° Fahrenheit.
- (C) The reservoir's waters are deep enough for even the largest members of the herd to take a cool bath.
- (D) In fact, many young orangutans will be carried until they are 5 years old!

3 Examine the five images and their labels within the article.

What do the images show about Asian animals?

- (A) Most of the animals eat the same types of food.
- (B) Some of the animals are able to hold on to objects.
- (C) Siberian tigers are the fastest animal in Asia.
- (D) Each animal has special body parts that help it survive.

4 Examine the photograph above the introduction [paragraph 1].

How does the image support the information in "Gathering With The Elephants In Sri Lanka"?

- (A) It shows that elephants use their trunks to drink water.
- (B) It shows that elephants need tusks to eat leaves.
- (C) It shows elephants at a large watering hole in Sri Lanka.
- (D) It shows Sri Lanka has the largest group of elephants in the world.