
Real Rodents

Reading Comprehension

Vizcachas

When you first see one, it's hard to tell if vizcachas are related to rabbits or rodents. The large ears and long hind legs of a vizcacha look like those of a rabbit and a bushy tail like a chinchilla. On the other hand, the vizcacha has two incisors, as do other rodents. However, the vizcacha is an herbivore, which is unlike some rodents.

Vizcachas live in colonies. These colonies can range from a few members to hundreds of members. They communicate in many different ways. The position of their tails indicate either anxiety or relaxation. An extended tail means that the animal is anxious. If the tail is curled, then the animal is at ease. Additionally, the animals "chatter" to one another in the colony. They also give loud calls to warn others of danger.

Mountain vizcachas live in the rocky mountain areas of South America. These animals are not able to dig well enough to escape predators underground, so they have adapted to their habitat by developing superb climbing skills. They use their powerful rabbit-like hind legs to jump quickly among the rocks. Their speed and ability to navigate the harsh terrain also helps to keep the vizcachas safe from most predators like pumas and foxes. However, speed cannot fully protect the vizcacha from its worst enemy: humans. People hunt vizcachas illegally for their meat and fur. Habitat loss also threatens them.

In order to understand things within our environment, we often use visual clues to help us categorize plants and animals. Sometimes this does not work though since things are not always what they seem. Not all furry creatures with large ears, long hind legs, and fluffy tails are rabbits, and not all rodents burrow in the ground. Vizcachas prove that.

Story Questions:

1. The vizcachas' main defense against predators is...
 - a. digging.
 - b. climbing.
 - c. attacking.
 - d. hiding.

2. Which statement does not describe a communication behaviour of vizcachas?
 - a. They extend their tails to show anxiety.
 - b. They "chatter" within their colony.
 - c. They move their ears to communicate food sources.
 - d. They give loud warning calls to alert others of danger.

3. What is one purpose of this passage?
 - a. to inform the reader of how species are different from one another
 - b. to inform the reader of the habitat of a chinchilla
 - c. to inform the reader of how animals communicate
 - d. to inform the reader of how animals survive in rocky mountain habitats

4. What is a synonym for the word *categorize* as it is used in the passage?
 - a. classify
 - b. characterize
 - c. describe
 - d. attribute

Journal Writing

5. How can scientists better help people understand differences between species? **Write** a 7-10 sentence response explaining your thoughts.

Math Worksheet

6. **Practise** [dividing with decimal remainders](#).

Word Problems

7. **Read** the word problems below and **write** the answers.
 - ★ Carl played baseball last summer. In his first game he got 4 hits in 6 at bats. He went 1 for 4 in his second game and 2 for 3 in his third game. He got 4 hits in 4 at bats in the fourth game and 1 for 5 in the fifth game. He wanted to figure out his batting average. How many total hits did he have in the 5 games? How many total at bats did he have in the 5 games? What was his batting average when he divided the total at bats into the number of hits? Round to three decimal places.

 - ★ In the first month of the season last year, Carl had 38 hits in 84 at bats. In the second month, he collected 40 hits in 91 at bats. He was hoping to have a .400 batting average or better because he wanted to eventually play baseball in high school. What was Carl's batting average for the first month? What was Carl's batting average for the second month? What was Carl's overall batting average for the 2 months? Did he have a .400 batting average or better?

Fun Stuff!

8. **Build** a [mousetrap car](#) using the power of science.