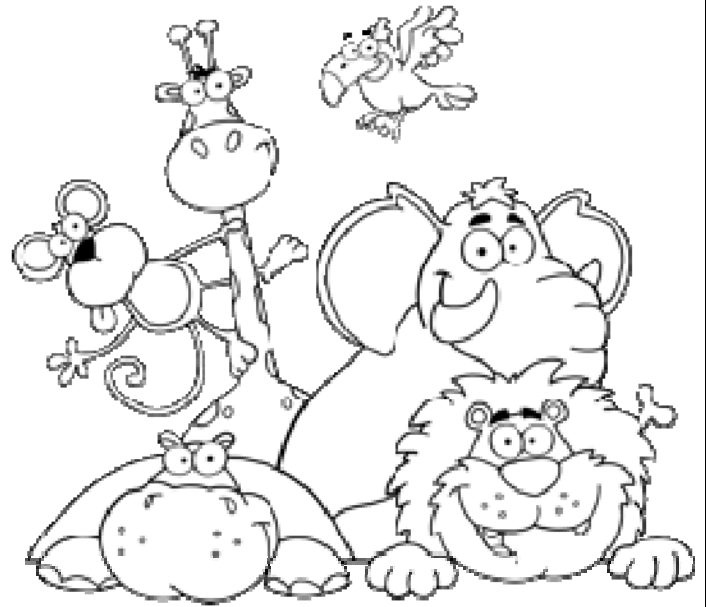


How the Environment Affects the Survival of Animals and Plants

Animals and plants shrink but it's not a magic trick, it's the effects of climate change. Researchers have found that, in order to cope with hotter weather and less rain, some animals and plants are not growing as big as they usually would. When it comes to climate change, birds are thought to be the most resilient of creatures. For other ground dwelling or canopy living animals there may be even greater obstacles ahead.



It's not known exactly why plants and animals shrink but there are a few ideas. The earth's climate is getting warmer and in many areas this means there is less rain. For many plants a great way of dealing with this is to down-size, but this will affect the animals that eat the plant - they will have to eat more to get the energy they need and this may cause the animals to shrink, which will mean a smaller meal for carnivorous animals as well! Shrinking may be helpful because the smaller you are the less food and less water you need to survive. But how small can animals go? Researchers looked back at 65 million year old fossils and noticed the same change in insects such as beetles, bees and ants that became 50-75% smaller as the earth heated up. This doesn't mean that we'll soon need magnifying glasses to feed our hamsters - the changes are likely to be slow and we may not always notice.

Natural disasters are destructive forces of nature which affect the environments. Some of these destructive forces are floods and droughts. A flood is an overflowing of water onto the land that is normally dry. Similarly, Drought occurs when a region suffers a deficiency of rain fall for an extended period of time. Floods and Droughts are both, equally destructive in making the survival of animals and plants very difficult and sometimes even impossible.

Frogs and toads are particularly vulnerable to changes in temperature and need very specific habitats to survive. Sometimes they need particular plants around them to eat or use to make nests, or their eggs will only develop in certain temperatures.



Writing Activity

1. Why is it that, some animals and plants these days are not growing as big as they usually would?

2. How do natural disasters affect the survival of animals and plants?

3. Give at least one example of an animal from your own life, whose survival was endangered because of extreme weather?

Hint: Think about the animals whose life becomes difficult in snowfall or heavy rains.

4. How does the environment affect the survival of animals and plants? Explain in your own words.

