

FOCUS

Wild Arizona

Key Words

Antibacterial: prevents bacteria from growing

First impression: an opinion created after encountering something new for the first time

Overpopulated: having too many animals in one area

Trait: physical feature of an animal such as hair color or number of legs

Someone once said, “You never get a second chance to make a **first impression.**”

What does this mean? Do you think it is true? Let’s take a look at how our first impressions may not always be the best.

Table 1 contains the names of five different animals. Next to each name, write the first two words that come to your mind when you think about each animal.

Which animal is your favorite? In the column labeled “Rating,”

write the number 1 next to this animal. Which animal is your least favorite? Write the number 5 next to this animal. Then, rank the remaining animals in order, using the numbers 2, 3 and 4.

Why did you choose the animal you did for your favorite? Does it remind you of a pet at home? Do you think it’s cute and cuddly? What about your least favorite animal? Is it scary or slimy? These are often the reasons people give for why they like (or don’t like) different animals. These reasons can be considered first impressions. They are the first things that we notice about the animals.

However, first impressions are often wrong. When we learn more about an animal, we discover some really cool **traits** or behaviors.

Table 2 lists some animal traits or behaviors. Which one do you think is the best? Write the number 1 next to it in the “Rating” column.

Which one is the worst? Write the number 5. Finish ranking the other three.

These traits and





behaviors were carefully selected. Each one belongs to one of the animals in Table 1. Can you guess which one?

Most of the **bats** in Arizona are insect eaters. They eat all types of insects, but often will eat mosquitoes that carry diseases. **Beavers** are important residents of rivers and streams. However, their dams often block rivers, causing them to flood. **Eagles** typically capture their own food. However, they have been seen stealing fish from other birds and animals. Many people think that **frogs** are slimy. However, their slimy skin contains a chemical that humans now use to develop new **antibacterial** products and medicine. Rodents such as mice and rats can

grow quickly, making many babies. **Rattlesnakes** feed primarily on these animals, making sure they do not become **overpopulated**.

Now that you know a little bit about the animals, does your opinion about them change? Do you have a new favorite animal?

It is important to point out that some of the traits listed may be viewed as bad. However, this is only our opinion. If we look at any animal, we will find some traits or behaviors that we feel are good, and others that we feel are bad. These traits or behaviors have developed as a way to help the animal survive. For the animal, it is not about good or bad, it is just about staying alive!

Just for fun

Pick your least favorite animal. Pretend the local zoo has a new exhibit featuring this animal. You have been hired to develop an advertisement that could appear in a magazine. Think about reasons why people would want to come see this animal. Using one sheet of paper, create an advertisement. Don't forget to use color and pictures. Send your advertisement to us along with your name, age or grade, and address or e-mail:

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Table 1: Descriptions		
Animal	Two Descriptive Words	Rating
Bat		
Beaver		
Eagle		
Frog		
Rattlesnake		

Table 2: Traits or Behaviors	
Trait or Behavior	Rating
Kills mice and rats	
Eats insects that may spread diseases like West Nile virus	
Causes water to flood and damage important habitats and roads	
Steals food from other animals	
Has chemicals in skin that can be used to kill germs	

■ This feature is part of the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Focus Wild Arizona program, a free educational program for teachers, parents, students or anyone interested in learning about wildlife and habitat. Visit our Web site, azgfd.gov/focuswild, to find exciting lessons and resources.