

FOCUS

Wild Arizona

Key Words:

Adaptation: physical or behavioral feature (characteristic) that helps an animal survive

Blubber: a layer of fat just beneath the skin

Classifieds: short advertisements found in newspapers

Habitat: the place where an animal lives

Would you expect to see a polar bear while walking to school? Probably not. But why?

Polar bears are found only in certain places on Earth, primarily the northern portions of Canada, Greenland, Russia and Norway. In fact, Alaska is the only place in the United States where you can find polar bears in the wild.

What do all of these locations have in common? They are very cold, often covered in snow and ice, and close to the ocean. Polar bears have **adaptations** that help them survive in this **habitat**. They have thick fur and a layer of **blubber**, which keep them warm. They are white to blend in with the snow and ice. They have very large paws that allow them to swim while hunting for seals. Polar bears would not be able to survive near your house. Can you think of animals that you might expect to see on your way to school?

Most animals live in very specific habitats. They have food and shelter



ILLUSTRATION BY TRACY HILL

needs that cannot be found in other places. And people are the same. For example, some people do not own cars, so they need to live near the places where they work and shop for food. Families often like to live near parks so the children have a place to play. There are many reasons why people live where they do.

And when people move, they spend time trying to find a house that meets their needs. One place to find houses is the **classifieds** section of the newspaper. This section contains short advertisements of items that people are

trying to sell. People sell appliances, cars, pets and other things, including homes. Here are two examples of home advertisements placed in a local newspaper:

This beautiful log cabin in the cool pines is a must-see! This gorgeous three-bedroom home offers a spacious, bright floor plan on a large wooded lot. There is a beautiful rock fireplace in the living room for those cold winter nights and an amazing deck for summer barbecues. House has a three-car garage to store all of your toys! Don't miss this one. Make an offer today!



By Eric Proctor

This cozy single-story home has been newly remodeled and painted, and comes with new cabinets, appliances, windows, doors, tile and carpet. Backyard is spacious with large shade trees. Located in a gated community with pool, spa and playground, surrounded by mountain views. Near schools, hospitals and shopping.

Which of these homes would you prefer? Do you think your parents would like the same one? Why or why not?

Just for Fun:

What if animals could read and write? Would they find homes in the classifieds section? Below are two advertisements that might appear in wildlife classifieds:

- 1. Rugged and rocky forest land available now for small or large packs! Easy access to fresh, cool water. Clear, star-filled nights and lots of elk and deer in the area provide excellent opportunities for hunting and viewing. You'll "howl" over these low prices.*
- 2. Whether you are staying year-round or just enjoying the state's mild winters, our central Arizona locations will meet your needs. All sites are isolated along the cliffs of a beautiful desert lake that is well-stocked with your choice of bass, catfish and suckers. Fly by today and see what we have to offer.*

Did you guess that the first one is ideal for a wolf while the second one describes the preferences of a bald eagle? Great job.

Now it's your turn. With the help of a parent or teacher, research one of the following animals: bat, beaver, burrowing owl, desert tortoise, gila monster, great blue heron, kangaroo rat, prairie dog, rattlesnake or salamander. Then, try to write a home advertisement specific to that animal. Trade with a friend and see who can guess the animal correctly. ✍

■ 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, www.azgfd.gov/focuswild, to find exciting lessons and resources.