HABITATS: THE AFRICAN SAVANNA

Links to National Curriculum

Science

Identify and describe a variety of common animals including fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals (**Year 1, Animals**).

Identify and name a variety of common animals that are carnivores, herbivores and omnivores (**Year 1, Animals**).

Identify and name a variety of plants and animals in their habitats (**Year 2, Living things and their habitat**).

Identify that most living things live in habitats to which they are suited and describe how different habitats provide for the basic needs of different kinds of animals and plants, and how they depend on each other (**Year 2, Living things and their habitats**).

Describe how animals obtain their food from plants and other animals, using the idea of a simple food chain, and identify and name different sources of food (**Year 2, Living things and their habitats**).

Recognise that living things can be grouped in a variety of ways (**Year 4, Living things and their habitats**).

Construct and interpret a variety of food chains, identifying producers, predators and prey (**Year 4, Animals, including humans**).

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To identify and describe a variety of plants and animals in the African Savanna.
2. To understand that animals can be carnivores, herbivores or omnivores.
3. To understand how plants and animals have adapted to the conditions of the African Savanna.
4. To understand how different habitats provide for the needs of animals and plants, and how they depend on each other.
5. To describe how animals obtain their food from plants and other animals, introducing the idea of a food chain for the African Savanna.

Notes to Teachers

- Activities given are suggestions only. The main purpose of the lesson plan and presentation is to provide key information and visual aids for teachers to adapt to their needs.
- The PowerPoint presentation runs alongside the plan and all slides are referred to in the lesson plan. Please feel free to modify the presentation by adding your own slides or deleting those you don't need.

THE AFRICAN SAVANNA

SUGGESTED STARTER ACTIVITY

The children could carry out some research using the Internet and/or books, to answer the following questions:
Where is Africa?
Locate continent on map/in atlas.
What is a savanna?
The film 'The Lion King' could be used as a starting point as it is set in the African Savanna and the children may remember the animals and even Mufasa's description of how a food chain works in the "Circle of Life"!
What animals/plants might they find in the African savanna? Have they seen any of these in zoos or wildlife parks?

The children could feed their findings back to the class and they could be recorded in a mind map on the board.

TEACHER INPUT

Plants of the African Savanna

Slide 3: A savanna is a large area of grassy flat land without many trees, in a tropical or sub tropical region.

In the African Savanna the rainfall only lasts about half the year, so the plants and trees have special features that help them grow during the long dry months. They are adapted to their conditions:

Slide 4: Acacia Tree
An umbrella shaped tree, which grows tall and flowers at the top where only the giraffes can reach them.
They have long roots, which can reach deep into the ground where most of the water can be found.
They have thick trunks, which help them survive fires in the dry season.

Slide 5: Baobab Tree
These are clever as they can store water in their large trunks, which keeps them alive in the dry months.

Animals of the African Savanna

KEY WORDS

Herbivore – an animal that only eats plants.

Carnivore – an animal that only eats meat.

Omnivore – an animal that eats both plant matter and other animals.

Frugivore – an animal that only eats fruit.

Insectivore – an animal that only eats insects.

Predator – an animal that lives by killing and eating other animals. The animal eaten is called the prey

Endangered – under threat or near extinction. When an animal is endangered it means they are disappearing fast or have a very small population. They can become a protected species, which means it is against the law to hunt them.

Extinction – the end of existence for a species.

Vertebrate – an animal with a backbone (all mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish). Animals without backbones are called **invertebrates.**

Mammal – warm-blooded animal that breathes air, has a backbone (vertebrate) and grows hair at some point during its life. Also, all female mammals have glands that can produce milk.

Bird – warm-blooded vertebrate with a body more or less completely covered with feathers and forelimbs modified as wings.

Amphibian – cold-blooded vertebrate that can live on land or in water. All amphibians begin life in the water with gills and tails. As they grow, they develop lungs and legs for their life on land.

Reptile – cold-blooded vertebrate that lays eggs and has a body covered with scales or hard parts.

If using the accompanying presentation, please note that the name of the animal will appear on the second click. This enables children to try and identify the name of the animal for themselves.

Slide 6: Lion (mammal)
Member of the big cat family. Lions are sociable animals and live in a pride (family group) with 20-30 other lions.
Male lions have a mane on their head, neck and shoulders.
Lions are carnivores and it is actually the female lioness that does most of the hunting. They eat mainly wildebeest, zebra, impala, antelopes & gazelles.
They usually hunt at dusk and spend most of the day resting and sleeping. They have excellent eyesight and can see well in the dark.
Humans have hunted lions for hundreds of years so they are now a protected species.

Slide 7: Hyena (mammal)
The most well known is the spotted hyena, also known as the laughing hyena due to the unusual and eerie sounds it makes.
After the lion, it is the largest carnivore in Africa. Hyenas are skilled hunters and a clan of hyenas can take down prey as large as zebra.

Slide 8: Impala (mammal)
Medium sized antelopes that roam the savanna. In the rainy season, when there is plenty of food, these herbivores gather in large herds to browse on grasses and herbs, bushes, shrubs and shoots.
The herd offers protection from predators such as lions. One alert impala can bark out an alarm that makes the whole herd take flight.

Slide 9: Giraffe (mammal)
Giraffes are sociable creatures and meet in groups each day.
They are herbivores and eat leaves from trees, shrubs, climbers, vines & some herbs.
Adult giraffes eat around 60kg of leaves everyday!
Their long necks mean they can reach the leaves high up in the trees.

Slide 10: African Elephant (mammal)
These are the largest land mammals and a male can weigh up to 6000kg (that's the same as 10 small cars)!
They are herbivores and eat fruits, grasses, bark and roots.
Elephants have a trunk – they breathe through 2 nostrils at the end of it. They can also use it to suck up 3 galloons of water in one go and spray it over themselves to keep cool!
They also have tusks – these are really extended teeth that they use to dig up tree roots, strip bark off trees to eat and dig holes to reach water underground.

Slide 11: Rhinoceros (mammal)
Rhinos have been on our planet for 60 million years. Then there were 30 species of rhino in the world, but today there are only 5 (2 of which live in Africa).
Rhinos are hunted by humans for their horns, which are used for many things e.g. they are used as a medicine in many parts of the world and are prized in Asian countries as a status symbol to display someone's success and wealth.
The rhino is now one of the most endangered animals in the world.
Rhinos are herbivores – some graze on grass whilst others prefer to eat the foliage of trees or bushes.

Slide 12: Hippotamus (mammal)
Their name means "water horse" and hippos spend most of their time in water.
They are the second largest living land animals and have huge bodies.
Hippos live in groups, sometimes known as "schools".
They are herbivores and eat grass and some water plants.

Slide 13: Cheetah (mammal)
Smaller and thinner than leopards. They have black 'tear-mark' stripes running down each side of their face from eye to mouth.
The cheetah is the fastest land animal over short distances – they can run at speeds of up to 70mph! A running cheetah almost seems to be flying – half the time it has all 4 feet off the ground at the same time.
Cheetahs are carnivores and eat small antelopes, hares and birds.

Slide 14: Zebra (mammal)
Member of the horse family.
Distinctive black and white stripes – when moving in a herd these stripes merge together and make it hard for predators to single out individual animals.
Just like human fingerprints, the zebra's stripe pattern is unique to each zebra.
Zebras are very sociable – they will only go to sleep if they are close to neighbours, so they can be warned if a predator approaches. They prefer to graze together and will groom each other.
They are herbivores and eat mostly grass.
Our zebra crossings are named after them!

Slide 15: Vervet Monkey (mammal)
These monkeys have long arms and legs, which allow them to move at speed on ground.
They have a mixed diet including fruit, leaves, flowers, eggs and small rodents. So they are omnivores.
They collect food using their hands and young vervet monkeys are taught what foods to pick and how to prepare them for eating by their mothers.
Predators include eagles and snakes, particularly the python, which often waits at the bottom of a tree to ambush an unsuspecting monkey as it climbs down.

Slide 16: Ostrich (bird)
At 8 feet tall, they are the world's largest and heaviest bird. But because of their size, they cannot fly.
They have long, muscular legs which are built for running – they can sprint over 70km/hour!
They eat mainly roots, leaves and seeds. But will eat whatever is available, including insects, snakes, lizards and rodents. So they are omnivores.

Slide 17: Black Mamba (reptile)
The largest poisonous snake in Africa, adults reaching an average length of 8 feet.
Also the fastest land snake in the world and can move at speeds of up to 23 km/hr.
They are actually brown/olive in colour. Their name comes from the inky black mouth they show when threatened.
Black mamba eat a variety of prey, including small birds and mammals, so they are carnivores.

Slide 18: Crocodile (reptile)
Closest surviving relatives of the great dinosaurs and have changed very little during the 150 million years they have lived on earth.
They are carnivores and eat mammals, birds, reptiles and fish.
They can move about on land but their bodies are mainly adapted for a life in the water. Their nostrils, eyes and ears lie along the top of their head, so they can hear, see, smell and breathe when the rest of their body is submerged.

Slide 19: **African Bullfrog** (amphibian)
One of the largest frogs in Africa – adult males may reach up to 9 inches or more.
Local people consider them to be a delicacy!
Bullfrogs are adapted to their environment as they go into a long "sleep" to avoid the harsh summer conditions.
Bullfrogs are carnivorous, eating insects, small rodents, reptiles, small birds and other amphibians.

What is a Food Chain?

Slide 20: A food chain or web shows how animals eat the plants and other animals around them. The chain usually starts with a plant, the plant gets eaten by an animal, then the animal gets eaten by a bigger animal and so on.
Producers – plants get energy from the sun and use it to make their own food, so they are called producers.
Consumers – animals eat the plants and other animals. They do not make their own food so are called consumers.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Research
Choose another animal that lives in the African Savanna and find out about it:
What does it look like? Can they draw a picture of it?
What does it eat? Is it a carnivore, herbivore or omnivore?

2. **Food Chains**
Produce their own simple food chain for the African Savanna.

3. Endangered Species
Choose an endangered species e.g. lion or rhino and find out the following:
Why is it endangered?
What is being done to protect it?
Why is it so important that we protect endangered species? This could form the subject of a class debate.

4. Creative
Produce a creative piece of work – a drawing/painting/collage/model of the African Savanna.

We value your feedback!

Let us know what you thought of this lesson plan by completing this Google Form https://forms.gle/cGAwi9AWXfSZgrYa9. Thank you!