

HOW DO ANIMALS COMMUNICATE

Communication is necessary for animals to survive. Animals do not talk in the same way as people, but they do have sophisticated ways of communicating. Animals send messages to each other that are often much more complicated than our human forms of communication. Communication helps animals to do things like attract mates, warn off predators, mark their territory and identify themselves to other animals. There are four ways that animals communicate.

VISUAL

There are two types of visual communication. The first type of visual communication is the colour and shape of the animal itself. This is called the 'badge'. The second type of visual communication describes the things that the animal does to communicate, including behaviour. This is called the 'display'. Visual communication, through display, is most useful when animals are close enough together to see visual signals. The Australian frilled-neck lizard opens its mouth and unfolds its frill when it is frightened. This is a visual signal that makes the lizard look larger to its predators.



AUDITORY

Auditory means hearing. This describes the sounds that animals use to talk to each other. Animals communicate by sound because it can travel over long distances very quickly and can be heard during the day or at night. Sound is a good form of communication because it only lasts for a short time, so it is not easily tracked by predators. Animals are able to use sound to warn about danger or to tell other animals that they are angry.



TACTILE

Tactile means touch. This type of communication describes how animals communicate through touch. Touch is used in different ways to communicate messages between animals. Mother cats nuzzle their kittens to comfort them, male deer lock antlers and fight to show which is most dominant. Dogs lick their owners to show them that they are happy.



CHEMICAL

This type of communication describes how animals communicate through smell (scent) and taste. Animal scents can remain long after the animal that left the scent has disappeared. This can be a signal to other animals that may tell them to keep away from that area or send a danger warning. Insects that live in groups leave different smells for different messages. They leave scents that warn of danger, that lead to the colony, or ask for help.



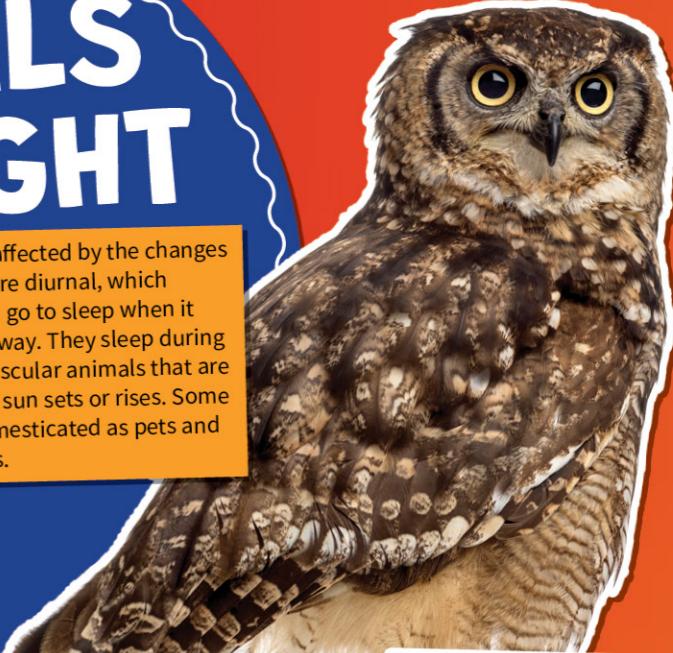
ANIMALS AND LIGHT

The waking and sleeping patterns of many animals are affected by the changes in light over 24 hours or during the year. Many animals are diurnal, which means they will naturally wake up when it gets light and go to sleep when it becomes dark. Nocturnal animals react in the opposite way. They sleep during the day and wake up at night-time. There are also crepuscular animals that are active primarily during twilight, the time just before the sun sets or rises. Some nocturnal animals such as cats and dogs have been domesticated as pets and therefore sleep at the same time as their human owners.



MIGRATION

Many animals are also affected by the change of season. The length of daylight tells some animals when to start migrating. When the hours of daylight become shorter, some birds and animals will start flying or moving to warmer areas where they can start finding a mate and breeding.



CAMOUFLAGE

Many animals have different colours and patterns on their fur or skin that make them difficult to see. This means they are camouflaged. Some animals, such as the tiger, use camouflage stripes to stop them from being seen when they are hunting their prey. Chameleons can change colour to fit in with the environment around them.



ANIMAL EYES

Many animals have eyes that are different from the human eye. Where their eyes are located can affect what animals see. Many animals, such as rabbits, have their eyes at the side of their head. This allows them to see all around. Some animals, such as owls, have their eyes at the front. This helps them to focus on small animals very clearly. Nocturnal animals have huge eyes that help them to see in the dark. Large eyes let in the maximum light.



ANIMALS AND COLOUR

Some animals, such as parrots or fish, have or develop bright colours to attract mates. Other animals use colour to scare predators. Some butterflies have patterns like eyes on their wings. These 'eyes' may help to frighten away birds or other predators.



BIOLOMINESCENCE

All animals give out light, infrared light, that we cannot see. Some animals give out light that we can see. When animals make this light, it is called bioluminescence. Some animals use chemicals or bacteria inside the cells of their body to create light. They use this light to communicate with each other, to attract prey or to escape from predators.

SEEING ULTRAVIOLET AND INFRARED LIGHT

Unlike humans, some animals can see infrared and ultraviolet light. Bees can see ultraviolet light which helps them see flowers that reflect ultraviolet light from their petals. Other animals, such as the piranha, can see infrared light. Seeing infrared light helps animals to catch their prey.