



South Florida
WILDLIFE CENTER
Saving Wildlife in Our Urban Jungle



LESSON PLAN:

EXPLORATION ADAPTATION

Summary:

Students will learn identifying characteristics of reptiles and explore adaptations that help an animal thrive in their environment.

Grade Level: K-5

Subject: Science

Duration: 1 hour



● Lesson Objectives

Students can:

- ✓ List traits of reptiles
- ✓ Define adaptation
- ✓ Explain why animals need adaptations to survive
- ✓ Identify the differences between two species to determine the habitat where they live

● Materials

- Construction Paper
- Colored Pencils or Markers
- Scissors
- Glue

● Vocabulary

Adaptation: a change of form or behavior that helps a species thrive in a particular environment.

Camouflage: the ability to hide or blend into the surroundings

Cold-blooded: Animals whose body temperature depends on the environment

Environment: conditions that surround or influence an organism or community

Habitat: environment where an organism lives

Survival: the process of remaining alive

Species: group of similar organisms that can reproduce with each other

Thrive: to develop and be successful

Trait: an identifying characteristic

Vertebrate: an animal with the presence of a backbone

● Background Information

Plants and animals have lived in the wild for millions of years. All living things have developed adaptations to survive in the environments where they live. These adaptations can be structural, a physical part of the organism, or they can be behavioral, such as migration.

Reptiles are air-breathing vertebrate animals that have skin that is covered in scales and lay soft, leathery eggs. Like all animals, reptiles have adaptations that allow them to live in a variety of habitats. Turtles are differentiated from other reptiles because of the presence of a shell made out of bone. Similar to birds, they also have a beak that is designed for eating different types of food.



The Florida softshell turtle has a flat, leathery shell that can range from dark brown to olive green. Their shell is streamlined, and they have webbed feet to allow them to swim easily through the water. This species is found throughout Florida in ponds, streams, and marshes with sandy bottoms where they can camouflage. Their long neck and sharp beak allow them to easily feed on prey items like snails, insects, fish and crustaceans.

The Gopher Tortoise is a long-lived reptile found in upland habitat throughout Florida. Their club-shaped feet and claws allow them to dig burrows that can be up to 40 feet long. They are considered a keystone species and play a significant role in the environment by sharing their burrows with over 300 other species. These tortoises have a rounded, serrated beak that allows them to easily feed on vegetation like grasses and leaves. In Florida, the Gopher Tortoise is listed as Threatened and protected under state law.

Preparation

Make copies of attached worksheets and gather materials for your desired number of students.

Procedure

1. Ask your class what they know about reptiles. Their answers can range from identifying characteristics such as scales or laying eggs to different species they may have seen in the wild or in captivity. Explain that they will be looking at two species of turtles to identify similarities and differences.
2. Pass out Compare and Contrast worksheet with scissors. Worksheet can also be completed by having students use the word bank to write in the answers in the Venn diagram. Go over worksheet as a class.
3. Follow up the worksheet by asking students to explain what adaptations are. An adaptation is a change of form or behavior that helps a species thrive in a particular environment. Ask students to look at the pictures of the Softshell turtle and Gopher tortoise. Looking at their characteristics, ask the students to guess what kind of environment each species lives in and why.
4. Show students the attached images of a Gopher tortoise and Softshell turtle in their natural habitat. Explain the adaptations they have for surviving where they live.



Compare and Contrast

Directions: Look at the two species of turtles on page 2. Cut out and glue the labels in the appropriate spots to complete the Venn Diagram and determine similarities and differences between these two species.

SCALES	SHELL MADE OF BONE	LAYS EGGS
WEBBED FEET	CLUB -SHAPED FEET	BEAK
SPINE	COLD-BLOODED	FLAT SHELL
DOMED SHELL		



SOFTSHELL TURTLE



GOPHER TORTOISE

BOTH









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THANK YOU!

For more downloadable resources and information on our current program offerings, please visit our website.

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