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Albinos Are Easy to See

Albinos are unusual-looking animals.

Linda and Carmen were on a hiking trip when suddenly they heard a hissing sound that spelled danger. They looked down at the rocks nearby and saw what had been making the noise. It was a snake. Linda and Carmen looked at the snake in astonishment. The girls had seen many snakes before but never one like this. It was white and had pink eyes. They were looking at a rare albino snake.

An albino animal does not have enough *melanin* (mĕl'ə nĭn). Melanin is the chemical that gives animals their color. Pure albinos have no melanin at all in their bodies. Their eyes and ears are pink. And their skin, hair, or feathers are white. There are albino insects, fish, snakes, turtles, frogs, toads, and salamanders. There are also albino birds, mammals, and people. But among most kinds of animals, albinos are rare.

Most albino animals living in the wild do not have an easy time of it. Because of their light coloring, they do not blend in with their surroundings. This makes it easier for their enemies to see them. Since albinos often have poor eye sight, they may have trouble finding food. Of all the

kinds of albino animals, fish such as catfish do the best in the wild. That is because catfish are bottom feeders and do not need to use their eyes to find food.



QUESTIONS

1. A chemical that gives animals their color is called _____.
2. The snake described in the story is an _____.
3. Why did Linda and Carmen suddenly stop walking?
 - a. They saw a snake in their path.
 - b. They wanted to get a better look at the snake.
 - c. They heard a sound that meant danger.
4. According to the story, albino catfish survive better than other albino animals because
 - a. they can eat without seeing.
 - b. the sun does not reach them.
 - c. their enemies cannot see them.
5. A gray kitten with pink eyes and ears has
 - a. a normal amount of melanin.
 - b. less than a normal amount of melanin.
 - c. no melanin at all.
6. When hunted by its enemies, a wild albino animal is more likely to be caught than a regular-colored animal because
 - a. it is hard for a wild albino animal to hide.
 - b. it is not easy for a wild albino animal to find food.
 - c. a wild albino animal moves slowly.

The Spider—A Misunderstood Animal

How much do you know about spiders?

Spiders are not insects. Insects have six legs and three body parts. Spiders have eight legs and two body parts. Of the 30,000 different kinds, or *species* (spē'shēz'), of spiders, only some spin webs.

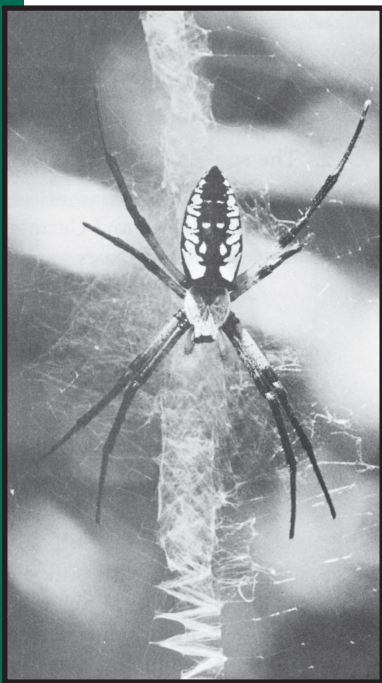
All spiders produce “silk,” but each species has its own way of using the silk. Spiders of one species, the web spinners, weave silky webs to catch their food, or *prey* (prā). The best-known web is the round web spun by the garden spider. Another species makes nets to drop over its victims. Another sends out a single sticky strand of silk like a fishing line to catch its food. When a fly becomes stuck to the end of the line, the spider hauls in its “fish.”

Web spinners seem to have three different life-styles. Some live by themselves in their webs. Others live in groups but have webs of their own for catching food. And

still others live, hunt, and feed together off the same web.

Spiders that do not spin webs may hunt their prey or wait for their prey to come to them. Crab spiders, for example, will hide in flowers and wait for visiting insects.

Since they feed on insects, some spiders are considered “helpful.” But spiders have no way of knowing whether or not an insect is a pest. In fact, when it comes to food, spiders are not choosy. They will eat anything that comes their way!



QUESTIONS

1. The word in the story that means “kinds” is _____.
2. To catch its prey, the “fishing” spider uses a
 - a. round silk web.
 - b. fishing line.
 - c. single silk thread.
3. According to the story, all spiders
 - a. are insects.
 - b. spin webs.
 - c. make silk.
4. Another title for this story might be
 - a. Choosy Eaters.
 - b. Interesting Insect-Eaters.
 - c. Lonely Web Spinners.
5. What would a crab spider most likely be doing in among the petals of a flower?
 - a. getting its rest
 - b. waiting for its prey
 - c. hiding from its enemies
6. Under which heading would you put garden spiders?
 - a. Web Spinners
 - b. Hunting Spiders
 - c. Fishing Spiders