

Carnivores

Discussion Questions:



- 1) What are carnivores?**
- 2) Which animals are carnivores?**
- 3) What features do carnivorous mammals have in common?**
- 4) What type of teeth do carnivorous animals have?**

Carnivores and Insectivores

Carnivores are animals that eat other animals to survive. They have specially adapted features that allow them to hunt and eat their prey.

Many classes of animals are carnivorous. Those animals that eat mainly or only insects are called **insectivores**.

Carnivorous mammals include members of the cat family (felines) and dog family (canines) and bears.

Birds catch a variety of insects, grubs, fish and small prey such as mice. Examples of smaller carnivorous birds include sparrows and wrens. Larger carnivorous birds include hawks, eagles, herons and pelicans.

Carnivorous insects include beetles such as the ladybeetle and the praying mantis.

Most reptiles and many amphibians are carnivorous. A chameleon has a long tongue to capture its prey and a snake swallows its prey whole.

Many fish have a carnivorous diet. Sharks, for example will eat many different types of smaller animals including fish, seals and birds.



Teeth of Carnivorous Mammals

Carnivorous mammals have teeth that are well adapted to tearing into flesh. Their long pointed 'canine teeth' pierce into the skin to enable the animal to catch and hold onto its prey during the hunt.

The front teeth (incisors) and back teeth (molars) have sharp edges allowing the animal to tear through flesh and separate it from bone and cartilage.

Bears and members of the feline and canine families have these type of teeth.



Above: A cougar skull showing the structure of the teeth.

Below: A cougar showing its teeth.

Below Left: A wolf showing its teeth.



Teeth of Carnivorous Fish



The jaws of many carnivorous fish are well adapted to catching prey. Sharks are a good example. Their teeth can be conical or triangular in shape, depending on their diet.

A shark's teeth often have jagged, serrated edges that help them slice through flesh. Some even have flat surfaces for crushing and grinding crustacean shells.

Sharks also have multiple rows of teeth. When one tooth becomes loose or damaged a new one from the row behind takes its place. New teeth are constantly being formed.



Teeth of Carnivorous Reptiles



Crocodiles and Alligators have very sharp conical shaped teeth which they use to tear large prey into pieces which they swallow whole. They do not need molars to crush food as they do not chew.

Many other reptiles also swallow their prey whole. Many lizards have very small teeth that simply help them grip on to prey while they crush it with their powerful jaws.

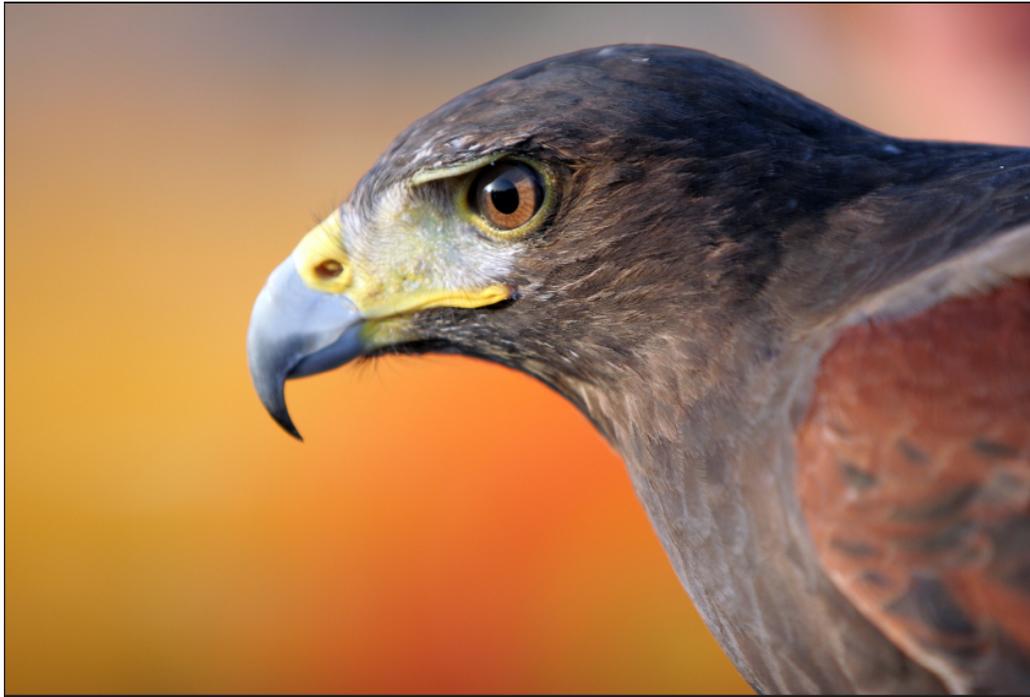


Above: An alligator's teeth .

Above Right: Close up of a crocodile's teeth.

Below Right: A Green Iguana has small teeth that are not easily seen.

Beaks of Carnivorous Birds



Birds do not have teeth. They rely on their strong beaks to help them catch their prey.

Birds of prey have sharp hook shaped beaks that they use to tear through flesh.

Sea birds often have spear shaped beak that help them snatch fish.

Some water birds catch creatures that live near the bottom of rivers and lakes. These birds often have wide, flat bills to help them sift through the mud.

