



SEAHORSES & SEAGRASS

SEAHORSE ADAPTATIONS



Watch the "Cheeto the Lucky Seahorse-Feeding Time" to learn about how seahorses are perfect for living in seagrass beds.

<https://vimeo.com/400417131/17508654ea>

For instructors, parents, or guardians:

Lesson learning objectives: By the end of this lesson, students will be able to define camouflage and ambush feeding and apply ways these adaptations benefit a seahorse living in a seagrass bed.

1. Introduce the topic:

This lesson will cover two ways seahorses are adapted to living in seagrass beds; camouflage and ambush predation. First have your student(s) watch the video. Tell them to pay attention to Cheeto's coloring and the way she eats the shrimp.

2. Seagrass beds:

Seagrass is a plant that grows under water in almost every coastal area of Florida. Clearwater Marine aquarium is located next to Clearwater Bay which is an estuary. Estuaries commonly have seagrass because they are shallow. Seagrass, like all plants, requires sunlight to grow, so in the shallow estuary, it grows all over!

Seagrass, despite its name, is closely related to lilies, but gets its name because it grows in large meadows just like grass on the land. This provides a good hiding place for animals like baby fish and seahorses who do not swim very fast.

3. Ambush feeding and camouflage:

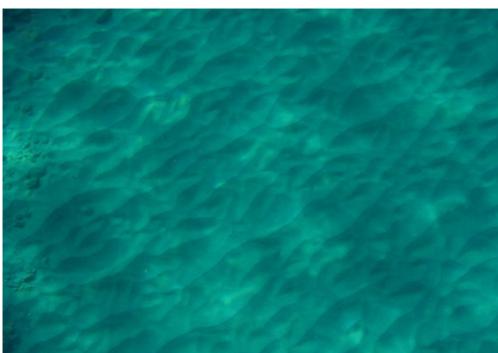
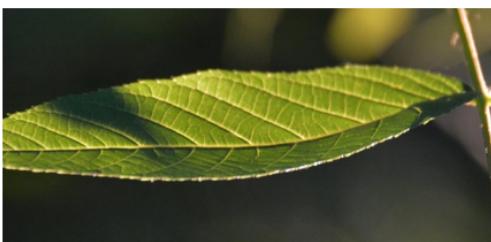
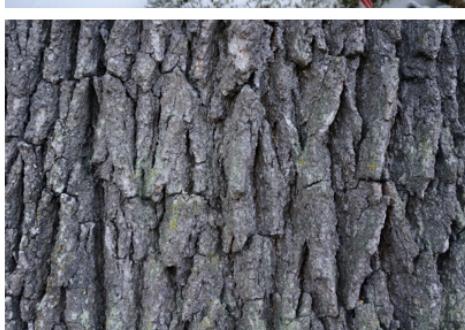
Ambush, or hide and seek feeding, is used by many animals such as seahorses and lions. This type of feeding means that the predator, or hunting animal, hides and waits for prey, or the animal it will eat, to come near it. Then the predator will quickly attack the prey and eat it.

Many ambush predators have something that makes them good at hiding. Seahorses use camouflage to do this. Camouflage is a way animals use colors or patterns on their body to blend into their surroundings. Seahorses can change their color to blend into seagrass beds. Seagrass beds are mostly green but bright sponges and algae may cause a seahorse to have a yellow or orange color like Cheeto!

4. Put your student(s) to the test!

On the following page, draw a line from the animal to the environment you think the animal would camouflage best in.





CREATIVE CAMOUFLAGE



Hide your seahorses within the seagrass bed. Color in your seahorses to match the background so it can stay hidden from predators and wait for food.



How is Cheeto now?

Follow the link below to learn about how Cheeto's story ended at Clearwater Marine Aquarium!

<https://bit.ly/3bnqGDT>

For an added Challenge:

Now that you have camouflaged your seahorse, make a list of all the animals you can think of that use camouflage as an adaption.

