

Predator-Prey Interactions

A Deadly Game of Tag

Tag is a fun game that many students play in the schoolyard and at home. Imagine for a moment, that you have to play tag for hours after hours, every day of the week, every week of the year. In this game of tag, if you are “it,” running all the time will make you tired, but you have to tag. If you are not “it,” you must always be aware and avoid being tagged by running or hiding. This is a day in the life of a wild animal. Animals must find food and avoid being eaten themselves.

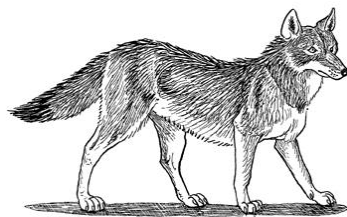
Eating and Being Eaten

In the wild, animals must find food and avoid becoming another animal’s food. Animals that eat other animals are called **predators**. For example, a cat is a predator that kills and eats mice. Animals that are killed and eaten by other animals are called **prey**. In the last example, mice are prey.

Now it’s your turn! Try to list as many different predator and prey animals as you know.

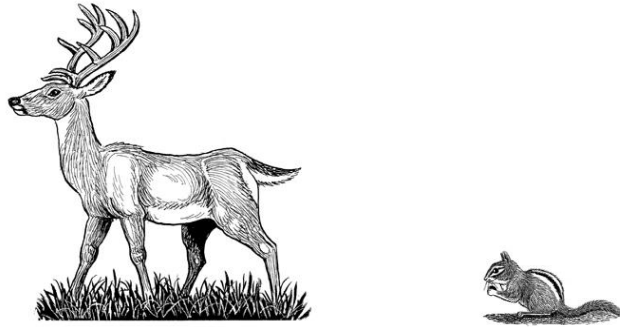
Predator Animals <i>Animals that eat other animals</i>	Prey Animals <i>Animals that are killed and eaten by other animals</i>

Some predators you might find in New Hampshire include the bobcat, lynx, fisher, ermine, snake, shrew, little brown bat, and coyote. Predators can be as large as a coyote or as small as an ermine.



Predators can come in all shapes and sizes: a coyote (left) is much larger than an ermine (right). An ermine is a member of the weasel family.

Some prey you might find in New Hampshire include mice, deer, chipmunks, rabbits, insects, and moose. Prey can be as large as a deer or as small as a chipmunk.



Prey can come in all shapes and sizes: a deer (left) is much larger than a chipmunk (right).

Survival Strategies

All animals need food to survive and want to avoid being eaten. **Survival strategies** are ways that help animals stay alive in the wild. Animals can have body parts that help them survive. For example, a coyote has sharp teeth to help them eat meat. Animals also do certain actions that help them survive. For example, if a deer hears a noise, the deer will freeze so they can listen for a predator and avoid being seen or heard by a predator.

	Body Parts	Actions
<p>PREDATOR: What are some survival strategies a predator might use to catch and kill prey?</p>	<p>Example: Sharp teeth, strong paws, claws</p> <p>Your Answers:</p>	<p>Example: Walking quietly</p> <p>Your Answers:</p>
<p>PREY: What are some survival strategies a prey might use to avoid being caught and eaten by predators?</p>	<p>Example: Good vision, sensitive ears</p> <p>Your Answers:</p>	<p>Example: Freezing</p> <p>Your Answers:</p>