

Amazing Animals of Mexico

Read and discuss the following paragraphs with the students. Then, have them complete pages 84 and 85.

Beautiful butterflies, colorful birds, mischievous monkeys, and deadly snakes live on the varied landscapes of Mexico. The jaguar was a symbol of power to the Aztecs, and the colorful birds gave their feathers for the traditional costumes.

One of the great, mysterious attractions in Mexico is the migration of millions of Monarch butterflies to the eastern part of Michoacán. No one understands why the butterflies make this journey each year, but it is a beautiful sight as millions of orange and black wings flutter through the air.



Iguanas and Gila monsters are two of the lizards that live in the desert areas of Mexico. You can often see children selling iguanas by the roadsides in the country, but stay away from the Gila monsters because they are poisonous. Other desert animals include coyotes, lizards, prairie dogs, and rattlesnakes.

Spider monkeys and parrots like to live in the tropical forests where there is an abundance of trees. The spider monkey winds its way through the branches like a professional acrobat, and can sometimes be a pest if you are eating food nearby. The parrots have brightly colored feathers that make them easy to see in the green foliage. Macaws also live in the tropical forests. The quetzal bird has long, brightly colored feathers that the Aztecs used for their ceremonial costumes. Unfortunately, the quetzal is becoming very rare.

One peculiar animal that lives in the jungle areas is the peccary. This funny-looking animal is a type of wild hog, and is called a *javelina* in Spanish. Ringtail cats also enjoy the jungle areas for hunting. Other cats that live in the Mexican jungles are ocelots, jaguars, and margays.

The dolphin and starfish can be found in the ocean areas of Mexico. Dolphins like to play off the shore, diving and swimming in the clear waters of the Pacific. Gray whales are sometimes also sighted off the shores of Baja California. Many other sea fish live near the Mexican shores and make fishing a big industry for the country.

The interesting and varied animal life of Mexico is as fragile as life anywhere. Much of the wildlife is disappearing as the land is developed for logging, farming, and industry. A blight along the coast of the Caribbean has claimed many of the palm trees, which are a natural habitat for the parrots and macaws. Logging is changing the migration patterns of the butterflies. Ecology is very delicate, and we must all work to protect our planet and the animals that live here.

Suggested reading: *The Three Little Javelinas*, *The Hummingbird's Gift*, *The Tale of Rabbit and Coyote*. (See bibliography.)

Environments of Mexico

Mexico has many different natural environments. Talk about the animals below and decide where you think they would live. Think about what kinds of homes they would need and what kind of food they might eat.

Cut out the circles below and place the animals in the environment in which they live on

spider monkey



peccary



dolphin



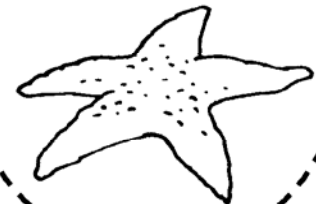
butterfly



Gila monster



starfish



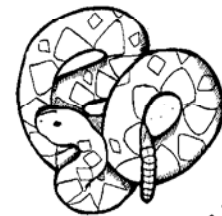
parrot



ringtail cat



rattlesnake



coyote



lizard



Environments of Mexico *(cont.)*

Desert

Tropical Forest and Jungle

Ocean