

Name: _____

Animal Madness with Professor Al Ligator

By Lydia Lukidis

Hi kids! I'm Professor Al Ligator and I love animals! I love smelly animals and big-bellied animals, slimy ones, and tiny ones. They are all special in their own way. Today we're going to talk about vertebrates. Vertebrates are animals with a backbone. There are five different groups of vertebrates.

The first group is mammals. Guess what? You and I are mammals. So are dogs, cats, horses, and kangaroos. Mammals have hair or fur. The mothers give birth to their young. They nurse them with milk. Mammals are warm-blooded. That means their body temperature stays the same if it's hot or cold outside.



Sssssss...I hear some creepy snakes! They belong to our second vertebrate group, reptiles. Reptiles are cold-blooded, which means their body temperature depends on whether or not it is hot or cold outside. Reptiles don't have fur like cats and dogs. Instead, their skin is dry. It is covered with scales that protect them. They usually lay eggs on land. Snakes, lizards, crocodiles, and alligators are all reptiles. But reptiles can be cute too, like fun-loving turtles!

There are also birds. Birds have both feathers and wings. The wings help them fly and the tails help them steer. Birds are warm-blooded and also lay eggs. Do you know what the most humongous bird is? I'll give you a hint; it starts with the letter "o." If you guessed

ostrich, you are right! An ostrich can run up to 97 kilometers per hour. That's pretty fast!

Now, amphibians sure are special creatures. They live both on land and in the water. Amphibians are born in the water and have gills like a fish. When they grow up, they develop lungs and can live on land. They are cold-blooded and some of them have webbed feet. Animals like frogs, toads, salamanders and newts are amphibians. Here's a fun fact; bullfrogs are the only animals that never sleep!

The fifth group of animals is fish. They live in the water and breathe with gills. They are cold-blooded and lay eggs. There are lots of fish. In fact there are 24,000 different species of fish in the world! Some of them are bizarre. There are blind fish, fish with noses like elephants, and fish that hop around and crawl on land! Now that's strange. But be careful. Not all animals that live in water are fish. Dolphins and whales, for example, are mammals.

So these are the five groups of vertebrates. There are also invertebrates, which are animals with no backbone. They include insects, worms, and spiders among many others. But that's a whole other story!

About the Author



Lydia Lukidis is a published children's author with a multi-disciplinary background that spans the fields of literature, theater and puppetry.

Lydia's picture book, *Gerbs in the House: The Dilly Dally Bedtime Routine*, is now available. Find out if Mocha will ever get his silly son to sleep!

Lukidis, Lydia. *Gerbs in the House: The Dilly Dally Bedtime Routine* ISBN: 978-0-9917402-7-7

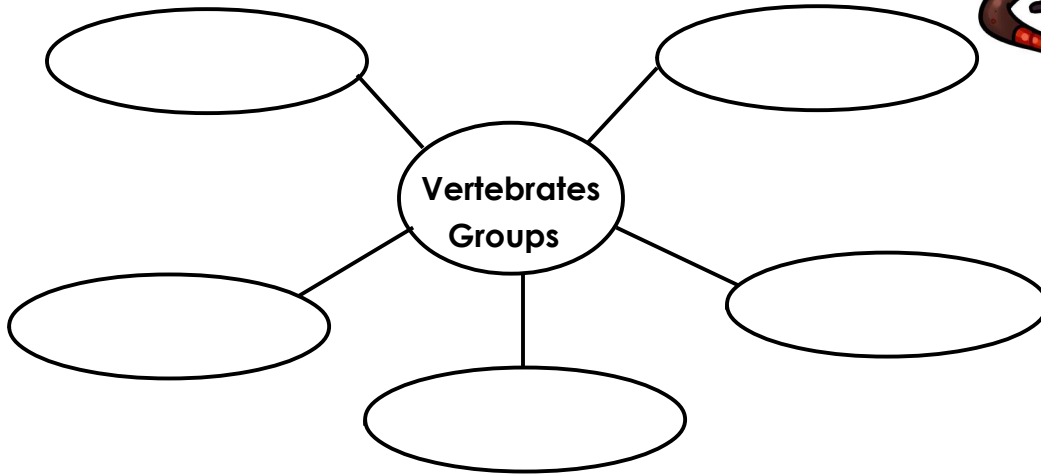
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1. Fill in the graphic organizer with the types of vertebrates you learned about in the reading passage, "Animal Madness with Professor Al Ligator".



2. According to what you read in the reading passage, what are traits of mammals? Put a next to each answer that is correct.

- Mammals have scales or hairless skin.
- Mammals give birth to live young.
- Mammals are warm-blooded.
- Mammals have hair or fur on their bodies.

3. In your own words, describe what makes amphibians different from the other types of vertebrates.

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage, "Animal Madness with Professor Al Ligator," with the correct definition.



_____ 1. vertebrates

a. gooey or sticky

_____ 2. humongous

b. to control the direction of something

_____ 3. webbed

c. small, bony plates that protect the skin of a reptile or fish

_____ 4. slimy

d. animals that have a backbone

_____ 5. steer

e. very strange, odd

_____ 6. invertebrates

f. organs that fish and some amphibians use to breathe

_____ 7. develop

g. very large

_____ 8. scales

h. having feet or toes connected by skin in between them

_____ 9. bizarre

i. animals that do not have a backbone

_____ 10. gills

j. grow

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In the reading passage, "Animal Madness with Professor Al Ligator," you learned about the five types of vertebrates.

Using the information you learned in the reading passage, describe why **seals** and **sea lions** would not be considered fish. Be sure to write your response in complete sentences.



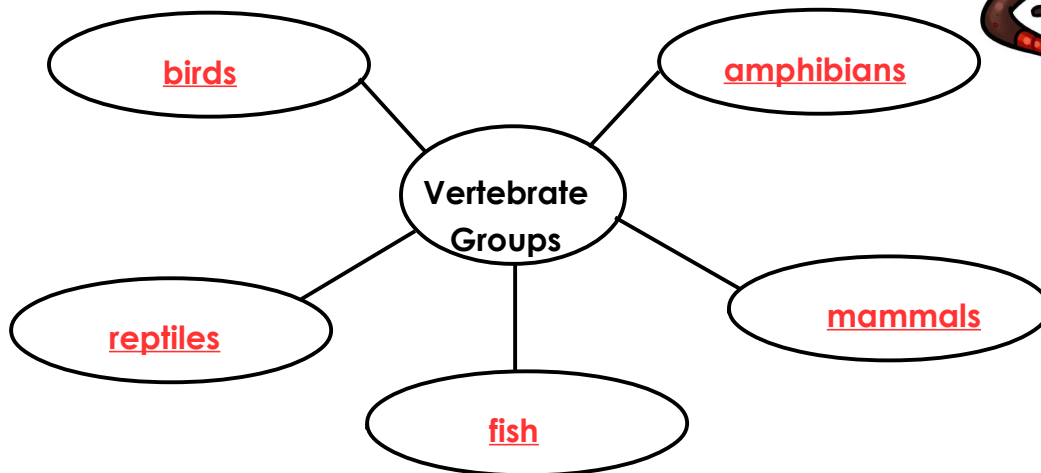
ANSWER KEY

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Amphibians live both in water and on land. They are born in the water and have gills like fish. When they grow up, they develop lungs and can live on land.

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| <u>g.</u> | 2. humongous | <u>b.</u> | to control the direction of something |
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| <u>b.</u> | 5. steer | <u>e.</u> | very strange, odd |
| <u>i.</u> | 6. invertebrates | <u>f.</u> | organs that fish and some amphibians use to breathe |
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