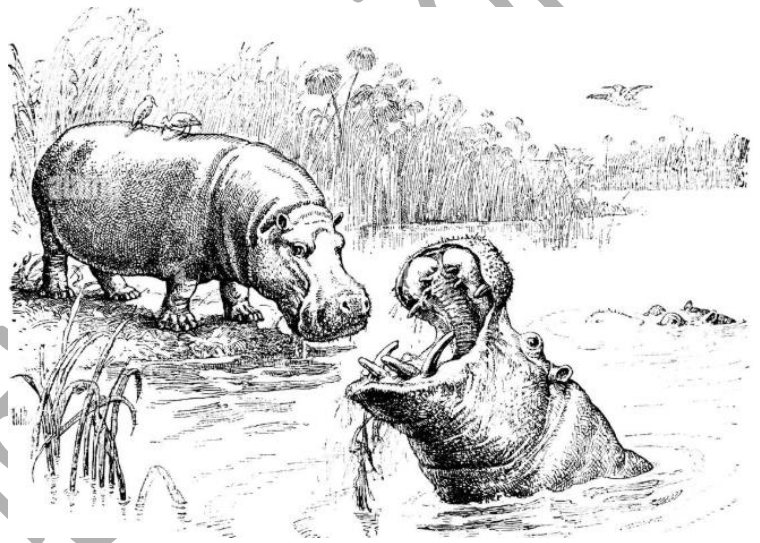


The Mighty Hippopotamus: A Fascinating Creature of the African Rivers

The hippopotamus is one of nature's most impressive and intriguing animals. Found in sub-Saharan Africa, this large, semi-aquatic mammal is known for its massive body, powerful jaws, and a surprisingly gentle nature when left undisturbed. In this essay, we will explore the life of the hippopotamus, discussing its physical features, habitat, behaviour, diet, and the challenges it faces in the wild. This will give us a better understanding of why this creature is so unique and important in the natural world.

The hippopotamus, often simply called the hippo, is a true giant of the animal kingdom. Adult hippos can weigh up to 3,200 kilograms, making them one of the heaviest land animals on earth. Their huge, barrel-shaped bodies are supported by short, sturdy legs, which help them move both on land and in water. Despite their bulky appearance, hippos are surprisingly agile in water, where they spend a significant part of their day. Their eyes, ears, and nostrils are positioned high on their heads, allowing them to see and breathe while mostly submerged. This physical adaptation is essential for life in rivers and lakes, where they remain hidden from potential predators.



Hippos are naturally found in the rivers and lakes of Africa. They thrive in warm, aquatic environments and can often be seen wallowing in the water to keep cool under the hot African sun. Water not only helps regulate their body temperature but also protects their sensitive skin from the harsh effects of the sun. Interestingly, hippos produce a natural, red-coloured secretion that acts as a sunscreen and has antibacterial properties. This unique adaptation further highlights how well-equipped these animals are for life in their natural habitat.

In terms of behaviour, hippos are mostly nocturnal when it comes to feeding. During the night, they leave their watery refuges to graze on the grasses that grow along the riverbanks. Although they are herbivores and primarily eat grass, hippos have been known to consume fruit or even engage in unusual behaviour such as scavenging on carrion on rare occasions. This nocturnal habit helps them avoid the heat of the day and reduces the risk of encountering predators. However, during the daytime, hippos are

known for their territorial nature. They often spend the day in the water, where their size and strength make them formidable opponents to any intruder.

The diet of the hippopotamus is quite simple. They primarily consume short, fresh grasses that are abundant near water sources. Despite their enormous size, hippos have relatively small stomachs, which means they must graze for many hours to obtain sufficient energy. Their slow metabolism and unique digestive system are perfectly adapted to a diet that is low in nutrients. This feeding strategy allows them to survive in an environment where food might not always be plentiful.

Reproduction in hippos is an interesting subject. Female hippos, known as cows, give birth to a single calf after a gestation period of around eight months. The calves are born underwater, which might seem dangerous at first, but this unique method of birth ensures that the young hippos are immediately adapted to their aquatic surroundings. Once born, the calves are cared for closely by their mothers, who protect them fiercely from any potential threats. The strong bond between a mother and her calf is vital for the survival of the young hippo in the wild.

Despite their seemingly calm demeanour, hippos can be very dangerous if provoked. They are known to be aggressive and have powerful jaws that can deliver a devastating bite. This combination of size, strength, and territorial behaviour means that hippos are responsible for more human fatalities in Africa than any other large animal. It is important to remember that these animals should be admired from a safe distance.

In recent years, the hippopotamus has faced several challenges due to human activities. Habitat destruction, poaching, and water pollution have all contributed to a decline in hippo populations. Conservation efforts are now underway in many parts of Africa to protect these magnificent creatures and their natural habitats. By preserving the rivers and wetlands that hippos call home, we are not only saving an iconic species but also maintaining a delicate balance in the ecosystem.

In conclusion, the hippopotamus is much more than just a large, powerful animal. It is a species perfectly adapted to its environment, with fascinating physical features, intriguing behaviours, and a crucial role in maintaining the health of its ecosystem. By studying the life of the hippo, we learn about the importance of conservation and the need to protect our natural world for future generations. The story of the hippopotamus is one of survival, adaptation, and the enduring beauty of nature.

- 1. What is the maximum weight mentioned for an adult hippopotamus in the essay?**
 - A) 1,500 kilograms
 - B) 2,500 kilograms
 - C) 3,200 kilograms
 - D) 4,000 kilograms
- 2. Where are hippopotamuses primarily found according to the text?**
 - A) In the rainforests of South America

- B) In the rivers and lakes of Africa
C) In the deserts of Australia
D) In the mountains of Europe
3. **Which physical feature helps a hippo see and breathe while mostly submerged?**
A) Their long necks
B) Their high-placed eyes, ears, and nostrils
C) Their flexible tails
D) Their webbed feet
4. **What unique secretion do hippos produce and what is its function?**
A) A sticky substance that traps insects
B) A red-coloured secretion that acts as sunscreen and has antibacterial properties
C) A clear fluid that camouflages them from predators
D) A fragrant oil that repels parasites
5. **When do hippos usually feed, as mentioned in the essay?**
A) In the early morning
B) During the afternoon
C) At night
D) At midday
6. **What is the primary diet of a hippopotamus?**
A) Freshwater fish
B) Leaves and fruits
C) Short, fresh grasses
D) Insects and small animals
7. **How long is the gestation period for a female hippo, as stated in the text?**
A) 4 months
B) 6 months
C) 8 months
D) 10 months
8. **Why might hippos spend most of their day in water?**
A) To avoid the cold weather
B) To cool their body temperature and protect their skin
C) To search for food underwater
D) To hide from other hippos
9. **What can be inferred about a hippo's behaviour during the day from the essay?**
A) They are very social and form large groups
B) They are solitary and shy away from water
C) They remain in water and can be territorial and aggressive if disturbed
D) They frequently migrate long distances
10. **Why might giving birth underwater be beneficial for hippo calves?**
A) It helps the calf learn to swim immediately
B) It prevents the calf from breathing too much air
C) It is a traditional method with no specific benefit
D) It protects the calf from predators and helps it adapt to an aquatic environment
11. **What benefit does the hippo's nocturnal feeding habit provide?**
A) It allows them to avoid the heat of the day and reduce the risk of predator encounters
B) It ensures they consume more food in one go
C) It makes them more visible to predators
D) It increases competition with other nocturnal animals

12. **Based on the essay, why do hippos need to graze for many hours despite their large size?**
- A) Their digestive system is highly efficient
 - B) They have relatively small stomachs and a slow metabolism
 - C) They need to compensate for high energy expenditure
 - D) They only eat during the night
13. **What inference can be made about the impact of human activities on hippo populations?**
- A) Hippo populations are increasing because of human protection
 - B) Human activities such as habitat destruction, poaching, and water pollution have contributed to a decline in their numbers
 - C) Humans have no effect on hippo populations
 - D) Hippos benefit from urban expansion
14. **How does the essay suggest that hippos contribute to their ecosystem?**
- A) By controlling the growth of riverbank vegetation
 - B) By serving as prey for large predators
 - C) By maintaining a delicate balance in their natural habitat
 - D) By pollinating aquatic plants
15. **In the context of the essay, what does the term "semi-aquatic" mean?**
- A) Living exclusively in water
 - B) Living both in water and on land
 - C) Able to fly over water
 - D) Spending a short time in water
16. **What does "barrel-shaped" imply about a hippo's body?**
- A) It is narrow and elongated
 - B) It is round and bulky
 - C) It is flat and thin
 - D) It is pointed and sharp
17. **What is the meaning of "adaptation" as used in the essay?**
- A) A change that helps an organism survive in its environment
 - B) A form of social behaviour
 - C) A method of hunting
 - D) A type of migration pattern
18. **In the essay, what does "territorial" refer to?**
- A) Sharing their space with others
 - B) Defending a specific area from intruders
 - C) Moving frequently between territories
 - D) Living in large, communal groups
19. **Identify the dependent clause in the sentence: "Although hippos spend most of their day in water, they are known to be aggressive if disturbed."**
- A) "Although hippos spend most of their day in water"
 - B) "they are known to be aggressive if disturbed"
 - C) "hippos spend most of their day"
 - D) "if disturbed"
20. **Which of the following is the best passive voice version of the sentence "Scientists are studying hippo behaviour in the wild"?**
- A) "Hippo behaviour is being studied by scientists in the wild."
 - B) "Scientists study hippo behaviour in the wild."
 - C) "Hippo behaviour is studied by scientists in the wild."
 - D) "Hippo behaviour was studied by scientists in the wild."

1. **Answer: C**
Explanation: The essay states that an adult hippopotamus can weigh up to 3,200 kilograms. 1. C
2. **Answer: B**
Explanation: The essay clearly mentions that hippos are primarily found in the rivers and lakes of Africa. 2. B
3. **Answer: B**
Explanation: The text explains that hippos have their eyes, ears, and nostrils positioned high on their heads, which allows them to see and breathe while mostly submerged. 3. B
4. **Answer: B**
Explanation: The essay notes that hippos produce a red-coloured secretion that acts as sunscreen and has antibacterial properties. 4. B
5. **Answer: C**
Explanation: It is mentioned that hippos usually feed at night, which helps them avoid the heat of the day and reduces the risk of encountering predators. 5. C
6. **Answer: C**
Explanation: The primary diet of a hippo is short, fresh grasses that grow near water sources, as stated in the essay. 6. C
7. **Answer: C**
Explanation: The essay indicates that the gestation period for a female hippo is around eight months. 7. C
8. **Answer: B**
Explanation: Hippos spend most of their day in water to help cool their body temperature and protect their skin from the harsh effects of the sun. 8. B
9. **Answer: C**
Explanation: The essay implies that during the day, hippos remain in the water and can be territorial and aggressive if disturbed. 9. C
10. **Answer: D**
Explanation: Giving birth underwater benefits hippo calves by protecting them from predators and helping them quickly adapt to an aquatic environment. 10. D
11. **Answer: A**
Explanation: Feeding at night allows hippos to avoid the daytime heat and reduces their risk of encountering predators, as mentioned in the text. 11. A
12. **Answer: B**
Explanation: Despite their large size, hippos have relatively small stomachs and a slow metabolism, so they need to graze for many hours to obtain sufficient energy. 12. B
13. **Answer: B**
Explanation: The essay states that human activities such as habitat destruction, poaching, and water pollution have contributed to a decline in hippo populations. 13. B
14. **Answer: C**
Explanation: By maintaining their natural habitats, hippos help preserve the delicate balance of their ecosystem, as explained in the essay. 14. C
15. **Answer: B**
Explanation: "Semi-aquatic" means that hippos live both in water and on land, which is clearly described in the essay. 15. B
16. **Answer: B**
Explanation: The term "barrel-shaped" implies that a hippo's body is round and bulky, as detailed in the text. 16. B
17. **Answer: A**
Explanation: "Adaptation" in the essay refers to a change that helps an organism survive in its environment, such as the hippo's physical features and behaviours. 17. A
18. **Answer: B**
Explanation: The essay describes hippos as territorial, meaning they defend a specific area from intruders. 18. B
19. **Answer: A**
Explanation: In the sentence "Although hippos spend most of their day in water, they are known to be aggressive if disturbed," the dependent clause is "Although hippos spend most of their day in water" because it cannot stand alone as a complete sentence. 19. A
20. **Answer: A**
Explanation: The best passive voice version is "Hippo behaviour is being studied by scientists in the wild," which correctly shifts the focus from the subject (scientists) to the object (hippo behaviour). 20. A