

Create a creature

Audience: Youth, Ages 6-11

During this activity, you and your scientist will create your own creature of the night based on adaptations of nocturnal animals. Nocturnal animals are animals that are active (finding food and shelter, competing for territories and places to raise young) during the night. Because they're active at night, they have special adaptations that allow them to get around easily in the dark. Owls have large eyes to help them see well in the dark. Bats, on the other hand, use echolocation. They send out high pitched sounds and use their incredible sense of hearing to listen for echoes. This helps the bats find prey and navigate. With these example adaptations in mind, you and your scientist will create your own unique creatures that have adapted to being active during the night!

MATERIALS

- Paper
- Scissors
- Glue/ tape
- Popsicle sticks
- Pipe cleaners
- Buttons
- Other recyclables/craft supplies

ACTIVITY

1. Ask your scientist if they can name some creatures that are active at night (owls, bats, rats, etc.) Ask your scientist if they know the word used to describe animals that are awake at night (nocturnal).
2. Ask your scientist if they can identify some of the things that help these animals get around during the night (eyes, etc.).
3. Using the above-mentioned materials and other craft pieces and recyclables, ask your scientist to imagine their own nocturnal animal. Ask them to create it by attaching the materials to their piece of paper using tape or glue. Since it's nocturnal, it will need a special adaptation to help it get around. Help your scientist brainstorm what these adaptations could be:
 - Maybe your animal can see well, so maybe it has large eyes
 - Maybe your animal has a good sense of smell, so maybe it has a special nose
 - Maybe your animal lives deep underwater, so maybe they can make themselves glow
4. Once you and your scientist have created your creatures of the night, talk about your animals and their adaptations.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What's your animal called?

What's special about its body?

Where does it live?

What does it do at night?

What does it do during the day?

What does it eat?

What helps it get around during the night?

ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY

- **Adaptations:** specific behavioral and/or physical changes to help an animal be successful and survive.
- **Biodiversity:** a word used to describe the extensive variety of life to be found on earth.
- **Community:** an ecological grouping of plants and animals that live together in a balanced situation in any particular area.
- **Crepuscular:** species that are most active at dawn and dusk.
- **Diurnal:** species that are active during the day.
- **Nocturnal:** species that are active at night.