

UC Santa Barbara

Educational Materials

Title

Dichotomous Key Mystery Cards

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Gumplant

Grindelia camporum

Classification Facts

I am a bushy, leafy plant with bright yellow flowers.

I can live in very salty soils.

I can grow 2 to 5 feet tall.

In the center of my flower is a sticky sap that feels like gum.

I provide important habitats for many wetland animals.

My flowers bloom between August and October.



Pickleweed

Salicornia virginica

Classification Facts

I am a small succulent plant with long, thin, and round fleshy leaves that look like little fingers.

I am waxy on the outside and full of moisture on the inside.

I grow in the low-to-middle tidal zone in the marsh, which means that I am covered with water some of the time.

I am a halophyte, which means that I love salt.

My flowers bloom between April and September.



Saltgrass

Distichlis spicata

Classification Facts

I have stiff green leaves that resemble feathers.

My roots absorb nutrients and saltwater.

I push the salt absorbed by my roots out of my leaves, where it dries to form little crystals. Look closely!

I am an important source of food for many animals that live in the wetland.

My small flowers are purple and bloom between April and July.



California Bulrush
Schoenoplectus californicus

Classification Facts

I have a tall, thin, dark green stem that is usually triangular.

I can grow 4 to 8 feet tall.

My shoots can be eaten raw or cooked.

My seeds can be dried, ground up, and used as flour.

I can improve water quality by removing harmful, toxic metals.

I have woolly, bristly, tan and brownish flowers.



Brush Rabbit
Sylvilagus bachmani

Classification Facts

I live in dense, brushy covered areas like the chaparral habitats in the western coastal regions of North America.

I have light brown and gray fur on my back and white fur on my abdomen.

I am nocturnal.

I am an herbivore. I eat grasses and many other herbaceous flowering plants such as the California sunflower, milkweed, and clovers.



Coyote
Canis latrans

Classification Facts

I have gray-brown and yellowish-gray fur on my body and white fur on my throat and abdomen.

I have large ears and shed my fur once a year.

I travel with my family in a large group called a pack.

I am primarily nocturnal and have a very distinctive howl.

I am a carnivore. I eat small mammals such as brush rabbits, mice, snakes, lizards, and some ground-nesting birds. I also eat carrion.



Saltmarsh Harvest Mouse
Reithrodontomys raviventris

Classification Facts

I am a tiny rodent that lives in wetland and marsh habitats throughout California.

I have dark brown fur on my back and a pinkish cinnamon abdomen.

I am less than 3 inches long.

Hawks, owls, blue herons and clapper rails like to eat me.

I am nocturnal.

I am an omnivore. I eat seeds, grasses, pickleweed, and insects.



Striped Skunk
Mephitis mephitis

Classification Facts

I have a large habitat range and can be found throughout North America.

I am black with 2 very distinct white stripes down my head and back.

When I feel threatened I do a handstand and spray potential enemies up to 15 feet away with a very unpleasant odor.

I am an omnivore.



Gray Fox
Urocyon cinereoargenteus

Classification Facts

I have a very large habitat range and can be found from southern Canada to northern Venezuela and Colombia.

I have gray fur on my back, reddish fur on my chest and head, and a white throat and abdomen. I also have a long bushy tail with a black stripe on top.

I am primarily nocturnal but will also forage for food during the day.

I am an omnivore. I eat a variety of plant material, brush rabbits, shrews, salt marsh harvest mice, and birds.



Red-shouldered Hawk
Buteo lineatus

Classification Facts

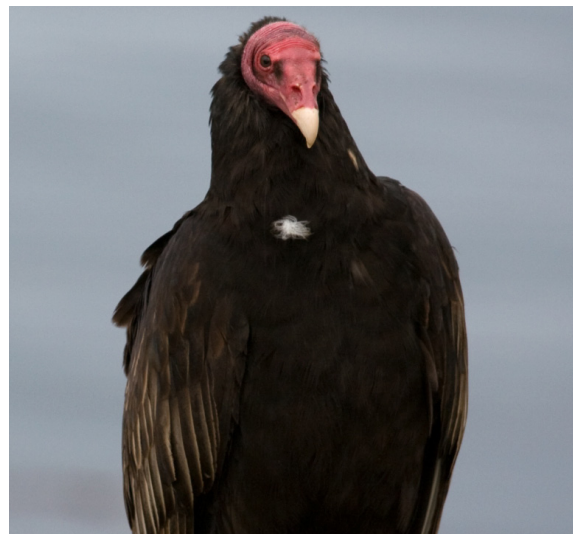
I live in southern Canada and coastal regions of the United States.

I am a large, broad-winged hawk with long tail feathers.

I have a brown head, dark brown back, and rust colored feathers under my wings, tail, and body. I have very sharp claws for hunting and protection.

I build my nest 20 to 60 feet above ground in wetland areas.

I am a carnivore. I eat rabbits, squirrels, reptiles, and crayfish in some areas.



Turkey Vulture
Cathartes aura

Classification Facts

I can be found throughout most of North and South America.

I am a large bird with dark brown and black feathers on my body.

I have a featherless purplish-red head and neck.

I have a short, hooked, ivory-colored beak.

I am a scavenger. I primarily feed on carrion.



Great Blue Heron
Ardea herodias

Classification Facts

I have a large habitat range that includes North and Central America as well as the West Indies and Galapagos Islands.

I have blue-gray feathers over my entire body with black feathers under my wings. My head and neck form an "S" shape.

I am a wading bird and can be found near open water and wetland areas.

I am a carnivore. I primarily eat fish (piscivore), but I also eat reptiles and small mammals.



White-tailed Kite
Elanus leucurus

Classification Facts

I live in open woodlands, desert grasslands, marshes and partially cleared fields.

I am a medium sized hawk. I have long, narrow, and pointed wings and a long, white tail.

I have a gray back and parts of my wings are also gray.

I have a white face with red eyes and a white torso. I have a black spot in the middle of the underside of my wings.

I am a carnivore. I primarily feed on small mammals.



Red-winged Blackbird
Agelaius phoeniceus

Classification Facts

I live in fresh and salt water marshes.

I am a stocky, broad-shouldered bird with a slender, conical bill and medium length tail.

I have glossy black plumage with red and yellow shoulder badges.

I use my bright coloring to attract mates, who have dark brown bodies with white specks in their plumage.

I am an omnivore. I primarily eat seeds, but I also eat insects.



Belding's Savannah Sparrow
Passerculus sandwichensis beldingi

Classification Facts

My habitat ranges from temperate to tundra. I can be found throughout North America, Central America, and northern South America.

I live in meadows, salt water marshes, agricultural fields and pastures.

I have a dark-streaked brown back and whitish abdomen with some black streaks.

I am an omnivore. I eat seeds, insects, insect larvae, and other small arthropods.



Western Fence Lizard
Sceloporus occidentalis

Classification Facts

I live primarily in California, but can also be found in eastern and south-west Oregon, Columbia River Gorge, southwest Idaho, Nevada, and western Utah.

I live in scrub or chaparral areas.

I am dark brown to black with a blue belly and blue flecks on my body.

I am a cold-blooded vertebrate, so you will often see me sunning on rocks during the day.

I am a carnivore. I eat insects and spiders.



Southern Alligator Lizard
Elgaria multicarinata

Classification Facts

I live along the Pacific Coast of North America, northern Idaho, and western Montana.

I live in chaparral and forested habitats.

I am primarily gray and have a tan stripe down my back and black flecks on my body.

I have skin folds on the sides of my body that separate keeled scales on my back from the smooth scales on my abdomen.

I am a carnivore.



Gopher Snake
Pituophis catenifer

Classification Facts

I can be found on every continent EXCEPT Antarctica. I live in desert flats, coastal dunes, coniferous forests, grasslands, and open brush.

I range in color from cream-yellow to green-gray to tan.

I have large black-brown or reddish blotches on my back.

I have one dark line between my eyes and one that runs from behind my eyes to my jaw.

I am a carnivore. I eat small mammals, birds, and eggs.



Pacific Tree Frog
Pseudacris regilla

Classification Facts

I live along the Pacific Coast of North America (southern Canada to southern California).

I live near streams where there are rocks, quiet pools, and shade.

I am gray and brownish with flecks of black along my body and I have a yellowish abdomen.

I am primarily nocturnal.

I spend most of my time under rocks during the day to avoid predators.

I am an insectivore.



Ladybug
Coccinella septempunctata

Classification Facts

I live in a variety of habitats, including forests, fields, and grasslands.

I am primarily black with a pair of large, red, black-spotted modified wings that cover my back.

I eat from side to side (not up and down like people do).

I am great in gardens because I eat many destructive insects.

I am an omnivore. I eat aphids and other small insects.



Hoverfly
Simosyrphus grandicornis

Classification Facts

I have a large habitat range and can be found on every continent EXCEPT Antarctica.

I live in woods, fields, and gardens.

I am a black fly with yellow bands on my back and abdomen.

I have one pair of clear wings.

I got my name because I can hover in the air above flowers.

I am a nectarivore. I feed mainly on pollen and nectar, but my larvae are insectivores.



"Native Bee"
Osmia lignaria

Classification Facts

I live throughout the United States and Canada.

I can usually be found near wooded or brushy areas in early spring.

I am black with a translucent blue-green color on my back.

I have a stinger and will sting you if I feel threatened, but I will not attack you.

I am a very good pollinator.

I am a nectarivore.



Skipper Butterfly
Hylephila phyleus

Classification Facts

I live throughout North America.

I have a variety of different colors and patterns on my body depending on where I am found in North America.

I have a larger body and smaller wings when compared to most butterflies.

I am named for my quick and darting flight habits.

In the caterpillar stage of my lifecycle, I am an herbivore, feeding on grasses and other plants. As an adult I am a nectarivore.

