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# The Hunt Begins

Every animal has its place in the food chain – a special order in nature that shows “who eats who”. The food chain starts with tiny plants and grasses on land and phytoplankton and algae (the tiniest of aquatic organisms) in water, which are eaten by herbivores (plant-eating animals). These herbivores, from the graceful antelope to the cute little squirrel, become food for the next group – predators.





## Why Do Some Animals Hunt While Others Eat Plants?

Predators are the hunters of the animal kingdom and are carnivores (meat-eating animals). They simply can't digest plants properly. Their stomachs and teeth are designed to break down meat, not leaves. Habitat (the place where they live) also plays a big part. Wolves, tigers and other carnivores can't munch on grass. But their habitats have animals that they can hunt. And they've developed abilities to make the most of it!

*Bull sharks are found in the seas surrounding India*

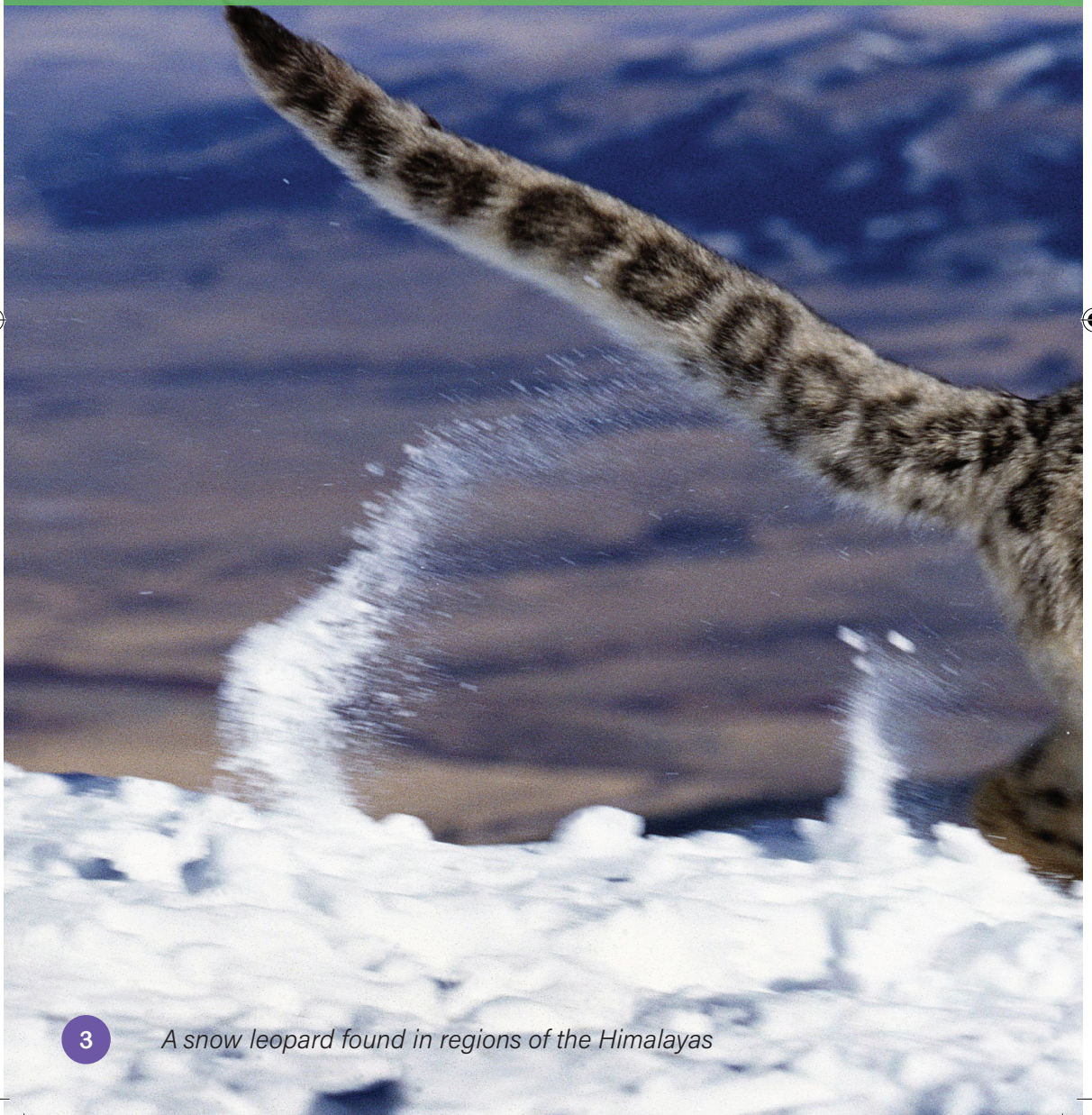






## How Do Predators Hunt?

Hunting is essential to a predator's survival, and they have all sorts of tricks up their sleeves – from chasing down deer to ambushing prey from the shadows. The mighty eagle uses its amazing vision to spot prey from astounding heights and snatches up its meal with razor-sharp talons. Meanwhile, a crocodile snaps up fish or large animals that wander too close to the water's edge with its powerful jaws.







## Hunting with the Pack or Going Solo

While some predators prefer to hunt alone, others like to hunt in packs with their buddies. The dholes use their numbers and wits to nab prey, taking turns to chase and corner their target. On the other hand, tigers, leopards and many other apex predators (animals at the top of the food chain) are lone hunters. These animals rely on their stealth and strength to bring down their prey without any help.







## Escape Artists: Surviving a Predator Attack

So what does the prey do? Animals lower in the food chain do their best to avoid becoming a tasty meal. They have special skills – speed and defensive tactics – that give them a fighting chance against their hunters. The dance of predator versus prey is a deadly game. While we feel sorry for the prey that ends up in the tummy of a tiger, it's hard not to admire the skill of these predators. Get ready to meet them!





# Peregrine Falcon

Find Me Here!

Look for hunting falcons around tall buildings, especially near open areas. Pylons along roads are a favourite perch too!



## CRITTER STATS

**Scientific name:** *Falco peregrinus*

**Size:** 36–58 cm – about the same as a crow

**Weight:** 0.90–1.5 kg

**Lifespan:** 13–25 years

**Habitat:** cliffs, grasslands and even your city!

**Conservation status:** least concern



**The fastest flying bird in the world is also one of India's top predators. When it dives in pursuit of prey, the peregrine falcon can reach speeds of 320 km/h! It is so fast that the prey – usually other birds – may never even see it coming!**



Watching a peregrine hunt is a thrilling experience! It can spot its prey even as it circles hundreds of metres above in the sky.

That's like you standing on top of the tallest building in India (an apartment block in Mumbai that's 320 m high) and being able to spot your handkerchief on the ground!







Once it has the prey in sight, the peregrine folds in its wings close to its body and takes the shape of a teardrop. This reduces drag and lets it fly at super speed!

It then plunges down at a steep angle before striking the target with its powerful talons mid-air.

**WHAM!** It is death on impact for the helpless prey.

It likes to eat the freshly caught meal on a high perch, but may also snack on the wing!





# DID YOU KNOW?

**In-built sunnies:** the peregrine falcon has a see-through layer of skin that it pulls over its eyes to protect it from wind and dust at top speeds!



**City slicker:** in cities, the peregrine hunts pigeons, since these are common. This is a bird that has learnt to live in cities, using towers and tall buildings as perches to scan for prey.







# Dhole

Find Me Here!

Once found all over India, you are now more likely to see dholes in the Western Ghats of Karnataka.

## CRITTER STATS

**Scientific name:** *Cuon alpinus*

**Size:** 90 cm – slightly bigger than an indie dog

**Weight:** 17–21 kg

**Lifespan:** 16 years in captivity

**Habitat:** central and southern India

**Conservation status:** endangered



**Also known as Indian wild dogs, the dholes are pack hunters that prey on species like the spotted deer, sambhar and wild boar. They may also snack on the occasional beetle or bird. These highly social animals work in teams and can bring down animals larger than them.**



A dhole pack in action is much like your favourite football team!

There is a plot devised with cunning, and a clear plan laid out for each member of the hunting pack.

Dhole have been known to hunt in groups of 30, though more often, hunting packs may be much smaller – less than 10 dholes.

