How Species Adapt

All plant and animal life constantly adapts to its environment. Because of this, species are always evolving.

Cacti have adapted to live in the desert. They store water in their fleshy stems, which is why they are often a strange, bulbous shape. Many have prickly spines to prevent desert animals eating them.

Camels have also adapted to desert conditions. Their humps, though, are not for storing water. They are large mounds of fat which enable camels to survive without food in the desert, where it can be hard to find, for up to two weeks.

Extreme cold can be as difficult as extreme heat. Penguins, however, have adapted to survive in the harshest conditions. They have blubber under their skin and a thick layer of waterproof feathers to keep them warm and dry.

Penguins have also turned their wings into flippers. Although this means they can no longer fly, they can swim extremely well, which helps them to catch the fish they eat.

1. Which unusual features do cacti have, and why do they need them?

Cacti have fleshy stems, often bulbous in shape, which help them to store water, and prickly spines which prevent desert animals from eating them.

2. What are camels' humps for and why are they necessary?

Surprisingly, camel's humps are not for storing water. They are large mounds of fat which enable camels to survive for long periods in the desert without eating food.

3. Where do penguins live and how have they adapted to survive there?

Penguins live in the coldest parts of the world. They have evolved blubber under their skin, waterproof feathers, and have turned their wings into flippers, which enable them to swim very well.

4. Why can't penguins fly?

Penguins can't fly because they no longer have wings, having turned them into flippers to enable them to swim well and catch fish, their main source of food.