

## Tapirs

Tapirs are mammals that look something like pigs though they are most closely related to horses and rhinoceroses. There are four kinds of tapirs: Baird's Tapirs, Malayan Tapirs, Mountain Tapirs and Brazilian Tapirs. These animals are native to Central and South America and Southeast Asia. They are about seven feet long and about three feet tall at the shoulder. Tapirs weigh anywhere from 330 to 700 pounds.

Tapirs have short snouts, called *prehensile* snouts, which can move in all directions. This allows them to easily grab shrubs and leaves when they are grazing. Tapirs also eat berries and other fruits and are said to love bananas. They spend many hours each day looking for food. Tapirs do most of their foraging (searching for food) at night or in the early morning hours before the sun comes up. They are hearty eaters and have been known to eat up to 85 pounds of food in a single day!

Tapirs have stubby tails and hooved toes - four toes on each front foot and three on each hind foot. Their toes help them walk on soft ground and in the mud. Tapirs usually live near water and prefer wet climates to dry ones. They like to bathe and will often walk through pools of water and rivers. They have tough skin that helps them adapt to water, and they are excellent swimmers.

Baby tapirs are born with stripes or spots that help to camouflage them when they are too young to escape from danger on their own. Baby tapirs are called calves, but male and female tapirs have no special names. They are simply called "males" and "females." Tapirs do not build their own places to live. It isn't clear where they sleep, but it seems that they find shelter in the jungle or forest, usually in places that are partly covered by trees or bushes. Tapirs have also been spotted sleeping in shallow water or on the ridges of mountains. They usually choose places that are cool and where they will be able to scent predators. Large cats often attack tapirs, but they usually have a very hard time overtaking and killing them because of the tapir's tough skin and excellent defenses. Humans who hunt tapirs and take over their territories are by far their most dangerous enemies.

## Tapirs Questions

1. Tapirs are related to
  - a. pigs.
  - b. horses.
  - c. dinosaurs.
  - d. All of the above
  
2. Describe a tapir's size (length, height) and weight.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Tapirs usually forage for food
  - a. all day long.
  - b. after a good nap.
  - c. in the late morning and early afternoon.
  - d. at night and in the early morning.
  
4. Tapirs
  - a. like water and usually live near it.
  - b. usually avoid water.
  - c. will walk or swim through ponds and rivers when they need to.
  - d. are not great swimmers even though they like to walk or sleep in rivers.
  
5. A tapir's prehensile snout
  - a. is short.
  - b. can move in all directions.
  - c. is good for gathering food.
  - d. All of the above
  
6. A tapir may eat up to \_\_\_\_\_ pounds of food in a single day.

**Tapirs Questions (Cont'd)**

7. How many toes does a tapir have?
  - a. 12
  - b. 14
  - c. 16
  - d. 18
  
8. Baby tapirs are called
  - a. fawns.
  - b. calves.
  - c. simply "babies"
  - d. pups.
  
9. Tapirs
  - a. build their own houses.
  - b. take over house that other animals have built.
  - c. sleep in natural settings.
  - d. always sleep in cool water.
  
10. Tapirs are most threatened by
  - a. big cats.
  - b. hot weather.
  - c. other tapirs.
  - d. humans.

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Tapirs Answers

1. b
2. 7 feet long, 3 feet tall, 330 to 700 pounds
3. c
4. a
5. b
6. 85
7. b
8. b
9. c
10. d