



### TRUIST PIER 225

Despite all the diverse animals calling Georgia and its coastline home, California sea lions can only be found in Georgia at Georgia Aquarium. These animals are mammals, just like humans, and opportunistic feeders. Their diet primarily consists of squid, anchovy, rockfish, whiting and mackerel. Adults eat an estimated 5-8% of their body weight every day. Males do not eat during breeding season. Georgia's coast doesn't have sea lions but it does see different species of marine mammals! It is common to see whales and dolphins traveling in the Atlantic close to our shoreline. Georgia even has a state marine mammal, which is the North Atlantic right whale. These whales make trips to the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and Northeastern Florida to give birth to their young in the winter time. Though it is a marine mammal like the California sea lion, its diet is considerably different. These whales only feed on krill and small fish.

**What is an opportunistic feeder? Are the fish mentioned bony or cartilaginous? Where do North Atlantic right whales spend the rest of the year? What are some other animals with the same diet as these whales?**



### DOLPHIN COAST

The common bottlenose dolphin can be found off the coast of Georgia in the Atlantic Ocean. Their diet can range greatly and be geographically dependent. There is strong evidence that bottlenose dolphins are selective feeders, taking fish disproportionately based on their availability in the environment and especially selecting soniferous (sound producing) fish. Human activities are starting to have an impact on dolphins and their food intake. Human fishing practices can accidentally lead to dolphin entanglement in recreational and commercial fishing gear, which are currently among the most serious threats to bottlenose dolphins. The accumulation of chemicals and heavy metals released into the environment by human activities continues to impact dolphin populations both directly and indirectly. Many organizations are working to protect and research these wonderful animals.

**How can humans help protect dolphins while fishing? How could metals or chemicals directly and indirectly impact dolphins? How do you think fish make sounds?**



### SHARKS! PREDATORS OF THE DEEP

All the sharks in the habitat, except the silver tip, can be found off the coast of Georgia. The diets of these sharks vary greatly from each other. For example, tiger sharks eat many species of bony fish, sharks, rays, marine mammals, marine reptiles, invertebrates and sea birds. While great hammerheads eat primarily stingrays, they also consume other rays and skates which can be found on the sea floor. They may also consume other sharks, including other hammerhead sharks, bony fish (including groupers and sea catfish), squid and bottom dwelling crustaceans. Sharks are very important to the ocean's health. They're presence in an area shows that it is healthy, but right now our oceans are losing an alarming number of sharks. Many humans fear or hunt sharks, taking millions out of our oceans annually. Shark attacks aren't nearly as common as people think, in fact you're more likely to be injured by your own toilet than by a shark attack!

**What are some examples of marine reptiles? Why would sharks be important to the health of the ocean? Why might humans hunt sharks?**

**WORD SCRAMBLE** Descramble the words below. Each word can be found in one of the information sections:

1. MENIPTDO

\_\_\_\_\_  
○

2. RCAOL

○  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. BVRTASEETRE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. UTHOM

○  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. YTAWRAWES

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. MLMMASA

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_○

7. GSHINIF

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. YETHHLA

○  
\_\_\_\_\_

Using the circled letters, descramble and solve this clue:

Lake sturgeons can be found in this river in the Valley and Ridge region of Georgia:

\_\_\_\_\_



## Field Guide: Diverse Georgia Grades 3-5



The earth is full of many different kinds of habitats, each filled with hundreds or thousands of different animals. Georgia is no exception to this. Georgia is divided into five geographic regions: Blue Ridge, Piedmont, Coastal Plains, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau. Each region of Georgia is made up of many different habitats which include diverse species of animals. These animals are grouped by specific physical characteristics. For example vertebrate or invertebrate, fish or mammal, etc. These animals all form relationships and interactions with each other creating complex food webs. Georgia Aquarium is home to a wide variety of animals, many of which can be found in the different regions of Georgia and off the coast in the Atlantic Ocean. Travel around Georgia Aquarium to find the species native to Georgia as well as what region they can be found in.



GEORGIA AQUARIUM

Cognia STEM-Certified Aquarium



### TROPICAL DIVER

Coral is often mistaken for a plant, but is in fact an animal made up of tiny organisms called polyps. Shallow water corals have a symbiotic relationship with an algae, a type of plant, called zooxanthellae. Corals are invertebrates found off the coast of Georgia. Though Georgia doesn't have a coral reef, it does have a hard bottom reef called Gray's Reef. Hard bottom reefs are made up of a few different types of invertebrates, and don't have as wide a range of species as coral reefs. Also in this gallery is a fish called the lionfish. This fish can also be found in Gray's reef and other locations off the Georgia coast. Lionfish are not a native species to Georgia and they have no known predator. Because of this, they are disrupting the food webs and invading ecosystems that are not theirs.

**What does symbiotic relationship mean? What is an invertebrate? How does the lionfish, having no known predators in Georgia, disrupt the food webs? Can humans do anything about the lionfish?**



### OCEAN VOYAGER: *BUILT BY THE HOME DEPOT*

Sandbar sharks are found off the coast of Georgia and frequent Gray's Reef. Much of their prey can be found in here. They typically eat fish, smaller sharks, rays, cephalopods, gastropods, crabs and shrimp. Sandbar sharks are an important part of ocean habitats. Humans are removing more and more of these sharks at alarming numbers. The loss of these predators would have terrible effects on the local food webs. A few other species found in Ocean Voyager can be found right off Georgia's coast, including batfish, which are omnivores that eat algae and invertebrates. The sandbar shark and batfish prey upon invertebrates, but unlike their prey, batfish and sandbar sharks are vertebrates. One of the main differences between the two aside from physical shape and size, is their skeletons. Sandbar shark bones are made of cartilage like our ears or nose. This allows scientists to group these fish as either bony fish like the batfish or cartilaginous fish like the sandbar shark.

**How could the diet of the sandbar shark be grouped? Why might humans remove these sharks from the ocean? What does omnivore mean? What is a vertebrate and what are some other examples?**



### COLD WATER QUEST

Gray's Reef is full of invertebrates many of similar types can be seen in this gallery. Sea anemones and sea stars can be found globally and their diets vary greatly. Both of these organisms are animals and carnivores. In fact, sea anemones are closely related to corals found in Tropical Diver. They use their tentacles to sting and stun their prey. The hole in the center surrounded by the tentacles is actually its mouth! Some sea anemones can even detach themselves and move to another location. Sea stars might not seem like they can move, but they do! They have white tubes covering their undersides called tube feet. These tube feet let them move to their prey. Once they reach their prey, they will push their stomachs outside their body, cover their prey with it and digest it, before pulling their stomachs back in. Totally different from how humans eat!

**How cold of water can sea anemones and sea stars be found? What is a carnivore and what are some other examples of carnivores? What makes sea anemones similar to corals? How do some species of sea anemones swim?**



### SOUTHERN COMPANY RIVER SCOUT

Georgia is full of rivers, lakes, streams and creeks. These waterways are teeming with life all working together to create these natural and beautiful ecosystems. All the rivers pass through multiple Georgia geographic regions and eventually flow directly into the ocean or merge with another river that does connect to the ocean. For example, the Savannah River runs along the border of South Carolina and Georgia. It passes through both the Piedmont and Coastal regions, whereas the Chattahoochee River runs through the Blue Ridge and Piedmont region. In addition to all these waterways, Georgia has a large wetland areas. Wetlands are an important habitat that mix together freshwater, like that from rivers, and ocean water. Head upstairs to Gator Crossing gallery to see an example of apex predators that call the wetlands home!

**What is another major river in Georgia and what region or regions does it pass through? What river passes through Atlanta and what region is Atlanta in? What is an apex predator?**