Creature Locomotion

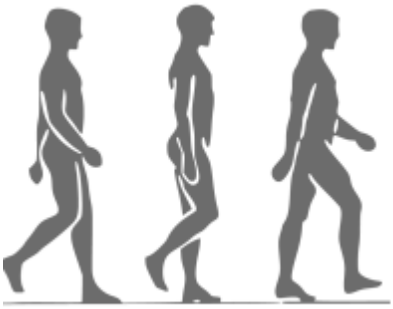
clever ways of moving around

Life on our planet Earth is incredibly diverse. All the creatures may look quite different, but they share on thing in common: they must move in order to find food and avoid being eaten!

We humans have cars, planes, boats and other vehicles to move us safely but creatures have to face a lot of obstacles. For example, A flying pigeon can be blown away easily from its path by strong winds and its journey is filled with many obstacles such as the branches of a trees. Despite these obstacles, creatures on our planet have come up with clever ways of moving around. Let us explore some of these ways!

Walking and Running

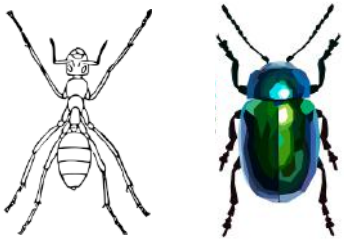
Many creatures, including us, move around by walking and running. Which body part helps you walk? Your legs! We have two legs to help us move around. Many creatures have four legs to help them move around. Insects generally have six legs to help them move around. Some creatures can also have many more legs. For example, Centipedes and millipedes can have hundrends of legs to help them move around.



We humans move around by walking with 2 legs

A millipede has many legs that it uses to move around. A typical millipede has around 70 legs

An elephant moves around using its 4 legs



Insects moves around using its 6 legs

We all know that we can move faster in a car than by walking or running. So you might wonder, why don't some creatures have wheels instead of legs? Well, driving cars is certainly faster on roads which are smooth, but you can't drive around easily in a jungle where there are obstacles. So wheels might be great on our smooth roads created by humans but in the natural environment where creatures live, such as jungles, legs are always better.

Clever Creatures

Water striders are one of the most interesting and enjoyable aquatic creatures to observe. They move around by walking, but not on land, they walk on water!!!

Flying fish can be seen jumping out of warm ocean waters worldwide. Their streamlined torpedo shape helps them gather enough underwater speed to break the surface, and their large, wing-like pectoral fins get them airborne. Flying fish are thought to have evolved this remarkable gliding ability to escape predators.

Flying snakes - In the rainforests of Southeast and South Asia, five types of snake move from tree to tree mostly by flying. Technically, they're not really flying. They flatten out their bodies and parachute or glide from high spots to lower spots. Why would snakes "fly"? Probably because jumping from one tree to another is faster than slithering between them, though these snakes do slither.

Flying

Some creatures take the aerial route and move around by flying. Most birds and some insects move around by flying. Like an airplane, birds have wings that help them fly. But unlike an airplane, the bird's wings are not hard and fixed. They are soft and flexible, and they can fold, unfold, bend and twist which allows them to flap their wings and fly.

Flying squirrels are a tribe of 44 species in the squirrel family. They are sociable, noisy rodents that glide from tree to tree, using a flap of loose skin that connects their front and hind legs. They can glide up to 150 feet (46 m), steering with their tail, and landing on tree trunks, gripping it with all four feet.

Birds fly by flapping their wings

Some insects such as butterflies and dragonflies move around by flying

Swimming

Many creature like fish that live under water move around by swimming. Have you ever been to swimming or watched someone else swim? We humans swim by moving our arms and legs under water while fishes swim by moving their whole body from side to side like a wave. This wave like movement of the entire body of a fish helps the fish swim very fast.

A single raindrop can weigh 50 times as much as a mosquito. So how can the insects fly through a downpour and come out alive? If you extend your palm in a rainstorm, drops strike your palm and then shatter into small pieces. In turn, you feel a force on your hand from the hitting raindrop. However, the mosquito is very light compared to the raindrop. So it does not resist the motion of the raindrop. The raindrop hitting the mosquito is like you trying to punch a balloon. No matter how hard you hit the balloon, you cannot damage it because it is so light.

Many fishes such as Clown fish and Ray fish that live underwater move around by swimming

If you observe a fish closely, you might have noticed that it also has fins. The fins help the fish in moving forward, turning and stopping.

Other clever ways

Apart from walking, running, flying and swimming, some creature have developed other clever ways of moving around that are shown below.

Snake moves around by slithering

A kangaroo moves around by hopping

Inchworm moves around by moon-walking

A gecko moves around by climbing

Penguins can move around by sliding on ice

A jellyfish moves around by jetting

Armadillos move around by rolling