

Name: _____

Banana Slugs

by Guy Belleranti

You're hiking with a group on a forest trail in Washington state. Suddenly, someone says, "Ewww, look at that fat yellow worm. It's got feelers coming out of its head!"

Don't worry, this creature doesn't hurt or eat people. It's a banana slug.

Banana slugs aren't worms. They're part of a large group of animals called mollusks. One of their closest relatives is the snail.

Banana slugs eat leaves, mushrooms, dead plant material, and even animal waste. They perform an important function by cleaning



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Interestingly, banana slugs have both male and female reproductive organs. They can produce and fertilize their own eggs, but more often mate with others. Eggs are laid under logs or in soil and leaves.

Banana slugs have a single muscular foot. On the bottom of this foot is a gland that produces slimy mucus. This slime helps the banana slug travel across the forest floor. The slime also keeps the slug's skin moist. This is important because they breathe partly through their skin and the skin must be moist for this to occur.

In addition, the slime provides protection from many predators. It acts like an anesthetic that can numb a predator's mouth. Many animals don't like the taste of slime, and leave the slugs alone. However, other animals such as garter snakes, salamanders, and waterfowl do eat them. Raccoons sometimes do, too. They roll the slugs in dirt and then—gulp, gulp, gone!

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1. Based on the information in the article, where are you most likely to find a banana slug while out on a hike?
 - a. Acadia National Park, Maine
 - b. Olympic National Park, Washington
 - c. Shenandoah National Park, Virginia
 - d. Bryce Canyon National Park, Utah
2. What factors are responsible for a banana slug's bright yellow color?
Are banana slugs always yellow?



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statements about banana slugs and flowers is correct?

- a. Both banana slugs and flowers are plants.
 - b. Both banana slugs and flowers are mollusks.
 - c. Both banana slugs and flowers have male and female reproductive parts.
 - d. Both banana slugs and flowers have a single muscular foot.
4. Why wouldn't a banana slug be able to survive in an arid climate, such as the Mojave Desert in southeastern California?

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ___ o ___ ___ u s ___ s _____

hint: invertebrates, including snails, slugs, and mussels

2. ___ o i ___ ___ u ___ e _____

hint: dampness; wetness



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5. s a ___ a ___ a ___ ___ e r s _____

hint: amphibians with bright markings and slimy skin

6. ___ a ___ e r ___ o ___ ___ _____

hint: aquatic birds like ducks or geese

7. ___ ___ o t e ___ ___ i o ___ _____

hint: safety from harm

8. ___ u ___ u ___ _____

hint: a slimy substance that helps slugs travel

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In the article, "Banana Slugs," you learned that a banana slug's appearance is affected by its diet and the amount of moisture it gets.



With an adult's permission, use the Internet to research another animal whose appearance is influenced by its diet. Identify whether the animal is a mammal, bird, fish, reptile, or amphibian. Describe what the animal eats and how its food changes how it looks.

Be sure to write the web address of the website you used at the bottom of this page.



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Website I used: _____

ANSWER KEY

Banana Slugs

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1. Based on the information in the article, where are you most likely to find a banana slug while out on a hike? **b**
 - a. Acadia National Park, Maine
 - b. Olympic National Park, Washington**



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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. **m o l l u s k s**

mollusks

hint: invertebrates, including snails, slugs, and mussels

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8. **m u c u s**

mucus

hint: a slimy substance that helps slugs travel

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