

Programme 6 Opportunists



raccoons, raccoon dogs, foxes, pigs, rats and even bears have all found refuge in cities and towns. Their success lies in their unfussy diet – a diet that seems to work for humans too.

Producer – Huw Cordey

Some mammals eat nothing but termites, others just flesh, and one, the giant panda, relies almost exclusively on bamboo. But there is an alternative strategy. Instead of being a specialist you can be a generalist – an omnivore – that can always make the most of whatever seems to be around at the time.

Omnivores need certain talents. A raccoon has extremely sensitive hands, to seek out food both on land and underwater. They need to have a strong sense of smell, like the bizarre-looking babirusa pig, which can easily detect the scent of ripe fruit wafting gently through dense tropical vegetation. They also need to be opportunists – for a few weeks a year, skunks in Texas feast on baby bats that fall to the ground from cave walls. Above all, omnivores need to be adaptable. The raccoon bear hibernates through periods of food scarcity, and grizzly bears can consume a staggering 30,000 calories a day when the salmon are running – that's 10 times more than an adult man.

As humans spread out into their habitats, many specialist mammals are under increasing threat. These animals simply can't adapt quickly enough to change. But omnivores such as

Programme 7 Return To The Water



David Attenborough says: “The oceans are full of food, so it’s hardly surprising that some mammals have gone there to find it.” Off the coast of California, he dons wet suit, flippers and mask to swim with sea otters, and finds that even with all these artificial aids he could never match their natural agility. They can even sleep at sea, anchoring themselves by wrapping strands of kelp around their bodies.

Off Florida, David swims for the first time with manatees – gentle, giant grazing mammals. These bizarre underwater ‘cows’ weigh in at 3,500lbs, are 13 feet long, and steadily grazing on sea grass eat 10 per cent of their body weight in one day.

Along the coast of South Carolina, he watches the unique fishing technique of bottle-nosed dolphins. At low tide, six or seven of them herd

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small fish up on to the bank and ‘net’ them straight into their mouths. This is a daring strategy that involves teamwork, intelligence and forward planning.



Another first for David Attenborough – off California, in a tiny boat, he encounters the biggest mammal of all, a blue whale. He shouts: “I can see its tail just under my boat ... and it’s coming up!” It’s 30 metres long – nothing this big could possibly grow and survive on land, it could only happen in water.”

Producer – Neil Lucas

Programme 8 Life In The Trees



If you don't mind heights, living in trees has huge benefits – plenty of food and escape from the predators lurking on the ground.

Rock hyraxes are not your typical tree-dwellers. They look more like ground-hugging guinea pigs than accomplished climbers but, surprisingly, they are well adapted to walking around the low-level branches of the acacia trees on which they feed. The soles of their feet are moist and rubbery, creating a slight suction which allows the hyraxes to almost stick to the branches.

Having a good grip is a basic requirement for moving around at height – sloths and slender lorises can both grip tightly with all four limbs, but if you need your hands for feeding, like a tamandua, then you need a gripping tail. It can hang on tight while using its front limbs to break into baked hard termite mounds.

A grey squirrel's agility is legendary – their light body, balancing tail and sharp claws allow them to move around the tree tops at astonishing speed. Flying squirrels don't stop there – they can glide as much as 90 metres through the air. In North Queensland, fruit bats roost in the biggest colonies of mammals in the southern

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hemisphere. There are three million people in Sydney but up to 20 million fruit bats in one roost. Taking a clear advantage of this, white-bellied sea eagles nest on the edge of the roost and pluck bats from the air. And crocodiles grab bats that are skimming the lake to drink.

On the island of Madagascar, lemurs have filled every niche, with sifakas leaping 15 metres between branches. But the lemurs don't have the trees all to themselves. Living alongside them is the predatory fossa, a giant mongoose, that can match any lemur for agility.

Producer – Huw Cordey

Programme 9 Social Climbers



Scarlet-faced or blue bottoms, monkeys are the most brilliantly coloured mammals of all. Their colour-vision gives them a huge advantage up in the trees – they can find ripe fruits and leaves. Hanging from a rope high in the canopy of Venezuela, David Attenborough watches red howler monkeys use their sharp eyes to pick only the best leaves, before seeing off their rivals with one of the loudest calls in the wild.

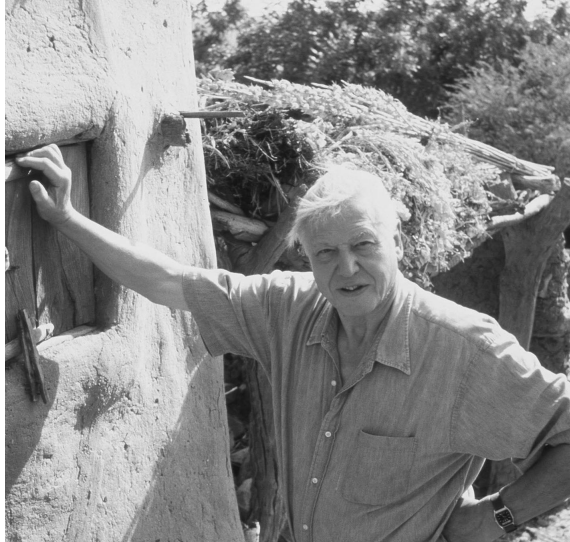
With their acute vision and lively intelligence, capuchin monkeys crack open clams on their favourite tree anvils in the Costa Rican swamps. The swamps are also full of insects, but the monkeys rub themselves with a special plant that acts as a natural insect repellent.

In the dim light of the West Africa forest, beautiful guenon monkeys send messages to each other with colourful face patterns. These forests are full of eagles, leopards and chimps, but the guenons have an extraordinary anti-predator alliance to deal with them. Monkeys often live in large groups and use their social skills to great advantage. Brain triumphs over brawn as toque macaque monkeys battle for mates.

A change in climate forced baboons down from the trees and on to the grasslands. But living on the ground brings more of a risk from predators, so they live in larger groups where social skills became even more important. Living on the ground also opens up new hunting opportunities – the hapless flamingos of Kenya are now on the menu.

Producer – Mark Linfield

Programme 10 Food For Thought



Humans appear to be unique – living in huge cities, walking on two legs and using language. But are humans really as different as they think they are from other mammals?

In the forests of Borneo, David Attenborough meets a remarkable orang-utan that has learnt how to row boats and wash clothes by imitating humans. Food and how apes find it has been key to the evolution of large brains – something that all apes share with humans. David communicates with Koko the gorilla in sign language, and cracks nuts with chimps in the Congo who have learnt this tradition from watching humans. In Gombe, chimps hunt for meat in a very human way.

There are only four men on Earth who can run a kudu antelope to its death. They are Kalahari bushmen, and this ‘persistence hunt’ is thought to link modern humans to the earliest form of human hunting. Humans hunt animals with more techniques than any other mammals and have learnt to shape wild animals to their needs by domesticating them.

From space, you can see how humans have begun to reshape the Earth – from the hand-sculpted rice terraces in China to the vast

irrigated wheat circles in the desert of Arizona. Once a surplus of food could be made and stored, humans could settle. David travels to the remote thatched granaries of the Dogon tribe of Mali, to an ancient mud city and then to the ruins of one of the great capitals of the Mayan civilisation to trace the evolution of human settlement from villages to great cities. The temples of Tikal used to be the highest building in the Americas until the skyscrapers were built. Satellite technology reveals that over-intensive agriculture was probably to blame for the collapse of this ancient city.



Can modern city-dwellers avoid a similar fate? NASA scientists believe that they have come up with a way of genetically modifying plants with jellyfish genes so that they can be remotely grown and monitored on Mars. David Attenborough sets off the latest plant experiments in a shuttle launch. He concludes: “Now we are looking for food not just on our planet but beyond our planet to others. Perhaps the time has now come when we should put that into reverse. Instead of controlling the environment for the benefit of the population, maybe we should control the population to ensure the survival of our environment.”

Producer – Vanessa Berlowitz