

Yuck, You Suck!

Poems about Animals That
SIP, SLURP, SUCK

JANE YOLEN and **HEIDI E.Y. STEMPLER**

Illustrated by **EUGENIA NOBATI**

This one's for the Dodos (and their littles) —H.E.Y.S.

For Team Stemple, Midwest Division —J.Y.

Dedicated to Checo, the funniest and
most loving dad I could have —E.N.

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ANIMALS SUCK FOR A REASON

(OR, RATHER, MANY REASONS)

Sucking is easy. Even babies do it!

The obvious reason animals suck is for food and water. Human babies, like most mammals, suck milk from their mama or a bottle. Some critters only suck water (pigeons), while others get all their nutrition through sucking (butterflies, stingrays, and lampreys).

But there are other reason animals suck—for protection (remora—more on this later . . .) or for propulsion, which means moving from one place to another (jellyfish). And even to take baths (we see you, elephant).

Some animals (vampire bat) have a sucky reputation even though they don't suck at all. Lots of animals seem to suck, but they actually use different types of behaviors and muscles to move food into their stomachs.

And, though animals with suction cups don't actually suck, they suction (which is different). It seemed fitting to put one suction cup sucker (remora) in this book.



OTHER BOOKS TO SINK YOUR PROBOSCIS INTO

Demas, Corinne, Artemis Roehrig, and Ellen Shi. *Do Jellyfish Like Peanut Butter? Amazing Sea Creature Facts*. Apex, NC: Persnickety, 2020.

Sea creatures do amazing things, but it's not what you may think if you just hear their names. In this question-and-answer book, find out what marine animals really do in the ocean.

Grodzicki, Jenna. *I See Sea Food: Sea Creatures That Look Like Food*. Minneapolis: Millbrook Press, 2019.

Take a look at a variety of ocean animals named for food in this photo book, which features egg yolk jellyfish, chocolate chip sea stars, and many others.

Singer, Marilyn. *Who Are You Calling Weird? A Celebration of Weird and Wonderful Animals*. Lake Forest, CA: Words & Pictures, 2018.

Animals are weird, but they are also cool. Find out about some of the weirdest animals in the ocean, land, and air, and how their oddest qualities help them survive in the wild.

Stewart, Melissa. *Pipsqueaks, Slowpokes, and Stinkers: Celebrating Animal Underdogs*. Atlanta: Peachtree, 2018.

We love to talk about the biggest and strongest animals, but what about the smallest and weakest? Find out how what may seem like problems are really strengths to these animal underdogs.

Writer's Loft Authors & Illustrators. *Friends and Anemones: Ocean Poems for Children*. Sherborn, MA: Writer's Loft, 2020. Discover ocean animals—some that suck and others that do weird things like stick eels up their noses—in this fun book of poetry.

ANATOMICAL TERMS FOR PARTS THAT SUCK

BEAK

Most bird beaks don't work as suckers. Doves (including pigeons) are the only birds that evolved beaks that work this way.

BODY

The jellyfish's body (called a bell) does the sucking to move through the water. As the bell collapses, it forms a sucking vortex of water. This creates an area where water rushes in, moving the jelly forward. Complicated? Yes. And also quite simple.

MOUTH

Either on its own or working with a tongue, many suckers use their mouths to do their sucking. Humans and other mammals suck as babies. Stingrays are mouth suckers too. But they suck up everything in their path before chewing it all to bits.

PROBOSCIS

A long tubular structure that can extend as long or longer than the animal's body. The longest insect proboscis is the Morgan's sphinx moth (*Xanthopan*) that sucks from and pollinates orchids. Its proboscis can reach 1 foot (30 cm) long!

SUCTION CUP

Many animals—frogs, lizards, superheroes—use suction cups to stick to things, but of all the suction cup suckers, the remora is the best. Its suction cup is made up of flexible collagen fibers lined up in a leaflike pattern that adhere to a host's nonsmooth, nonflat surface. And it stays stuck even if the host animal swims fast or jumps out of the water. A true sucking superhero!

TRUNK

An elephant's trunk is actually a proboscis! It's a combination tongue, upper lip, and nose—made up of approximately forty thousand muscles (humans have about six hundred in their entire body). It can lift more than 700 pounds (317 kg) and has one or two fingers at the end (depending on what kind of elephant). It only sucks water up part of the way. Then it spits the water into the elephant's mouth—or into the air!



MORE ABOUT THOSE SUCKERS



MOSQUITO

There are thousands of types of mosquitoes (which means “little fly” in Spanish and Portuguese). These tiny annoyances, from the family Culicidae, grow from egg to larva to pupa. Then the females change into buzzy-winged fliers that use their proboscises to pierce their victims’ skin and suck their blood. Even though they only take small amounts, their gross spit causes an itchy bump.



FLEA

Flea is the common name for an insect group that includes twenty-five hundred different species of small flightless bloodsuckers. Fleas don’t live very long (at the most about one hundred days), and much less if no blood-filled host—like a dog or human—is around. What makes them go away? They really dislike eucalyptus, lavender, garlic, and citronella—all of which will make a flea flee.



STINGRAY

These odd-looking fish glide through the ocean like graceful underwater birds and then settle on the ocean floor. Don’t step on them, though—they don’t like it. Also, their tails can be poisonous. Through a small mouth on their belly, they suck in food and shred it into an easily digestible meal with sharklike teeth—which makes sense because they’re related to sharks.



BUTTERFLY

The life cycle of these colorful winged insects is made up of egg, caterpillar (larva), chrysalis (pupa), and butterfly. When butterflies are hungry, they uncurl their proboscises to suck from flowers or rotting fruit. When this doesn’t give them enough salt or minerals, they do what grown-ups tell you not to—they drink from puddles, which contain the right stuff to complete their diet.



REMORA

These fish are unlikely BFFs with sharks. The ocean predators appreciate the cleanup work their friendly hitchhikers do—eating dead skin and small, pesky, less helpful hangers-on like parasites. The remora isn’t stuck by its mouth. Instead, it has a suction cup that evolved from a dorsal fin. This keeps its mouth free to eat those tasty shark leftovers.



JELLYFISH

Jellyfish are not fish. And they don’t have brains or bones. Somehow, they are both smart and strong anyway. Many have stinging cells in their tentacles that sting passersby, or worse—kill. But that’s mostly for small things they want to eat. Jellyfish don’t just float, though. They are master swimmers. Unlike other water creatures, they suck water toward and past them to pull their bodies forward.



PIGEON

These birds have adapted to living in urban (city) environments. While most birds dip their beaks into water, get a drop, and tip their head back to drink, pigeons (and other doves) stick in their strawlike beak and suck. Some people consider pigeons pests, but they are so smart they can recognize themselves in a mirror and understand the alphabet. Still think they are dumb flying rats? Think again!



LAMPREY

These unattractive creatures have survived more than 350 million years without changing much. They are not eels—they are jawless fish with mouths that are always open. Their spiral of teeth and a funnel-like tongue together do the dirty work of sucking and eating pretty much anything in their way. Terrifying? Not always. Some lampreys live their whole lives eating nothing at all. True fact!



MOTH

Like their colorful cousin the butterfly, most moths sip or suck nectar with their big proboscises. However, some moths, such as the erebid moth, feed on tears. If the host (an antbird, for example) isn't producing tears, the moth will scratch its host's eyes until there is a weepy feast. Then the moth sucks up the tears, which is enough to make anyone cry!



HONEYBEE

While male honeybees (drones) hang out, female honeybees use their proboscises to suck nectar from flowers. They store it in their honey sacs (or honey stomachs) before flying back to the hive to feed the other worker bees there. This keeps the hive buzzing. That buzzing, by the way, is not a friendly greeting. It cools the busy hive—and also serves as a warning. Buzz off!



VAMPIRE BAT

Vampire bats have a bad reputation as monstrous bloodsuckers. They are neither. What they are is a subspecies of the leaf-nosed bat—which sounds much cuter. They live mostly in Central and South America. And, like vampires from stories, they do bite with sharp teeth and then lap up (not suck) the blood—mostly from cows, horses, pigs, birds, and the occasional farmer.



ELEPHANT

Elephants (found in Africa and Asia) are the largest living land mammal. They are incredibly smart. Baby elephants are born with short trunks, which they sometimes clumsily trip over. So cute! They learn quickly to use their trunks for sucking up water, making noise, picking up objects (including food), flipping up dust to keep bugs away, and even as snorkels while underwater.



LEECH

These bloodsucking worms have been used by doctors since the Middle Ages (500 to 1500) to try to cure diseases. Gross! While these living, breathing medical devices suck blood out of a patient, they simultaneously release helpful stuff into the patient. Believe it or not, they help prevent things that are actually grosser than leeches—such as blood clots and dead body tissue. How can you tell a leech has sucked your blood? It leaves a small Y-shaped scar. Which probably stands for YUCK, YOU SUCK!

A GLOSSARY OF SCIENCE-Y WORDS THAT DON'T SUCK

AMBER: yellowish tree resin (sticky stuff) that can catch things (like bugs) and preserves them as it hardens, making a fossil. Totally by accident.

AVIAN: like a bird, of a bird, anything, really, having to do with birds

CACHE: a bunch of things you hide away, or the place you hide them

EONS: a really, really, really, really, really long time

EVOLUTION: a super-slow process (think eons) where animals (and humans and birds and bugs and fish) can develop new things (like fins or legs or beaks that sip like a straw) because it's something that makes it easier to live in their habitat

HOST: not the sucker but the suckee—the person or animal that is having blood sucked from them

KERATIN: the stuff that makes hair, nails, horns, feathers, and . . . sometimes scary teeth

LOCOMOTION: moving from here to there

MEDICINAL: used for medicine

MOLLUSK: fancy science word for creatures with soft bodies, no backbone, and usually a shell

NECTAR: sugary plant spit

PACHYDERM: fancy word for elephant

PARASITE: something hanging around (without an invitation) in order to get food

PHYSICS: a subject in school that is about math and science together in a very complicated but very cool way

PRESERVED: to save something, sometimes by accident

PROFESSOR: really smart college teacher

SUPPLEMENTING: adding to what you aren't getting enough of

VORTEX: whirling water or air that pulls things in—stay away!



JANE YOLEN and **HEIDI E.Y. STEMPLER**

are a mother and daughter writing team. On their farm in Massachusetts, they have resident butterflies whom they adore and mosquitoes whom they do not. Thankfully, they have never spotted a shark or vampire bat on the property. They can often be heard arguing about pigeons, which Heidi loves and Jane thinks are flying rats. *They're brilliant! Are not! Are too!*

Jane is the author of more than 400 books including Caldecott winner *Owl Moon* and the *New York Times* best-selling How Do Dinosaurs series.

Heidi is the author of a slightly smaller number of books (39), including *Counting Birds*, *People Shapes*, and *Adrift*.

You may still be able to smell their stinky poems from *Eek, You Reek!* which led, naturally, to *Yuck, You Suck!* This is their 25th book together. And THAT doesn't suck!

EUGENIA NOBATI has drawn for as long as she can remember. She loves to give shape to funny characters—particularly animals that sip, slurp, suck! Eugenia lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with her family.



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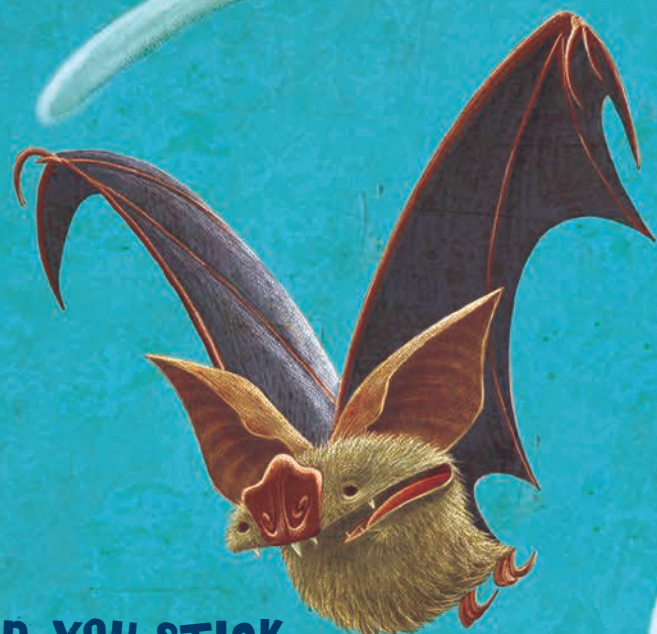
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