

## How are locusts adapted? Fact sheet



“How are locusts adapted ? What do you think?” can be used to stimulate class discussion. The fact sheet is an aid for teachers to guide the discussion.

**When the locust is on its own (called the solitary phase) it is green. This is the colour of the vegetation. Why do you think that the locust is green?**

***Is it because it eats grass? NO***

Although the locust does eat a lot of grass, the exoskeleton is not transparent so you wouldn't be able to see the grass inside the locust's body.

***Is it for camouflage? YES***

The green colouration of the solitary form helps to conceal the locust in the vegetation. *The children could also discuss which other animals use camouflage.*

***Is it to warn off predators? NO***

The green colour of the solitary form doesn't warn off predators. However, the multi-coloured pattern of the gregarious form makes it difficult for predators to identify individuals in the swarm and probably has a warning role. The gregarious locusts sometimes actually eat poisonous plants so that the predators are deterred from eating them.

**The back legs of a locust are bigger than the back legs of many other kinds of insects. Why do you think that the locust's back legs are so big?**

***Are they for hopping? YES***

Insects like grasshoppers and locusts can hop. The last pair of legs are longer and more powerful and the muscles are bigger. A locust can jump up to 50cm, which is ten times its own body length. Ask the class “How far would you be able to jump, if you could jump ten times your height?”

***Are they for defence? YES***

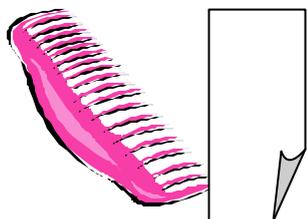
Some of the large grasshoppers and locusts have spines for defence. Some grasshoppers may also shed a leg if an enemy attacks it. Hopping away is still the locust's main way of escape.

***Are they for chirping? YES***

Male locusts also use their back legs to produce sounds to attract a mate. They rub their back legs against their hard front wings. Locusts have a row of spines on their back legs. Locusts do not have ears on their heads, instead they hear through their abdomen. Crickets make sounds in a different way to locusts. They “sing” by rubbing their two front wings together. Their ears are in their legs.

**Ask the class**

*Would the spines on a locust's legs make the sound louder or quieter than if they had smooth back legs? Try scraping a comb against a piece of card. Is it louder when you run the teeth or the smooth back edge of the comb against the card?*



*Can you think of a musical instrument that you use at school that works like this? A guiro (or scraper)!*

