

Small But Mighty: Piranhas' Unique Traits

VOCABULARY WORDS

1. survival (noun) /sər'vaɪ.vəl/ - The state of continuing to live or exist, often despite difficult circumstances.
Example: The piranha's sharp teeth help its survival by allowing it to catch prey.
2. upset (adjective) /ʌp'set/ - To feel angry, worried, or unhappy about something.
Example: Piranhas may make sounds when they are upset.
3. barking (noun) /'bɑː.kɪŋ/ - The sound a dog makes; also used to describe the sound made by some piranhas when picked up.
Example: The red-bellied piranha makes a barking sound when it is handled.
4. thud (noun) /θʌd/ - A low, dull sound often made by something heavy hitting a surface.
Example: Piranhas might make a thud sound when they fight with other fish.
5. clicking (noun) /'klɪk.ɪŋ/ - A short, sharp sound often made by hitting two hard objects together.
Example: Piranhas make a clicking noise by hitting their teeth together.
6. prey (noun) /preɪ/ - An animal that is hunted and eaten by another animal.
Example: Piranhas catch their prey quickly with their sharp teeth.
7. fascinating (adjective) /'fæs.ə.neɪ.tɪŋ/ - Extremely interesting or captivating.
Example: Piranhas have many fascinating traits that make them unique.



"They are the most dangerous fish in the world," US President Theodore Roosevelt wrote in 1913 after a trip to Paraguay. He described a fish found in South America that could bite and eat you in pieces. This fish is much smaller than a shark but, according to Roosevelt, much scarier. He was talking about the piranha, which means "tooth fish" in the Tupí language of Brazil. However, piranha attacks on humans are rare, and some piranhas don't even eat meat!

Piranhas have about 20 sharp teeth, and their bite is quick and strong. They can regrow teeth that fall out. Unlike other animals, piranhas lose all the teeth on one side of their mouth at once, and new ones grow in their place right away. This ability helps them continue to hunt and eat. Their teeth are a key part of their **survival**.

Piranhas cannot talk like humans, but they make different sounds when they are **upset**. Scientists discovered that the red-bellied piranha makes a **barking** sound when it is picked up. When fighting other fish, piranhas may make a low **thud** sound or even hit their teeth together to create a **clicking** noise. These sounds help them communicate with each other.

Piranhas often move in groups called schools to stay safe. They stick together to protect each other from larger predators. Usually, older piranhas stay in the middle while younger, stronger fish stay on the outside. This arrangement helps keep the group safe as they swim through the water.

Although piranhas can be dangerous, they mostly use their speed and strength to catch smaller **prey**. Their group behavior and unique communication methods help them survive in their environment. Overall, piranhas are **fascinating** creatures with many interesting traits.

DISCUSSION

1. If you were to create a new sport inspired by piranhas, what would it look like? What rules would you have?
2. Imagine you could talk to a piranha. What would you ask them about their life in the water?
3. What kind of piranha-themed superhero would you create? What powers would they have?
4. If piranhas had a school where they learned about other fish, what subjects do you think they would study?
5. Create a story about a piranha that travels the world. Where would it go, and what adventures would it have?
6. If you could invite a piranha to a dinner party, what questions would you ask it? How would you introduce it to your friends?
7. If you had a piranha as a pet, what kind of games or activities would you do together? How would you make sure it is happy and healthy?