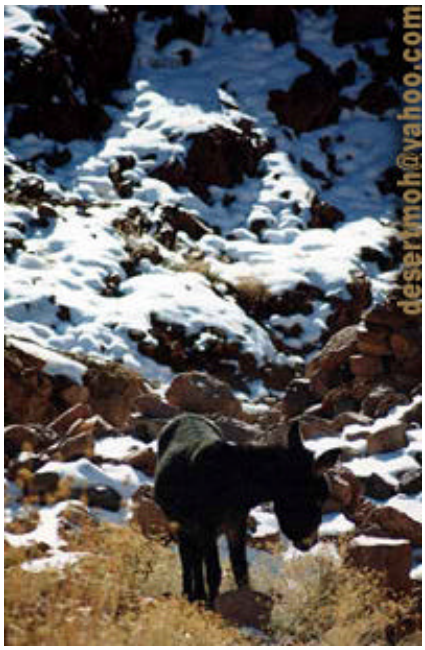
Habitat



Imagine your *home* where you were brought up! It has running water, has a range of temperature that is not too high (+50 ?) or too low (-10??), has certain privacy behind walls that won't show what you're doing, has toilet and waste disposal ways. Now imagine you move to another country and we lost you. Then we go looking for you there and it just happened that the entire country is mostly nomadic people. How would we find you? The smartest way is to describe your *home* as above and ask people where can we find such places in this country. This would narrow down the search to few places and make our job very much easier. This might be a ridiculous example but rather than *a home*, scientists call it your "habitat" and they apply it for all living creatures who have very different preferences and scale of the places they like to live in. For example, have you seen an elephant who likes to live in the desert or a camel climbing a rocky mountain?

Now imagine you wish to look for a gazelle, desert ostriches, ibex, a Sahara Jerboas or butterflies? Do you know how their habitat looks like? You can if you know the food type they like, range (in kilometers) away from the water they can't leave, form of places they like to sleep in, and maybe what they do when seasons change. If you know that, then you might know how their habitat looks like.

Have you ever thought how Bedouins find their camels when they miss them? They just know the camels habitat. Camels are no rock climbers (unlike Ibex who lives nowhere but rocky slopes) so they must be walking in flat wadi beds. Camels also like certain food like *Acacia* leaves (big beautiful desert trees with thorns that Arabs call *Sayyala*) or *Zilla* shrubs (shrubs are any small trees less than 50 cm in height) so they won't go in places where they don't grow. Any living being needs water even camels. If there are very few wells that the Bedouin knows and if the speed of a camel cannot exceed half kilometer per day (no need to hurry when they eat) then

after a week they can only be within a circle of 3.5 kilometers around the water well. Not only this but they will be only in the side that has the zilla shrubs they like to eat within this circle! Smart? Yes. That's how the knowledge of a **habitat** works.

Now how is HABITAT defined scientifically? Below is a definition but it let me explain few terms before you go there (too simplified, please check for complete meaning elsewhere). *Organism* means an animal or a person, and *community* means group of different animals that lives depending on each other. Now here's the definition:

1. The area or environment where an organism or ecological community normally lives or occurs: *a marine habitat.* **2.** The place where a person or thing is most likely to be found. **3.** A structure that affords a controlled environment for living in extremely inhospitable locations, such as an underwater research laboratory.
http://www.bartleby.com/61/27/H0002700.html

But habitats vary in scale. For nomads, it's as big as an entire 10 kilometer valley and its surrounding mountains. For an ibex it could be one mountain. For a microbe, it could be one human (microbes when livings on other living beings are called *parasites*). A ***Microhabitat*** is a very small, specialized habitat, such as a clump (7ezmah) of grass or a space between rocks.

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DSICLAIMER: this is not the proper academic definition, just my interpretation to my friends and Safarists of SaharaSafaris. Please email me any corrections or comments.