

Commensalism

In some symbiotic relationships, one partner benefits, but the other is neither harmed nor helped. This is called commensalism. For example, hermit crabs use empty snail shells for shelter.

Another example is when one organism attaches itself to another for transportation. Some seeds have hooked spines. These spines stick to the fur of a passing animal. The animal carries them to a new place where the seeds can then grow.

Mimicry is another type of commensalism. This happens when one organism looks like another. For example, over time the Viceroy butterfly came to look like a Monarch butterfly. Why? Predators don't like the taste of the Monarchs. Because the Viceroy looks so much like a Monarch, predators don't eat them, either.



ACTIVE READER

1 Identify Underline the sentence that defines commensalism.

2 Recall Who benefits from a commensal relationship?

_____ only one organism

_____ both organisms

The Monarch, in the picture at the left, is slightly larger than the Viceroy, shown at the right.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Explain the difference between mutualism and commensalism.

2. Why is the relationship between the Monarch and the Viceroy butterflies a commensal relationship?
