

Name _____

Do Aardvarks Form Relationships with Other Species?



Aardvarks are solitary animals that mostly keep to themselves, but they do have interesting relationships with other species in their ecosystem. These relationships can be categorized into mutualism, parasitism, and commensalism.

Mutualism occurs when both species benefit from the relationship. Though aardvarks do not have many mutual relationships, their burrows often become homes for other animals. Creatures like snakes, insects, and small mammals use abandoned aardvark burrows for shelter. This benefits the animals seeking safety, while the aardvark gains nothing but also is not harmed.

Parasitism is when one species benefits while the other is harmed. Aardvarks can suffer from parasites such as ticks and fleas, which feed on their blood. These parasites harm the aardvark by causing irritation and possible infections while benefiting by getting nourishment.

Commensalism occurs when one species benefits and the other is neither helped nor harmed. Birds such as oxpeckers may follow aardvarks to eat insects stirred up while they dig. The birds benefit from an easy meal, while the aardvark remains unaffected.

Overall, while aardvarks are mostly independent, they play an important role in their ecosystem by creating shelters for other animals and indirectly helping insect-eating birds find food.