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Why does a zebra have stripes? 斑马为何有斑纹?

科学家们称他们已经揭开了斑马身上为何有黑白条斑纹的秘密。这篇刊登在《自然生物学期刊上》的文章说斑纹有掩护作用，因为昆虫不喜欢斑纹。

There have been many theories to explain the zebra's **unmistakable stripes**. Scientists have suggested that each zebra has a unique pattern that lets other animals recognise it. Or that the mass of black and white in a vast herd provides confusing **camouflage** that puts off **predators**.

But this team set out to test exactly what effect the stripes had on a zebra's most **irritating and ubiquitous enemy** - the **blood-sucking horsefly**.

As part of their experiment the team put sticky horse models - one white, one black and one zebra-striped - into a **fly-infested field**. When they collected the flies that had landed and stuck to each of the models, they found that the model zebra attracted by far the fewest flies.

The researchers think that zebras had a **black-coated ancestor**, which **evolved** its white stripes in an evolutionary arms race, with an insect that's become the biting, disease-carrying **scourge** of most horse herds.

Victoria Gill, BBC News

Questions

1. True or false? *There have been different explanations about why zebras have stripes.*
2. What is the main enemy of zebras mentioned in the report?
3. How different do modern day zebras look from their ancestors?
4. The latest scientific research shows that stripes give zebras an advantage over their non-striped ancestors. What is it?

Answers

1. True or false? *There have been different explanations about why zebras have stripes.*
True.
2. What is the main enemy of zebras mentioned in the report?
The horsefly.
3. How different do modern-day zebras look from their ancestors?
They have black and white stripes whereas their ancestors may have looked pure black.
4. The latest scientific research shows that stripes give zebras an advantage over their non-striped ancestors. What is it?
The striped pattern makes the zebras much less attractive to insects.

GLOSSARY

unmistakable	准确无误的
camouflage	掩体/伪装
predators	食肉动物
irritating	令人烦恼的
ubiquitous	无处不在的
horsefly	马蝇
fly-infested	充满苍蝇的
ancestor	祖先
evolved	进化
scourge	天灾/瘟疫