



The Blind Cavefish • Study Guide

Deep underground, in submerged caves, there is no light. Because there is no light, there is almost nothing for animals to eat. Yet life survives here. The top predator in these sunless ecosystems is a tiny blind cavefish, only a few inches long. These fish are extremely rare, only found in the dark recesses of caves. Jonathan joins Christine Loew, a veteran cave explorer, on a mission to film this elusive fish in Mexico's Riviera Maya.

Objectives

1. Introduces viewers to life in cave systems.
2. Demonstrates how submerged caves are explored.

Questions for before watching the program

1. What is the base of the food web in the ocean? What powers this life?
2. Are there places where life can live in the absence of sunlight? Can you think of an example?
3. How do stalactites form? Can they form underwater?
4. Why would a cave fill with water after being dry? (Think long-term, over thousands or tens of thousands of years).

Discussion for after watching the program

1. Where is the Yucatan peninsula? Can you find it on a map? (*Internet research: why are there so many caves there?*)
2. Why would an animal such as a fish that lives in a cave have no eyes? Why would it still need some way to sense light?
3. Why do fish from outside the cave pose a threat to the blind cavefish?
4. Why is buoyancy control and careful kicking required when navigating inside a cave?
5. *Internet research:* What do blind cavefish eat?
6. Why does the blind cavefish need to stay in the dark for safety?