

ISLAND GIANTS

ACTIVITY 4

The Galapagos Islands were named for the giant tortoises that have lived there for nearly 2 million years. These massive reptiles have shells up to 5 feet long and can weigh 500 pounds!

There are many subspecies of the Galapagos Tortoise, each one adapted to the habitat found on a specific island. But as you saw in the film *Galapagos: Nature's Wonderland*, scientists have identified two main types of Galapagos Tortoise, shown in the pictures at right. The *domed*



tortoise has a shell shaped like the dome of a building. The *saddleback* tortoise has a shell shaped like a horse's saddle.

What other differences do you notice between these two types of Galapagos Tortoise? Sharpen your observation skills by looking closely at the pictures at left. Use the chart to record your observations. Start by

using the terms in the "Characteristics List" to describe each type's shell, neck, and legs. Then describe other differences that you notice.

Domed Tortoise	Saddleback Tortoise
Shell:	Shell:
Neck:	Neck:
Legs:	Legs:
Other Characteristics:	Other Characteristics:

CHARACTERISTICS LIST:

long short rounded narrowed high neck opening low neck opening

You probably remember from the film that one type of Galapagos Tortoise is usually found in a dry habitat where the vegetation is mostly tall cactus plants, while the other is usually found in a moist habitat where thick vegetation covers the ground. Use your observations to explain how each type is adapted to its special habitat.

Domed Tortoise	Saddleback Tortoise
Habitat:	Habitat:
Adaptations:	Adaptations:

Now, in a class discussion, debate which type of tortoise is better adapted to live in the other's habitat. Could a domed tortoise survive in the saddleback's habitat? What would happen to a saddleback living in domed-tortoise territory?