Territoriality Encyclopedia Article

Territoriality

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Territoriality

The attempt by an individual organism or group of organisms to control a specified area. The area or territory, once controlled, is usually bound by some kind of marker (such as a scent or a fence). Control of territory usually means defense of that territory, primarily against other members of the same **species**. This defense, which may or may not be aggressive, typically involves threats, displays of superior features (e.g., size or color), or displays of fighting equipment (e.g., teeth, claws, antlers). Actual physical combat is relatively rare. A songbird establishes its territory by vigorous singing and will chase intruders away during the mating and nesting season. A leopard (*Panthera pardus*) marks the boundaries of its territory with urine and will defend this area from other leopards of the same sex. Territoriality is found in many organisms, probably including humans, and it serves several purposes. It may provide a good nesting or breeding site and a sufficient feeding or **hunting** area to support offspring. It may also protect a female from males other than her mate during the mating season.