

The Yippittee!

for kids who are crazy about conservation!

Issue 8 October 2011



Creatures of the night

Greetings and welcome to another edition of the Yippittee! This time its all about things that go bump in the night. Ha, but don't worry, its nothing scary, just us animals that you don't see because you're sound asleep when we're busy looking for our food.

We're **nocturnal**. So read on to find out more about these secretive and shy creatures and their special features which help them to be active in the dark without a torch! However, they do leave behind some tell tale signs so you never know, you may discover some of them are visiting your local park or even your garden – apart from the ones that live in the desert or the rainforest!



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Of course you don't just want to know about them do you? There are many different ways you can help to look after these creatures as well. Finally I hope you have lots of fun doing the puzzles here too! You could test some grown ups with the quiz and see if they are as wise as me!
Twit twoo!!

Nocturnal Factfile:

Badger

Scientific name - meles meles.



Also known as: Brocc - the old English word for badger!

Habitat: woodland.

They live in a **sett** - underground tunnels leading to chambers where they can sleep and have their young. One or two families may live in a sett together. A large sett can have up to 40 entrances!

Diet: Omnivorous - their favourite foods are earthworms but they also eat beetles, tree roots, berries, even hedgehogs!

Life span: 15 years.

What else? A female is called a **sow** and a male is a **boar**. A group of badgers is called a **clan**! They make shallow pits away from the sett where they go to the toilet.

Signs:

The entrance holes to their sett. Scratch marks on the trees near to the sett where they sharpen their claws and cleaning the mud off their paws!

A pile of straw, bracken and dry leaves which they bring out to air and often change like you might change your bed sheets!

Well trodden pathways.

Nocturnal Factfile:

Red Fox

Scientific name - vulpes vulpes.

Habitat:

woodland, parks, gardens, under hedgerows.

They live in a **den** or **earth**

underground. Sometimes they will make an old rabbit hole bigger and move in there. At times they will just sleep in a sheltered place outside.

Diet: rabbits, birds, mice, earthworms, beetles.

Life span: 2-3 years.

What else? A female is called a vixen and a male is called a dog.

It moves around in an area called its **territory** where it knows all the good places to find food and where it can hide. They mark their territory by spraying their urine to warn off other foxes.

They have good eyesight, hearing and sense of smell.

Signs: Their black droppings are twisted in shape and some mornings you can smell a fox's scent in the air!



Nocturnal factfile:

Hazel Dormouse

Scientific name - muscardinus avellanarius.

Also known as: Common Dormouse.

Habitat: among trees, bushes, hedges. Usually nests in thorny bushes.

Diet: berries, nuts, flowers, insects.

Life span: 4-6 years.

What else? They hibernate over the winter for 6 months! Nests lower down among tree roots or underneath a hedge.

Signs: You may see the empty shell of a hazelnut or tell-tale teeth marks.



Nocturnal factfile:

Tawny Owl



Scientific name - *Strix aluco*.

Habitat: woodland.

Diet: wood mice, other small mammals, birds, frogs, worms, beetles.

Life span: 18 years!

Adaptations: the wings have very soft downy feathers at the edges of their flight feathers so that they can silently swoop down on their prey. Their eyes are really big and let in lots of light. In fact they are so big that they can't move them from side to side, which is why they can swivel their heads around 270 degrees instead! The big rings of feathers on their faces around their eyes help to channel sounds to their ears.

Signs: You may see in the ground regurgitated pellets which contain all the bits the owl couldn't digest like fur and bones. They cough them up and spit them out!

Did you know....?

When they are frightened woodmice have a strange habit of washing and grooming themselves!



Field Vole

Barn Owls

Barn owls live in more open areas and their favourite food is field voles. They often hunt by road sides as there aren't so many meadows about where they live, but sadly they sometimes get hit by cars.

Nocturnal Factfile:

Wood Mouse

Scientific name - *Apodemus sylvaticus*.

Also known

as: Long-tailed Field Mouse.



Habitat:

woodland but can be found in many places including mountainside, sand dunes and gardens.

Diet: seedlings, fruit, nuts, insects.

Life span: 1 year.

What else: they may be small but the male can forage, that means look for food over an area the size of half a football pitch and travel up to 1/4 mile in a night!

Adaptations: Good sense of smell to find food. Their brown hair makes them camouflage and they have really big ears and eyes to detect predators. Big back feet help it to leap to safety.



Barn Owl

Smells Like Trouble!!

Animals don't have torches so when its dark animals rely on their senses even more to find their way around and to find food to eat!

Can you guess what the five senses are?



S m _ _ _



_ e a _ _ n g



T _ _ s _ _ _

_ _ _ c h

S _ _ g h _ _



Night Vision

Many nocturnal creatures have more eye rods than daytime ones. These are the

parts of the eye that let light in. With more rods they can let more light in and see more in the dark.

People on the other hand just have to eat more carrots!



Nocturnal - really?

"Nocturnal" means a creature is active during the night.

The opposite of this is "diurnal" - this means that creatures are active during the day, like most human beings! However, it can be more confusing than that.

Some creatures are active 24 hours, day and night,

just having naps in between their

activities, like the shrew which has to

eat every 3 hours or else it will starve to death!!

Then there are the creatures which are most active at dawn when

the sun is rising and dusk when the sun sets. They are

called "crepuscular".



Some animals are nocturnal because its easier to hide that way from predators - the creatures that want to eat them! In fact some mice don't come out on moonlit nights because they know its more likely they'll get caught!

Can you match these predators with their favourite prey?

bat
barn owl
tawny owl
hedgehog
badger
red fox
fennec fox

snails

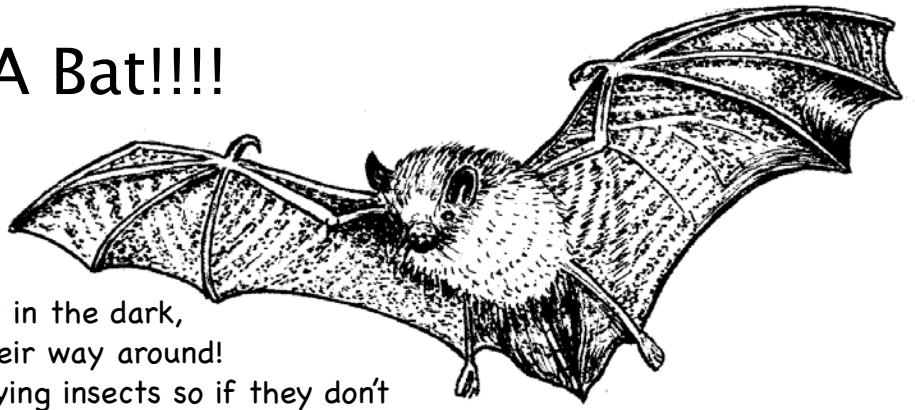
slugs &

jerboas
earthworms
field voles
rabbits
moths
wood mice



As Blind As A Bat!!!!

This saying isn't actually true, bats aren't really blind, but their eyesight isn't that great either, so rather than using their eyes to hunt in the dark, bats have another way of finding their way around! They love to eat moths and other flying insects so if they don't look for their prey, how do they find it? Well, they can hear it, but not quite in the way that we might hear something - let me explain....



Natterer's bat

Its called **echolocation** - or locating (finding) their food by using an echo. An echo is when a sound bounces off something like a wall and then comes back to you which is why you can hear the sound again. I suppose its a bit like a tennis ball bouncing off a wall or like water hitting a rock or the edge of a pool and bouncing off it - it goes back in the direction it came.

Bats make a very high pitched noise which humans can't even hear. The sound travels though the air in waves, the same as ripples travel through water. When the sound hits something it bounces off and returns to the bat.

As soon as a bat's squeak reaches a moth and bounces back, the bat hears the echo and goes to where the sound came from to catches the moth! Dolphins also use this hunting method to catch fish. Clever, eh?!!

Did you know....?

The idea of using radar on aeroplanes and sonar on ships is not new - some animals have been using echo-location for much longer!

Did you know....?

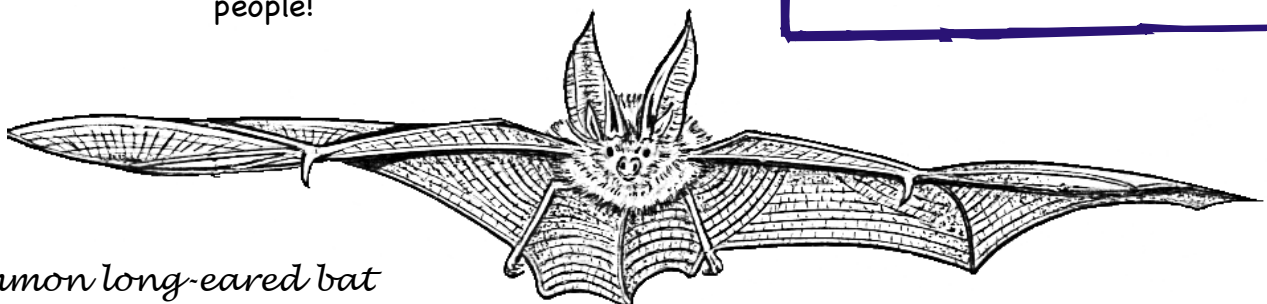
Bats are the only mammals in the world capable of powered flight. Others such as the flying fox really only glide.

Bats are mammals - that means, unlike birds they don't lay eggs but give birth to living babies and feed them milk. However birds and bats are both warm blooded which means that they can control their own body temperatures.

Many people are scared of bats, mainly because they are associated with spooky things like halloween and Dracula. Actually bats are harmless and really quite cute, except perhaps for vampire bats, which live in Central and South America and drink the blood of farm animals and occasionally even people!

Did you know....?

Did you know that there are 18 species of bat in the UK but they are all protected by law because there are less of them than before.



Common long-eared bat

The Mighty Moth!

Have you ever wondered why if you leave a window open at night, the moths will be attracted to the light? It is because they look for the light from the moon and the stars to navigate and find their way around. They use their sense of smell to find food, usually nectar from flowers and to find other moths.



At first glance a moths might seem a little bit boring compared to colourful butterflies! But take a closer look at the shape of their wings and the patterns on them which make them camouflaged against tree bark. Their hairy bodies keep them nice and warm at night.

The Earth Thrower!

The word "mole" comes from the old English "moldewarp" which means "earththrower"!

Not surprising when you see the piles of earth moles throw out when they are making their tunnels. They have massive front feet like spades with really big claws used for digging.



Moles can be active during the day as well as at night, but mainly come out above ground in the night looking for food, nesting material or a new place to live if they are leaving home for the first time. Even though it is dark, they risk their lives, often becoming dinner for hungry owls!

Did you know....?

If moles want to change direction, they can do a forward roly polly to turn around! They can also run backwards - their fur will lie in either direction so it doesn't hold them up by brushing against the walls of the tunnel.

Did you know....?

In the 1950s up to a million moles were trapped every year! Many farmers and gardeners thought they were pests and their fur could be used to make clothes.

Seven Prickly Hedgehog Facts!

1. An adult can have 5,000 spines!
2. They can travel about 3 miles in a night
3. They are really good swimmers!
4. They are born naked but soon sprout tiny bristles.
5. They love eating slugs and snails and rely mainly on their sense of smell to find their food.
6. Their predators include foxes and badgers but often get killed crossing busy roads.
7. They hibernate over the winter - for more information see our "Autumn" edition of Yippittee!



Desert Drama!



Many desert creatures are nocturnal

because it's simply too hot for the creatures to come out during the day. The Fennec Fox has massive ears which it can use to detect its prey such as scorpions, beetles, lizards, snakes and of course, jerboas which it has to hunt at night. These rodents are like mini kangaroos which bounce across the desert. Each



bounce takes them about 10-13cm, but when they are being chased they can jump up to 3 metres and go in a zig zag pattern to confuse their hunter!

Did you know....?

A fennec fox's ears measure 15 cm long!



Did you know....?

A jerboa's hind legs are about 4 times longer than its arms!

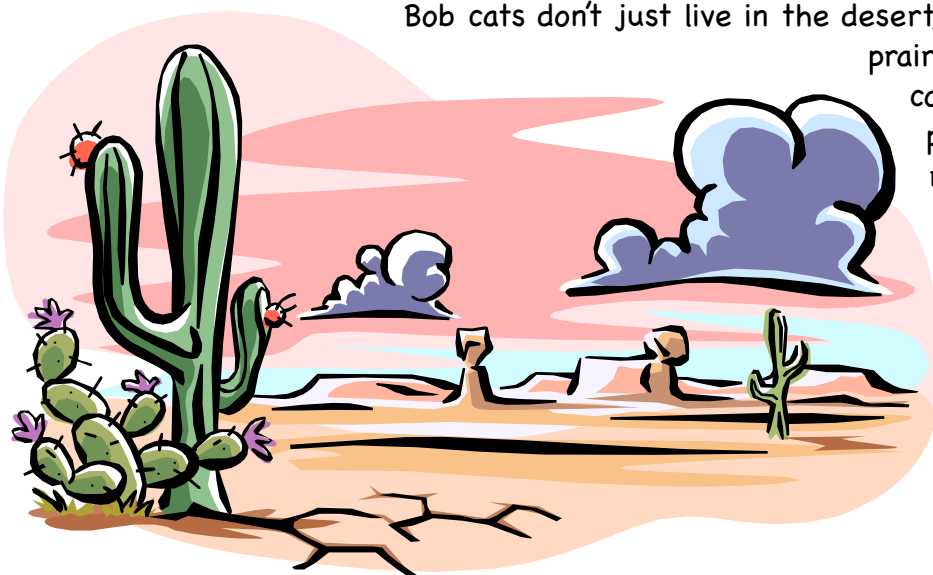
The bobcat is a nocturnal hunter but is also crepuscular - active at dawn and dusk. However, they will change their behaviour and hunt in the day as well if they're short of

food, especially during the winter. Otherwise they rest in a cave or rocky crevice.

Did you know....?

Bobcats are named after their "bobbed" or stumpy tails!

Bobcats don't just live in the desert, they can be found on mountain prairies and swamps too but they need cover so that they can creep up and pounce on their prey - prey like rabbits and hares, squirrels, mice, birds, even deer - despite the fact they're only about twice the size of a pet cat.



Did you know....?

A bobcat can travel over 25 miles during a night time hunting trip!



In The Jungle!

The **rainforest** is a haven of activity both day and night. Here are some of those night time creatures:

Emerald Tree Boa

A boa is a kind of snake which kills its prey by squeezing it to death! First it grabs its prey using its teeth and then coils its body around.

They have special jaws which they can **unhinge** -

they are only attached by stretchy ligaments, a bit like *rubber bands* which means they can open their mouths really wide to swallow their prey whole!! They don't chew - instead the acids in their stomachs digest the food.

During the day, Emerald Tree Boas **COIL** themselves up on a branch with their head sticking out through the middle of the coil, but at night their head hangs down through the branches ready to strike at unsuspecting passers-by! Heat sensors in their lips help them to detect warm blooded prey but once they've eaten they may not need another meal for about 2 months!

Sloth

These lazy creatures sleep for about 15-18 hours everyday!!

Their fur is **camouflaged** which is a good job, because they wouldn't be able to move very fast to escape from **predators** like the jaguar. In fact because they hardly move at all, a kind of green **algae** grows on their fur!



They love to spend their time hanging upside down so much so that their insides are in different places! Also their hair grows the opposite way to most animals' so that the rain will run off easily! Sloths can spend years up the same tree and don't even have to come down for drink because they get their water from the juicy leaves and morning dew!

Aye Aye

This is a kind of nocturnal lemur that lives only on the island of **Madagascar**, Africa. They cleverly find insect grubs to eat by tapping trees to find any hollow parts. If there are then they listen very carefully to see if they can hear any grubs moving about inside. They can use their sharp teeth to break through the bark and their long middle finger to scoop them out.

They also eat nuts, seeds and fruit. They are **endangered** because of hunting and destruction of their habitat.

Bush Baby

If you find yourself in the African jungle and you think you can hear a baby crying, it may just be a bush baby! These nocturnal creatures are



also called "*nagapie*" in South Africa which means "little night monkeys"! They're arboreal which means they live in the trees and have big eyes and ears to use to find the insects they eat.

Little Helpers!!

Bats like to eat moths so, plant **flowers** which moths like, those that release their scent at night and that will attract bats.

For example...

honeysuckle,
buddleia,
evening primrose,
verbena,
night scented stock and
jasmine.

They'll also attract butterflies and bees!

Build an **owl box** and put it up a tree or in your local woods. There's instructions on how to do it on <http://www.lincstrust.org.uk/factsheets/nestbox/tawnyowl.php> and more advice on http://www.bbc.co.uk/breathingplaces/owl_box/

Join a "Watch" group - these are run by the Wildlife Trust. Find one near you - www.wildlifewatch.org.uk

Be a "Nature Detective" - have a look at the Woodland Trust's Website www.naturedetectives.org.uk

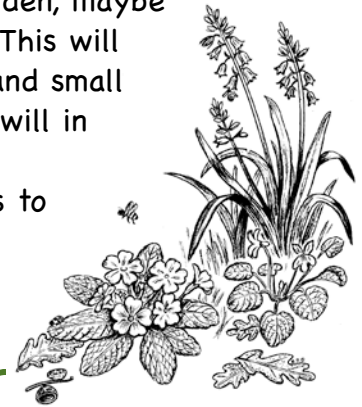
For more information about animals and environmental issues, don't forget to look at the factsheets on our very own website!! www.ypte.org.uk

Put up some **bat boxes**. Many bats are becoming rare because they can't find anywhere to live.

Warning - don't put bat boxes too near your house - if they enter your roof it is illegal to get rid of them and they may cause damage, or at least a mess! There's a factsheet on making one at: <http://www.lincstrust.org.uk/factsheets/batbox/index.php> or you could try <http://www.derby.gov.uk/Environment/WildDerby/035Floydsbirdandbatbox.htm>



Have an overgrown **wildlife area** in your garden, maybe with a log pile. This will attract insects and small mammals which will in turn attract the bigger predators to your garden.



Get your school to **raise money** to sponsor an area of rainforest or an endangered animal that lives there. www.rainforestconcern.org

Go on a **badger watch** or if you think they already visit your garden just put food out for them - they love peanuts. Hedgehogs will eat bread and milk but its not good for them. Try cat food and water instead! Don't use slug pellets because if you do have hedgehogs, they too will become ill if they eat the poisoned slugs!



Nocturnal Wordsearch

Can you find the words hidden in the grid?

v	s	i	g	h	t	d	l	s
d	m	h	r	s	k	h	e	a
u	e	s	i	r	h	t	e	d
j	l	n	a	c	t	o	l	a
e	l	d	u	d	a	l	a	p
r	g	o	c	l	e	s	n	t
b	t	r	c	h	w	f	r	e
o	z	m	d	a	b	o	u	d
a	j	o	h	b	t	x	t	i
h	f	u	w	a	f	i	c	u
o	n	s	d	d	k	l	o	r
t	a	e	x	g	c	y	n	n
r	r	s	n	e	e	i	s	a
p	h	c	n	r	g	c	j	l
e	b	a	p	h	d	y	h	s
d	t	p	t	e	y	t	e	o
i	c	e	r	a	r	p	a	s
h	a	b	i	t	a	t	r	b
h	d	e	s	e	r	t	e	d

adapted

badger

bat

dark

den

desert

diurnal

dormouse

echo

escape

fox

habitat

hear

hide

hunt

jerboa

location

night

nocturnal

owl

predator

prey

rare

sett

sight

sloth

smell

touch

Crazy About Conservation!

We'd love to show some of your letters, jokes, poems, stories or pictures so if you have any then please write to us or e-mail them. We'd also love to hear your ideas for future editions of Yippittee – please, let us know!!

Crazy about Conservation! YPTE, Suite 29, Yeovil Innovation Centre, Barracks Close, Copse Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA22 8RN or e-mail it to us at... info@ypte.org.uk

You're joking!

Why don't bats live alone?

They prefer to hang out with their friends!

How does a hedgehog play leap-frog?

Very carefully!

What's grey with a trunk?

A mouse going on holiday!

What's the biggest moth in the world?

A mammoth!



Nocturnal Quiz!

1. What do bats use to find their prey?
2. Which creature spends 3/4 of its life asleep?
3. Which small animal can travel nearly 3 miles in a night?
4. How does a boa snake kill its prey?
5. What's a tawny owl's favourite food?
6. Why are many desert animals nocturnal?
7. Which creature lives in a sett?
8. What does "diurnal" mean?
9. Which animal was also known as the "earth-thrower"?
10. What does an omnivore eat?



Long-eared owl

Answers

1. Echolocation 2. Dormouse 3. Hedgehog 4. Squeezes it to death 5. Woodlice 6. Its too hot in the day 7. Badger 8. Active during the day 9. Mole 10. Plants and animals