

British Mammals

There are over 100 kinds of mammal found in and around Britain. All of these creatures:

- are **warm-blooded**;
- feed their babies using their own milk;
- have some hair or fur;
- breathe air into their lungs.

Although all of our mammals share these same features, some of them do stand out from the crowd. Let's look at some of the British champions of the mammal world!

The Award for the Best Swimmer Goes to...the Water Vole!

Water voles are found close to ponds and canals in many areas of the UK. Although they don't have webbed feet and also have thick fur that quickly becomes heavy in water, they are actually very good at swimming. Many people often think they have seen a rat instead of a water vole but they are actually quite easy to tell apart:

- voles have a rounded nose, not a pointed one;
- voles have small, hidden ears;
- voles have short, furry tails.

Water voles eat 80% of their body weight in plants and grasses every single day – it's a wonder that they don't sink!



The Award for the Best Builder Goes to...the Badger!



known British mammals. They have chunky bodies, white and black striped heads, powerful legs and long, sharp claws. Their name is from the French word 'bêcheur', which means 'digger'. Up to fourteen badgers at a time work together to dig **setts** with lots of different 'rooms' called chambers. They can sometimes have up to 80 entrance holes! To make them cosy and warm in the winter and when they have new cubs, badgers cover the floors of the chambers with dry leaves and grass. Scientists have found setts that are more than 100 years old.



The Award for the Best Snoozer Goes to...the Dormouse!

Dormice are **nocturnal** mammals that deserve a medal for their fantastic sleeping skills! Their name also comes from a French word 'dormir', which means 'to sleep'. The tiny, honey-coloured creatures, who are usually only around 8cm in length and 15g in weight, **hibernate** for around six or seven months each year. They sleep in nests that they build on thick ground, under leaves or in the bottom of trees. Even in the spring and summer months, dormice still sometimes enter into short sleeps called 'torpors' if they can't find food or are feeling too cold or wet. Because they spend a lot of time asleep, it is very unusual for people to spot dormice in the wild.



"Dormouse" by Zoë Helene Kindermann

The Award for the Best Flyer Goes to...the Bat!

There are seventeen kinds of British bat that you may see shooting through the night sky in the UK. They make up a quarter of all of the mammals found in the country. Bats are unusual mammals because they are the only ones that can fly. They have



light, **streamlined** bodies perfect for flying and they use their wings to swoop, hover and move in all directions. As they fly, bats feed on insects. Some of the most common species of British bat are called pipistrelles, long-eared bats, noctule bats and Daubenton's bats. If you'd like to see a bat in the wild, try walking around fields and hedgerows just after sunset during the spring and summer months.

A Batty Bat Fact

You may have heard the saying 'as blind as a bat' and thought that bats had terrible eyesight but that isn't true! Bats can see clearly but they prefer to use their other senses (especially their hearing) to fly in the dark and to help them to find prey.



Glossary

- hibernate:** To enter a deep sleep during cold weather for a long period of time.
- nocturnal:** Animals that are mostly active at night.
- sett:** The burrowed home of a badger.
- streamlined:** Designed to move through air or water quickly.
- warm-blooded:** Animals that can maintain a constant body temperature regardless of the temperature of their surroundings.



Questions

1. Tick all of the statements that are true about all mammals.

- ☐ they have lungs that breathe air
- ☐ they have beaks
- ☐ they feed their babies on their own milk
- ☐ they are cold-blooded

2. Join the boxes to match the correct fact to each of these mammals.

water voles

are often confused with rats

dormice

build homes called setts

badgers

usually measure less than
10cm in length

3. List two reasons why water voles shouldn't be good at swimming.

- _____
- _____

4. Find and copy one adjective from the paragraph on badgers which means the same as **strong**.

5. Why is it unusual to spot dormice in the wild?

6. Explain why badgers' and dormice's names have something in common.

7. Why has the author included a glossary? Choose one other word to include and write a definition for it.

8. If you could choose to be one of these mammals, which would it be and why?

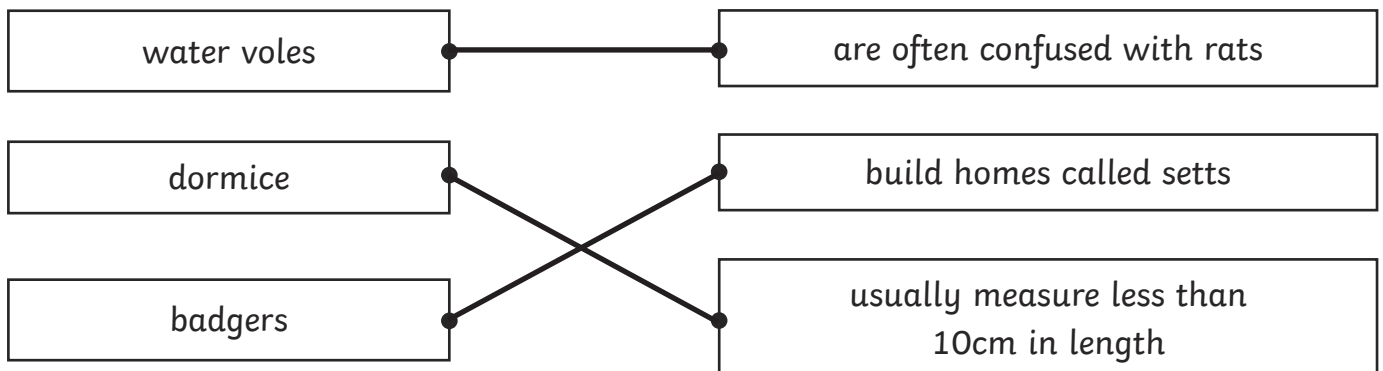
Answers

1. Tick all of the statements that are true about all mammals.

they have lungs that breathe air

- ☐ they have beaks
☐ they feed their babies on their own milk
☐ they are cold-blooded

2. Join the boxes to match the correct fact to each of these mammals.



3. List two reasons why water voles shouldn't be good at swimming.

Pupils' own responses, such as: They don't have webbed feet; their thick fur quickly becomes heavy in water.

4. Find and copy one adjective from the paragraph on badgers which means the same as **strong**.
powerful

5. Why is it unusual to spot dormice in the wild?

Pupils' own responses, such as: It is unusual to spot a dormouse in the wild because they spend so much of their lives asleep and they only come out at night.

6. Explain why badgers' and dormice's names have something in common.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The names for badgers and dormice both come from French words. A badger's name means 'digger' and a dormouse's name means 'to sleep'.

7. Why has the author included a glossary? Choose one other word to include and write a definition for it.

Pupils' own responses, such as: The author has included a glossary to explain the meanings of some of the trickier words.

chamber: The name of a room in a badger's sett.

8. If you could choose to be one of these mammals, which would it be and why?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I would choose to be a bat so that I could experience what it's like to fly.

British Mammals

There are over 100 species of mammal found in and around the British Isles. All of these creatures have the same basic features: they are all **warm-blooded**, they all produce milk for feeding their young, they all have hair or fur on their body at some point in their life, and they all breathe oxygen into their lungs. Although all of our mammals share these same characteristics, some of them do stand out from the crowd. Let's look at some of the British champions of the mammal world!

The Award for the Best Swimmer Goes to...the Water Vole!

Water voles are found in many of the areas of the UK, usually close to slow-flowing or still water. Although they don't have webbed feet and also have thick fur that quickly becomes heavy in water, they are actually very strong swimmers. Water voles are often confused with rats but they are actually quite easy to tell apart:

- voles have a rounded (not a pointed) nose;
- voles have small, hidden ears, while a rat's ears are clearly visible;
- voles have short, furry tails.

Amazingly, due to their **herbivorous** diet, water voles manage to consume 80% of their body weight on a daily basis; it's a wonder that they don't sink!



The Award for the Best Builder Goes to...the Badger!



Badgers are one of the most well-known British mammals with their stocky bodies and white and black striped heads. Their name is from the French word 'bêcheur', which means 'digger'. Up to fourteen badgers at a time will often work together on massive constructions; they use their powerful legs and sharp claws to dig **setts** with multiple 'rooms' called chambers. They line their chambers with dry leaves, bracken and grass to keep them insulated, which is especially important when they are faced with the harsh winter weather or when they are looking after newborn cubs. Their setts are passed on through the generations, with some thought to be over 100 years old.



The Award for the Best Snoozer Goes to...the Dormouse!

Dormice are **nocturnal** mammals that definitely deserve a medal – they are champion sleepers! Their name also comes from the French language, stemming from the word 'dormir', which means 'to sleep'. The tiny, honey-coloured creatures, who are usually only around 8cm in length and 15g in weight, **hibernate** for around six or seven months each year in nests that they build on thick ground, under leaves or in hollowed trees. Even in the spring and summer months (when they should be awake – at least during the night!), dormice still sometimes enter into short hibernating states called 'torpors' if they are short of food or finding the weather particularly cold or wet. Because of the length of time that they spend asleep, it is very unusual for people



"Dormouse" by Zoë Helene Kindermann

to spot dormice in the wild.

The Award for the Best Flyer Goes to...the Bat!

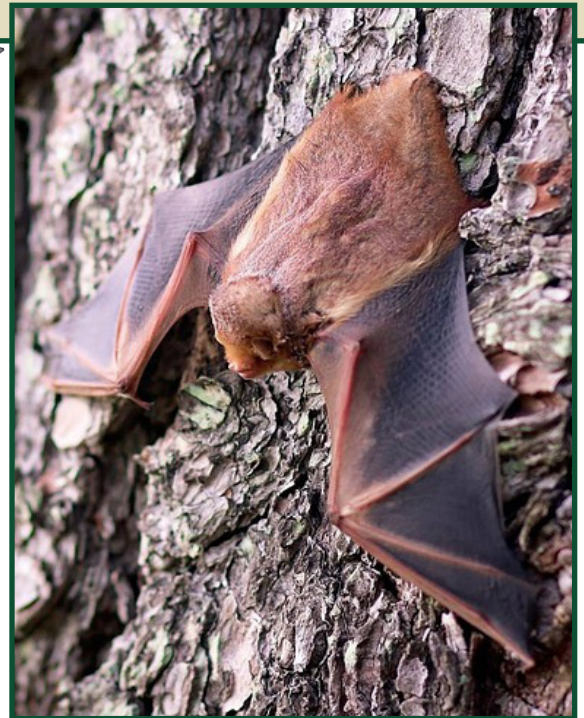
As they are rather common creatures in the UK, you may have been lucky enough to see at least one of the seventeen species of British bat shooting through the night sky. Bats actually make up one quarter of all of the mammals found in the UK. Bats are the only mammal that can fly and they have light, **streamlined** bodies perfect for it. To fly, they create a



rowing action with their wings so that they can swoop, hover and move in all directions. As they fly, they busily feed on nocturnal insects, who have no means of escape. Some of the most common species of British bat are pipistrelles, long-eared bats, noctule bats and Daubenton's bats. If you'd like to see a bat in the wild, try walking around fields and hedgerows at **dusk** during the spring and summer months, when it is still light enough to see their flying silhouettes.

A Batty Bat Fact

You may have heard the popular saying 'as blind as a bat' and thought that bats had terrible eyesight but that just isn't the case! Bats do have sight but they prefer to use their other senses (including their hearing and **echolocation**) to fly in the dark and to help them to find prey.



Glossary

- dusk:** The time just before nightfall when it is not quite dark.
- echolocation:** A system where bats make noises which travel through the air. When the sound hits an object, it bounces back to them so that they can sense whereabouts it is.
- herbivorous:** To feed on plants.
- hibernate:** To enter a deep sleep during cold weather for a long period of time.
- nocturnal:** Animals that are mostly active at night.
- sett:** The burrowed home of a badger.
- streamlined:** Designed to move through air or water quickly.
- warm-blooded:** Animals that can maintain a constant body temperature regardless of the temperature of their surroundings.



Questions

1. Which of these statements is not true? Tick one.

- ☐ mammals produce milk to feed their young
- ☐ water voles eat insects and small mammals
- ☐ bats are the only flying mammal
- ☐ dormice are mostly active at night

2. Complete the missing information in the table:

Body Feature	Water Vole	_____
tail	_____ and _____	long and hairless
nose	rounded	_____
ears	_____ and _____	clearly visible

3. **...it's a wonder that they don't sink!**

Why has the author added this phrase?

4. Find and copy one word from the paragraph on badgers that means the same as **severe**.

5. Which French word means 'to sleep'?

6. Use the section on bats to match the statement with the reason:

In the UK, you might see a bat

because they have light, streamlined bodies.

Bats are expert flyers

because they are one of the most common British mammals.

The best time to spot bats is at dusk

because the sky is not too dark to see them.

7. Give two reasons why the badger has been given the best builder award.

8. Explain in your own words why the saying 'as blind as a bat' isn't really fair.

9. In what ways do the photographs and illustrations help you to understand the text?

Answers

1. Which of these statements is not true? Tick one.

- ☐ mammals produce milk to feed their young
☒ **water voles eat insects and small mammals**
☐ bats are the only flying mammal
☐ dormice are mostly active at night

2. Complete the missing information in the table:

Body Feature	Water Vole	Rat
tail	short and furry	long and hairless
nose	rounded	pointed
ears	small and hidden	clearly visible

3. **...it's a wonder that they don't sink!**

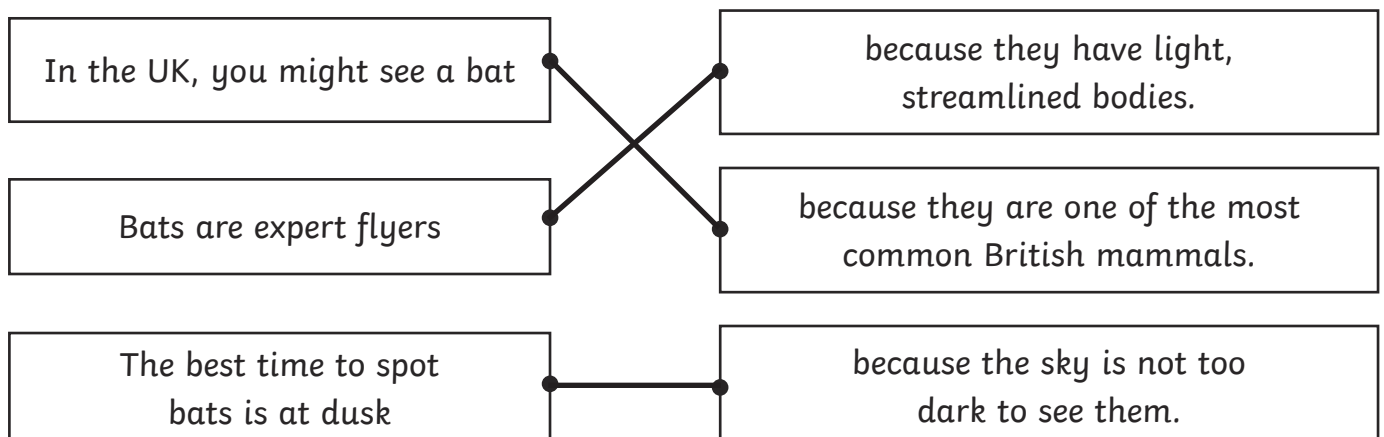
Why has the author added this phrase?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The author has used this phrase to show their surprise that water voles can still float despite eating 80% of their body weight each day.

4. Find and copy one word from the paragraph on badgers that means the same as **severe**.
harsh

5. Which French word means 'to sleep'?
dormir

6. Use the section on bats to match the statement with the reason:



7. Give two reasons why the badger has been given the best builder award.
Accept any two of the following reasons taken from the text: Their name means 'digger' in French; up to fourteen badgers work together on massive constructions; they have powerful legs and sharp claws making them efficient at digging; they dig setts with multiple rooms (chambers) and entrances; their setts survive for a long time (over 100 years).
8. Explain in your own words why the saying 'as blind as a bat' isn't really fair.
Pupils' own responses, such as: The saying 'as blind as a bat' isn't fair to bats as they aren't actually blind; they just rely on their other senses more than they do their sight.
9. In what ways do the photographs and illustrations help you to understand the text?
Pupils' own responses, such as: The photographs and illustrations help me to understand the text as I wasn't sure what some of the mammals that were mentioned look like. It was hard to visualise them just from the description in the text itself.

British Mammals

There are over 100 species of mammal found in and around the British Isles. All of these creatures have the same basic features: they are all warm-blooded, they all produce milk for feeding their young, they all have hair or fur on their body at some point in their life, and they all breathe oxygen into their lungs - even the ones that live in water. Although all of our mammals share these same characteristics, some of them do stand out from the crowd... let's look at some of the British champions of the mammal world!



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water voles manage to consume 80% of their body weight on a daily basis; it's a wonder that they don't sink!

The Award for the Best Swimmer Goes to...the Water Vole!

Water voles are found in many of the areas of the UK, usually along waterways with slow-flowing or still waters, where they burrow into the soft soil banks to create shelter. Although they are not particularly well-adapted to aquatic life – as they don't have webbed feet and have thick fur that quickly becomes waterlogged - they are actually very strong swimmers. Many sightings of water voles are often confused with rats but they are quite easy to tell apart:

- voles have a rounded nose; not the pointed shape like that of a rat's;
- voles have small, hidden ears unlike rats who have obvious ears;
- voles have shorter, furry tails whereas rats have long, hairless tails.

Amazingly, due to their herbivorous diet,

The Award for the Best Builder Goes to...the Badger!



of all British mammals with their stocky bodies and white and black striped heads. But did you know that their name is said to derive from the French word 'bêcheur', which literally means 'digger'? Up to fourteen badgers at a time will often work communally on massive constructions, using their powerful legs and sharp claws to dig setts with multiple chambers and up to 80 entrance holes! They line their chambers with dry vegetation to make them cosy and insulated, which is especially important when they are faced with harsh winter conditions or looking after vulnerable, young cubs in their first weeks of life. Their setts, which are most commonly found in banks, caves and embankments, are passed on through the generations, with some estimated to be over 100 years old.

The Award for the Best Snoozer Goes to...the Dormouse!

Dormice are nocturnal mammals that definitely deserve a medal as they like to sleep – a lot! In fact, their name also has French origins and comes from the word ‘dormir’, which translates to mean ‘to sleep’. The tiny, honey-coloured creatures, who are usually only around 8cm in length and 15g in weight, hibernate for around six or seven months each year. They sleep in nests that they build before the onset of winter on dense woodland ground, under leaves or in hollowed trees. Even in the spring and summer months (when they should be awake – at least during the night), dormice



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still sometimes enter into short hibernating states called ‘torpors’ if they are short of food or finding the weather particularly cold or wet. Because of their championship sleeping status, it is very rare for people to spot dormice in the wild.

The Award for the Best Flyer Goes to...the Bat!

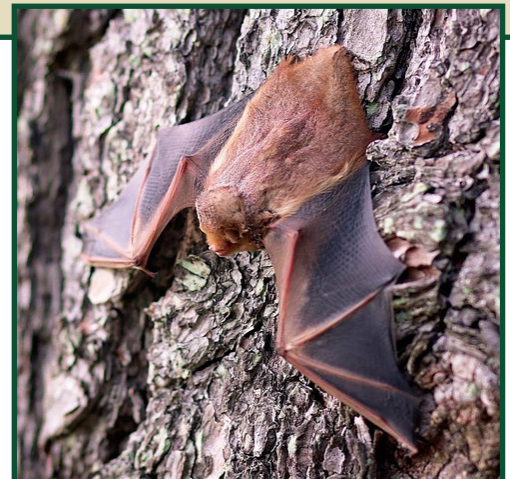
As they are relatively common creatures in the UK, you may have been lucky enough to see at least one of the seventeen species of British bat shooting through the night sky. In fact, bats make up one quarter of all the resident mammals found in the UK. Bats are the only mammal that use their own power to fly and they have light, streamlined bodies perfect for



taking flight. To fly, they create a rowing action with their wings so that they are capable of swooping, hovering and moving in all directions. As they fly, they expertly feed on nocturnal insects, who have no escape from their acrobatic aeronautical abilities. Some of the most common species of British bat are pipistrelles, long-eared bats, noctule bats and Daubenton's bats. To give yourself the best chance of a sighting, try walking around fields and hedgerows just after sunset during the spring and summer months.

A Batty Bat Fact

You may have heard the popular saying ‘as blind as a bat’ and thought that bats had terrible eyesight but that just isn't the case! Bats do have sight but they do not depend on their eyes to the same extent that many other animals do. Instead, they use their other senses (including their hearing and echolocation) to navigate their surroundings and to help them to find prey.



Questions

1. **Although all of our mammals share these same characteristics, some of them do stand out from the crowd...**

What is the author trying to say in this sentence? Tick one.

- ☐ all mammals are very different
☐ all mammals have the same basic features but some have special skills in certain areas
☐ all mammals are exactly the same
☐ certain mammals aren't warm-blooded

2. Complete the missing information in the table:

Body Feature	Water Vole	_____
_____	_____ and _____	long and hairless
nose	rounded	_____
_____	_____ and _____	obvious

3. **... or looking after vulnerable, young cubs in their first weeks of life.**

Define the word vulnerable based on its use in this sentence.

4. Which French word means 'digger'?

5. Use the section on dormice to match the statement with the reason:

Dormice are tiny creatures

because they need a warm and insulated place to hibernate before the weather gets too cold.

Dormice build their nests before the onset of winter

because they are short of food or are finding the weather conditions harsh.

Dormice sometimes enter into torpors

because they weigh only 15g and measure 8cm in length.

6. Give two reasons why dormice sightings are very rare.

7. Explain one way in which bats and dormice are **similar** and one way that they are **different**.

8. Look for an example of a **simile** in this text. Explain why it isn't actually factual.

9. Which do you consider to be the 'Champion of all Champions' of the British mammals discussed within the text. Explain your reasons fully.

10. Summarise the purpose of this text and its intended audience.

Answers

1. **Although all of our mammals share these same characteristics, some of them do stand out from the crowd...**

What is the author trying to say in this sentence? Tick one.

☐ all mammals are very different

all mammals have the same basic features but some have special skills in certain areas

☐ all mammals are exactly the same

☐ certain mammals aren't warm-blooded

2. Complete the missing information in the table:

Body Feature	Water Vole	Rat
tail	shorter and furry	long and hairless
nose	rounded	pointed
ears	small and hidden	obvious

3. **... or looking after vulnerable, young cubs in their first weeks of life.**

Define the word vulnerable based on its use in this sentence.

Pupils' own responses, such as: weak, defenceless, helpless (or any other suitable synonym/definition).

4. Which French word means 'digger'?

bêcheur

5. Use the section on dormice to match the statement with the reason:

Dormice are tiny creatures	because they need a warm and insulated place to hibernate before the weather gets too cold.
Dormice build their nests before the onset of winter	because they are short of food or are finding the weather conditions harsh.
Dormice sometimes enter into torpors	because they weigh only 15g and measure 8cm in length.

6. Give two reasons why dormice sightings are very rare.

Accept any two of the following reasons taken from the text: They are nocturnal; they are tiny creatures; they hibernate for around six to seven months each year; they are hidden in nests in dense woodland, under leaves or hollowed trees; they enter into torpors and sometimes also hibernate in the spring and summer months.

7. Explain one way in which bats and dormice are **similar** and one way that they are **different**.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Bats and dormice are alike because they are both nocturnal animals but the mammals are different because dormice don't have the ability to fly like bats do.

8. Look for an example of a **simile** in this text. Explain why it isn't actually factual. **'as blind as a bat'**

Pupils' own responses, such as: The simile isn't fair because bats aren't actually blind. They just don't rely on their sight as much as some of their other senses.

9. Which do you consider to be the 'Champion of all Champions' of the British mammals discussed within the text. Explain your reasons fully.

Pupils' own responses with justification from the text, such as: I think that the bat should be named the Champion of all Champions because they are the only mammal that can fly and they also have the super special skill of being able to use echolocation to sense their surroundings.

10. Summarise the purpose of this text and its intended audience.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that this text is intended for a young audience, especially children who are interested in wildlife and its purpose is to entertain them and inform them of when and where they may be able to spot certain creatures.