

Parent Outline: K - 2

Unusual Animals

Welcome/ Staff/Volunteer Names

Introduction: Today's Topic-Unusual Animals **Question: What makes an animal unusual?**

Ice Breaker/ Keeping Track of Baby- Mom "bats" have to find their babies (Ranger Rick).

Game: Mammal characteristics-good sense of smell, nurse from mother, glands, large brains...

Background/ BATS-Bats are misunderstood but very interesting and unusual creatures.

Exploration: They are the only mammals that can really fly. Bats sense things and fly by echolocation. Bats eat insects and come out at night-are nocturnal. Bats rest during the day by hanging upside-down. The main bat in Iowa is the Little Brown bat, which migrates south in winter. A bat's wings are tough skin between its long fingers. Bats have one or two babies. Bats are very helpful. We can build bat houses to help them.

Echolocation demonstration

Game: Bat and Moth

OPOSSUM-Opossum are the only North American marsupials. Possum are nocturnal, and omnivorous. They have 50 teeth. They "play dead", or freeze, when caught by a predator. Predators may be foxes, coyotes, dogs, bobcats. Babies are born tiny and undeveloped-blind, deaf, & hairless (raisin size!). The newborn babies crawl into the mom's pouch after they are born, where they nurse for three months. The babies ride in the pouch while the mom hunts for food. A few weeks later, they can live on their own.

Possum legend-read/tell the story of how Possum's tail got to be naked.

Game: Coyote and Possum

MOLES-Live underground in the tunnels they dig. Moles front shoulders, legs, and feet are big to make digging with their claws easier. Eyes are tiny-eyelids don't open far. Eyesight is weak, but they can sense light from dark. A mole's snout is very flexible, used for sense of touch as well as smell. Thick mole fur lies flat in either direction. The tail has no fur. Moles are carnivorous predators (insectivores). They eat one-half their body weight in worms and grubs (insect larvae) each day. Moles are active in day and night, they have a scent gland on their belly. They do not hibernate, but dig their tunnels deeper (below frostline) in the winter.

Pocket Gopher-An herbivore who sometimes eats garden plants and their roots. Makes hills.

SHREWS-Shrews are small energetic rodents known for being fierce. They have a poison gland behind their front teeth (incisors). Shrews eat snails, insects, worms, mice, & snakes. Their senses of smell and hearing are very good, which is how they find prey. Shrews must eat every hour. Eyes are tiny. Their nose is shaped like a shovel, good for burrowing. Shrews have velvety fur and a short tail.

OUTDOOR Look at any nearby bat houses and talk about the bats/where they are now.

EXPLORATION: Find some holes in dead trees where a bat might live in the summer.

 Walk along the trail and look for gopher mounds (bare dirt piles) and mole runs.

 Find things that an opossum would like to eat (nuts/seeds, fruit, insects, etc).

SEND OFF: Goodbye!

Next Month's topic-Animal Signs & Sounds

TAKE HOME: Bat puzzles, poem

 Parent Outline

Vocabulary

Mammal, echolocation, marsupial, nocturnal, predator, carnivore, herbivore, insectivore, hibernate

Background and Activity References

- Caduto, Michael J., and Joseph Bruchac. 1991. *Keepers of the Animals: Native American Stories and Wildlife Activities for Children*. Fulcrum Publishing, Golden, CO.
- Educator's Activity Book About Bats*. 1991. Murphy, Mari, ed. Bat Conservation International, Austin, TX.
- Ranger Rick's Naturescope: Amazing Mammals Part II*. 1986. National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C.
- Shedd, Warner. 1994. *The Kids' Wildlife Book*. Williamson Publishing, Charlotte, VT.