

# Woodland animal fact cards

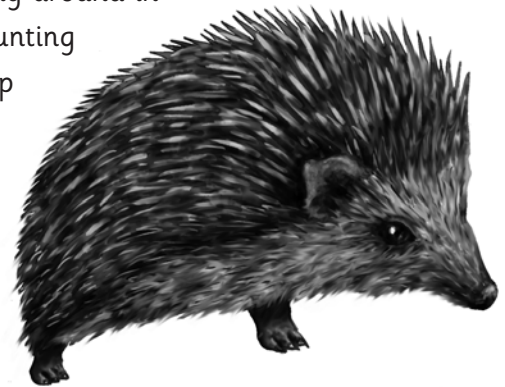
## Grey squirrel

The grey squirrel was introduced to Britain during the late 19th century and has largely replaced the red variety. They have a lifespan of up to nine years, and like to live in woodland and hedgerows. Grey squirrels usually feed during the daytime on acorns, nuts, shoots, flowers and roots, and often hide away spare food in the ground or in tree hollows. The squirrel's home, called a drey, is made from twigs and lined with dried leaves and grass. The young are born in the spring and come in litters of three or four.



## Hedgehog

The hedgehog takes its name from the pig-like habit of rooting around in the undergrowth for food and making noisy snuffling and grunting sounds. They are Britain's only spiny mammal and can live up to five years. An adult has as many as 5000 short, yellow-tipped spines protecting the upper part of its body. It will roll into a ball to protect itself if threatened. Hedgehogs live in woodland and hedges, but are also found in gardens. They eat slugs, snails, beetles and worms, and are most active at night, especially after rainfall.



## Fox

The type of red fox found in British woodlands is the most widespread of the dog families living in the world. In the wild they can live for seven years, but in captivity this age has been doubled. They are easily recognised because of their slender muzzles and long bushy tails with white tips. They are not fussy eaters and will feed on insects, worms, berries, birds, small mammals and, in urban areas, scraps left by humans. Generally solitary animals, they live in a den called an earth and are most active during the hours of darkness.



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## Badger

Badgers are one of Britain's most popular woodland animals. Distinctive for the black and white markings on their head, they are strong, sturdy creatures with short black legs, and can weigh up to 12kg. Badgers are most common in the south west of England and prefer to live in woods and on grassland. They feed on worms, frogs, small rodents and insects, but also like bulbs, seeds and berries. They are largely nocturnal and live in underground homes called setts, which have several chambers as well as tunnels and entrances. Badgers are social animals and live in family groups averaging six members.



## Green woodpecker

This is the largest of the three types of woodpecker found in Britain. They are mainly green-grey in colour but have bright red marks on the top of their head. They are seen all year round and prefer to live in deciduous woodland, parks and orchards. Woodpeckers use their long bill for sounding out hollows in trees, but they actually catch the insects they eat with a long sticky tongue. They are especially fond of ants and that is why they often feed from anthills at ground level. Woodpeckers have a loud, laughing-like call and because of this are known by the nickname 'yaffle'.



## Sparrowhawk

Sparrowhawks are slate grey in colour and have orange markings on their chest. They have broad, rounded wings and long tail feathers to enable them to fly at speed between woodland trees. The sparrowhawk never hovers like other birds of prey, but catches its prey by using stealth, hiding among branches and then bursting into flight. The female is by far the larger and will catch birds like thrushes, starlings and pigeons. Males, being smaller, tend to focus on finches, tits and sparrows. Sparrowhawks build nests from a platform of twigs in trees and lay two to seven eggs.



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## Stag beetle

This is the largest of Britain's terrestrial insects. Stag beetles can grow up to 8cm in length and have gained their name because their large jaws look like the antlers of a stag. They are violet-brown in colour and are particularly fond of living around oak trees. The strong jaws are sometimes used to wrestle other beetles for mating sites, but these insects are not aggressive to humans and do not bite. Stag beetles are becoming rarer because of the loss of suitable habitats. The larvae feed on rotting wood and can take anywhere between three to five years to develop. Adulthood only lasts between May and August.



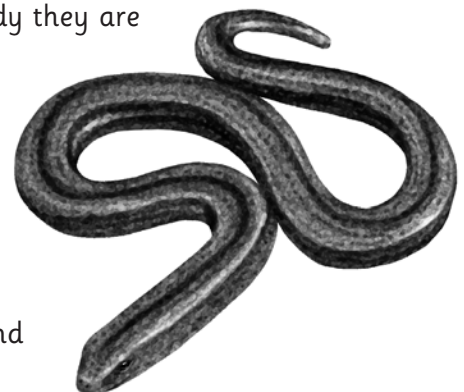
## Red Admiral butterfly

This butterfly is noticeable for its bright red and black markings with white patches on the tips of the wings. They are often seen in gardens as well as woodland. The caterpillars vary in colour from black to greenish grey, but they have a distinctive yellow line along each side and spines on the upper surface. Adults feed on nectar from flowers but they also have a liking for rotting fruit. They enjoy basking in sunshine on warm days. The Red Admiral butterfly's name is thought to have come from the word 'admirable' because of its bright colours.



## Grass snake

Sometimes known as the ringed snake, these reptiles can grow up to 2m in length, with the females larger than the males. On the upper body they are grey-green in colour with black spots and a yellow/cream collar around the neck. They prefer damp conditions and can be found in hedges and woodland. They are active during the day and like sunlight to warm up their body temperature. Grass snakes eat tadpoles, small frogs, fish, newts, mice and even small birds. They are excellent swimmers and can stay underwater for long periods. They hibernate between October and March, often choosing disused rabbit warrens to sleep in.



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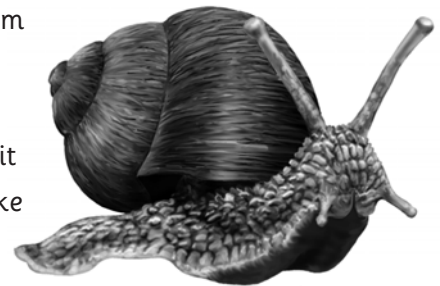
## Slug

Slugs are members of the mollusc family that, over time, have developed without a shell. They have two pairs of feelers on their head; the upper two act as light sensors, while the lower two provide the sense of smell. Slugs move around on what is a large foot, helped by lubricating mucus. This contains fibres so that they do not slide down when climbing vertical surfaces. They can even produce 'slime' cords to help lower themselves to the ground. In gardens they serve a useful role by eating dead leaves and decaying vegetation, but gardeners dislike them because they are fond of munching young plants!



## Snail

The snail is related to the slug but in this case a large shell protects the soft body. Snails prefer dampness and will move around mostly at night in wet weather. They also travel on a large muscular foot with the assistance of mucus. Snails feed on decaying vegetation but they do have teeth to scrape lichen from stones. When conditions become too dry, the snail can retreat into its shell and seal the entrance. It can survive for several months without water in this state, especially during winter when it hibernates. Eggs are laid underground in damp soil. Youngsters take 14 days to hatch and about two years to reach adulthood.



## Rabbit

Because there is danger from a number of predators in woodland areas, rabbits have long ears to improve their hearing and strong, powerful back legs to help them run fast. They have soft brown-grey fur and a short tufted white tail. Rabbits are herbivores, grazing on grass and leafy weeds. They usually eat quickly to start with and then become more selective in their grazing later. Rabbits live together in underground tunnels called warrens, where they often nap during the day. Females can have as many as seven youngsters in a litter and are able to breed four or five times each year.

