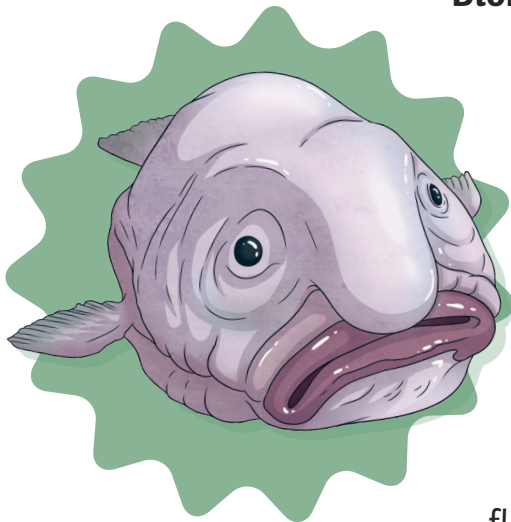


Unusual Creatures



Did you know that there are almost 8.7 million species of animals in the world? We all know about lions, sharks and eagles, but have you ever heard of a star-nosed mole or a blobfish? Read on to find out more about some of planet Earth's most unusual creatures.



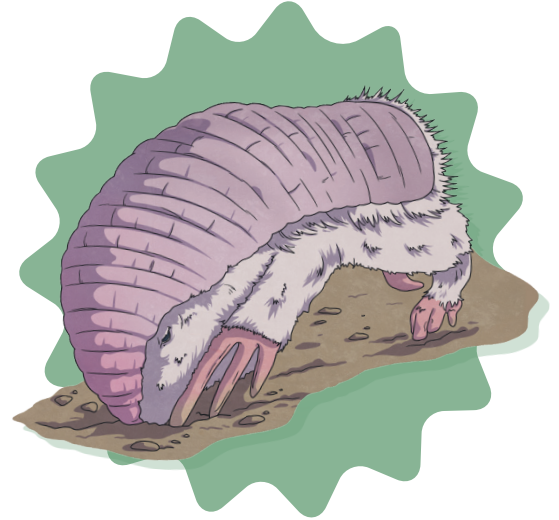
Blobfish

Deep in the oceans around Australia and New Zealand, a curious fish named a blobfish lurks on the sea floor as far as 3900 feet below the surface. That far down, the pressure is up to 120 times stronger than it is at sea level. The blobfish is skilled at floating and is able to float for long periods of time above the ocean floor without using up much energy. Blobfish are often accidentally scooped up in nets and taken to the surface. Unfortunately, their bodies are designed for the high pressure of the sea floor; without that pressure they seem to deflate like a balloon, giving them their strange appearance.

Unusual Creatures

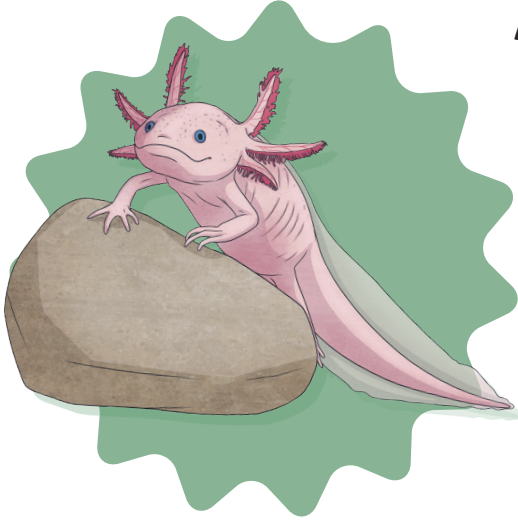
Pink Fairy Armadillo

This tiny mammal is so rare that scientists don't even know how many there are! It lives in the grasslands and sandy plains of central Argentina and spends most of its life burrowing underground using its large claws. In fact, it is so well-adapted to living in the soil that it struggles to walk on solid ground. The pink fairy armadillo is sensitive to any changes in its environment, such as a change in temperature or soil quality. Its fine hair and soft shell help it to keep warm on cool nights.

**Shoebill**

The shoebill is a unique bird that is found in freshwater swamps across African countries, including Rwanda, Sudan and Uganda. It is named after its strange beak, which looks similar to a shoe. At up to 140cm tall and with a wingspan of up to 260cm, the shoebill is an impressive and large bird. It is known for its ability to stand extremely still for long periods of time, especially when wading in swamps and bogs to hunt. Shoebills communicate with each other using a loud sound created by bill-clattering.

Unusual Creatures

**Axolotl**

This adorable amphibian is only found in the wild in a few canals and lakes in one country: Mexico. It is a unique creature that is studied by scientists because of its amazing skill — it can regenerate parts of its body including its gills, limbs and even parts of its heart and brain! Unlike most amphibians, an axolotl keeps its gills when it becomes an adult and spends most of its life underwater.

Star-Nosed Mole

This unique-looking mammal has an extremely sensitive nose - it has 25 000 sensors covering the 22 tendrils that make up the star shape. These sensors help the star-nosed mole to find, catch and eat its prey of small insects and worms at record-breakingly high speeds. The star-nosed mole is found in North America. Unlike most other moles, it prefers moist soil and so is often found in marshlands or near ponds and lakes.



Questions

1

Draw lines to match the creature to its habitat.

shoebill	Lake Xochimilco in Mexico
star-nosed mole	freshwater swamps in Africa
blobfish	grasslands in central Argentina
pink fairy armadillo	marshlands in North America
axolotl	the sea floor near Australia and New Zealand

2

Use information from the text to write an interesting fact about each creature.

pink fairy armadillo	
shoebill	
axolotl	
blobfish	
star-nosed mole	

3

How is the pink fairy armadillo suited to its habitat?

Unusual Creatures

Shoebills communicate with each other using a loud sound created by bill-clattering.

4

Which of these words is a synonym for communicate? Tick one.

- fight
- speak
- perform

5

What kind of prey do you think the shoebill hunts? How do you know?

This adorable amphibian is only found in the wild in a few canals and lakes in one country: Mexico.

6

What might be a threat to the axolotl?

Unusual Creatures

7

What makes a blobfish look so strange?






8

Why is the star-nosed mole unique among moles?

Answers

1

Draw lines to match the creature to its habitat.

shoebill		Lake Xochimilco in Mexico
star-nosed mole		freshwater swamps in Africa
blobfish		grasslands in central Argentina
pink fairy armadillo		marshlands in North America
axolotl		the sea floor near Australia and New Zealand

2

Use information from the text to write an interesting fact about each creature.

Child should have written an appropriate fact about each creature, using information from the text.

3

How is the pink fairy armadillo suited to its habitat?

It has large claws to help it burrow underground and it has fine hair and a soft shell to keep it warm.

Unusual Creatures

Shoebills communicate with each other using a loud sound created by bill-clattering.

4

Which of these words is a synonym for communicate? Tick one.

- fight
- speak
- perform

5

What kind of prey do you think the shoebill hunts? How do you know?

Child's own answer using clues from the text, e.g.

I think the shoebill hunts fish or frogs as the text says it wades in swamps to hunt and you might find fish or frogs in a swamp.

This adorable amphibian is only found in the wild in a few canals and lakes in one country: Mexico.

6

What might be a threat to the axolotl?

Child's own answer using clues from the text, e.g.

I think that pollution might be a threat to the axolotl because if that lake gets polluted it will have nowhere to live.

Unusual Creatures

7

What makes a blobfish look so strange?

Its body is designed to be in high pressure, so when it is taken out of the water it seems to deflate.

8

Why is the star-nosed mole unique among moles?

Unlike most other moles, it prefers moist soil.

It has a sensitive, star-shaped nose with over 25 000 sensors on it.

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.



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