## The Discombobulator

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## FASCINATING FUN FACTS!

Read on so that you can find out all kinds of interesting things about the creatures featured in **The Discombobulator**. You’ll also be able to use the glossary to find out the meanings of tricky words.

To purchase your copy of the physical book, simply visit the **shop** page of this website.

Why not see if you can complete the **Challenge** right at the end and astound everyone around you with your incredible knowledge?

## Sheep

## Sheep are *mammals*

* They are also *herbivores* and graze mainly on grass
* There are over a billion sheep in the world and hundreds of different species
* Adult female sheep are called *ewes* and adult male sheep are called *rams*
* Sheep are very sociable and like to live in *flocks* or *herds*
* Sheep have excellent hearing and can also see behind themselves without moving their heads
* Sheep are raised for their fleeces, their meat and for leather
* Fat from a sheep is called *tallow* and can be used to make soap and candles

**Did you Know?**

Sheep can recognise individual human faces and have good memories!

## Pigs

* Pigs are very clean; they only roll in mud to keep cool because they can’t sweat
* Pigs are *omnivores*
* Adult male pigs are called *boars*
* Adult female pigs are called *sows*
* Humans farm pigs for meat such as pork, bacon and ham

**Did you Know?**

A pig’s genetic makeup is very similar to that of a human!

They are the fourth most intelligent animal on the planet.

## The Lifecycle of a Frog

* Frog eggs float in a jelly-like substance in a pond, these are called *egg masses* or *frogspawn*
* Frogs lay thousands of eggs at a time! Many won’t reach adulthood
* Tadpoles hatch from the eggs and live in the pond
* The tadpoles turn into *froglets*
* The body shrinks and first the back legs grow followed by the front legs
* Next, the froglet’s tail shrinks and its lungs develop
* The back legs grow more and then we have an adult frog
* Frogs are *amphibious.* When they are developing they breath with gills
* When they become adult frogs they breath with lungs
* *Amphibians* shed their skin as they grow and the skin is usually eaten

**Did You Know?**

The word *amphibian* comes from the Latin word *amphibium* and the Greek word *amphibion* which means *living both in water and on land.*

The lifecycle of a frog involves a process called *metamorphosis.*

## The Lifecycle of a Butterfly

* A butterfly starts life as a very small egg. The eggs are usually laid on leaves
* When an egg hatches, the caterpillar (*larva*) will emerge
* It immediately eats the leaf it was hatched on (most caterpillars are *herbivores*)
* They eat a lot so that they can grow quickly
* As they grow they shed their *exoskeleton* several times
* Once the caterpillar has stopped growing it forms into a *pupa (chrysalis/cocoon)*
* While the caterpillar is inside the *pupa,* it is quickly changing and undergoing a process called *metamorphosis*
* Finally, the butterfly emerges. When it first hatches its wings are soft, but after it has rested it pumps blood into its wings so that it can flap them. It can fly!
* The adult butterfly then reproduces and lays more eggs on a leaf
* The life cycle is complete!

## Lions

* Lions are *carnivores*
* African lions are the most sociable of big cats and live in families called *prides*
* A pride is usually made up of around 15 lions
* The male defends the *territory* while the females do most of the hunting
* A lion’s roar can be heard 5 miles (8km) away
* They can run up to 50mph (81kph), but only for short distances
* Lions live on grasslands and plains (not jungles)
* The darker the mane, the older the lion
* Lions are *vulnerable*
* A baby lion is called a *cub*

**Did You Know?**

If a lion breeds with a tiger, the resulting *hybrids* are called ligers and tigons!

There are also lion and leopard hybrids known as leopons and lion and jaguar hybrids know as jaglions!

## Mice

* Mice are mainly *nocturnal* and have poor eyesight
* Their other senses are very good
* Mice are part of the *rodent* family
* They are one of the most commonly preyed on *species* in the world
* Mice are *herbivores,* eating all kinds of fruit and grains from plants
* A baby mouse is called a *pinky* or a *kitten*
* A female mouse is called a *doe*
* A male mouse is called a *buck*

**Did You Know?**

Mice are one of the smallest *mammals* in the world.

## Cheetahs

* There are less than 8000 cheetahs left in the wild and they are Africa’s most *endangered* big cat
* Cheetahs are *carnivores.* Their favourite food is small antelope
* The cheetah is the fastest land animal in the world. They can run up to 70mph (110kph), reaching its top speed in 3 seconds
* Its stride is 6 - 7 metres (21 feet)
* Its tail is muscular, flat and long and functions like a rudder. Its tail helps it to steer and keep balance when running very fast
* The cheetah has special semi non-retractable claws that work like the cleats on a football boot, giving it lots of traction
* A cheetah’s pads are hard and grooved
* Cheetahs have tear marks that run from the corners of their eyes down to their mouths. These marks reflect the glare of the sun and also work like the *sights* on a rifle, helping them to aim on their *prey*
* *Cubs* (baby cheetahs) have long hair that runs from their necks to the base of their tails. This is called a *mantle.* It makes them look like honey badgers and also helps to *camouflage* them

**Did You Know?**

Cheetahs can purr!

## Tortoises

* A tortoise is a turtle, but a turtle is not a tortoise! Tortoises don’t swim
* Tortoises are land-based *reptiles*
* They are usually *herbivores*
* A group of tortoises is called a *creep,* but they prefer to live alone
* Tortoises have an *exoskeleton AND* an *endoskeleton*
* Their shells are very sensitive to the touch. The scales are called *scutes* and are made of *keratin*

**Did You Know?**

Tortoises can live to over 100 years old!

## Monkeys

* Monkeys are *primates,* a group of animals that include humans and apes
* There are currently 264 known *species* in the world
* Monkeys are very sociable animals
* Old World monkeys live in Africa and Asia, whilst New World monkeys live in South America
* Apes are not monkeys because they don’t have tails
* Some monkeys live on the ground whilst others live in trees
* Dependent on their *species,* monkeys eat a variety of food such as fruit, insects, flowers, leaves and reptiles
* Most monkeys have tails
* A group of monkeys is known as a *tribe,* a *troop* or a *mission*
* The Pygmy Marmoset is the smallest type of monkey
* The Mandrill is the largest type of monkey
* Capuchin monkeys are believed to be the most intelligent type of monkey

**Did You Know?**

Monkeys, just like humans, have their own unique set of fingerprints!

Red bottoms indicate that a female monkey is ready to *reproduce.*

## Peacocks/Peafowl

* Peacock is actually the name for a male *peafowl*. The females are called *peahens*
* A baby peafowl is called a *peachick*
* Peacocks are part of the pheasant family
* Peacocks are best known for their beautiful tail feathers and plumage. A peacock’s tail is known as a *train*
* A peahen is more drab so that she can hide in the bushes when she is sitting on (*incubating)* her eggs
* A family of peafowl is called a *bevy*
* A group of peafowl is called a *party,* an *ostentation,* a *pride* or a *muster*
* Peafowl are ground-dwelling birds
* Their natural *habitat* is farmlands and forests in warm regions
* They live mainly in Asia, although they are bred in captivity in England and Japan
* Peafowl are *omnivorous*
* A peacock sheds his feathers every summer
* Peafowl can only fly short distances and prefer to remain on the ground
* Peacocks display their beautiful train to attract mates
* Peafowl are preyed on by mongooses, big cats and wild dogs
* Peafowl have a distinctive cry

**Did You Know?**

Peacocks are the national bird of India.

In the Hindu religion peacocks represent compassion, benevolence, knowledge and kindness.

## Elephants

* There are 2 species of elephants, Asian elephants and African elephants
* African elephants are bigger than Asian elephants and also have bigger ears
* Elephants are the largest land *mammals* in the world, weighing between 5000 and 14000 pounds once mature
* Elephants are *herbivores*
* Sadly, they are hunted by humans for their ivory tusks
* They have no natural *predators*
* A female elephant is called a *cow*
* A male elephant is called a *bull*
* A baby elephant is called a *calf*
* A group of elephants is called a *herd* and it is made up of cows led by a *matriarch*
* Young bull elephants stay with the herd until they are around 15 years old when they leave the herd to live alone
* An elephant lives for 60 - 70 years
* The trunk is the elephant’s nose and is used to drink, smell, pick up food, touch and communicate
* Elephants are very emotional animals
* An adult elephant eats between 300 - 600 pounds of food daily and drinks 40 - 50 gallons of water daily

**Did You Know?**

Elephants have excellent memories.

They have the largest brain of ANY animal!

Elephants can purr.

They’re great swimmers.

## Skunks

* Skunks are *mammals* that live in North and Central America
* They are distinctive for their black and white fur
* Skunks are *omnivores*
* Skunk spray is very smelly and is called *musk*
* Skunks spray if they feel threatened by something
* Skunks are *nocturnal*
* Their natural *predators* are birds which don’t have a great sense of smell, other predators include coyotes and bobcats
* The males are called *bucks*
* The females are called *does*
* The babies are called *kits*

**Did You Know?**

Skunks can hit a target with their smelly spray 12 feet away (3.7m)!

Some skunks spring into a handstand before spraying. They also stamp their paws, hiss and growl!

## Owls

* Owls are *nocturnal*
* Most owls are *carnivorous*
* Some owls hunt fish
* There are around 200 different species of owl
* Owls are adapted to hunt. They have strong talons and a powerful beak
* Owls have very large farsighted eyes that are good for seeing things in the distance
* Their flight is almost silent, so they can swoop down on their *prey*
* An owl’s feathers help it to *camouflage* itself
* Barn owls are easily recognised by their heart shaped faces

**Did You Know?**

Owls can rotate their necks 270 degrees!

A group of owls is called a *parliament.*

Owls usually swallow their food whole and then *regurgitate* it as pellets.

Barn owls screech and tawny owls hoot.

Owls are the symbol of learning.

Owls don’t build nests, but lay their eggs in the crook of a tree or hole.

## Magpies

* Magpies are easily recognised by their black and white colours
* Magpies are *omnivores*
* They are often viewed as pests because they cause damage in gardens and fields
* A group of magpies is called a *parliament*
* They are part of the crow (or *corvidae*) family

**Did You Know?**

According to myth, magpies like to collect and store shiny objects, but in fact they are scared of shiny objects and try to avoid them!

Magpies are very intelligent and can recognise themselves in a mirror.

Magpies are *monogamous* which means that they mate for life.

They rarely travel far from where they were hatched.

**WHO REALLY SAID “*EUREKA!?”***

In Greece many years ago, there lived a genius called Archimedes. He loved to work out solutions to difficult problems.

One day, as he stepped into his bathtub, he noticed the water level rising and some spilling out. He realised that there was a relationship between the water level rising up and his body weight. It suddenly made sense to him why some things float or sink in water. He was so excited with his discovery that he jumped out of the bathtub and without even bothering to dress, ran into the streets shouting *“Eureka!”* This is a Greek word meaning *“I have found it!”*

## Glossary

## *Amphibians.*

*A plural noun. Cold-blooded animals with a backbone (like frogs, toads, newts and salamanders. They have a gill-breathing stage followed (typically) by a land based lung-breathing adult stage.*

## *Camouflage*.

*A verb. To hide or disguise from something.*

## *Carnivores.*

*A plural noun. Animals that feed on other animals.*

## *Chrysalis (Pupa).*

*A noun. An insect pupa, especially of a butterfly or moth. It normally has a hard outer case.*

## *Endoskeleton.*

*A noun. An internal skeleton, such as the bony skeleton of vertebrates. A vertebrate is an animal possessing a backbone and skeleton.*

## *Exoskeleton.*

*A noun. A hard external covering for the body of some invertebrate arthropods, providing both support and protection. An arthropod is an invertebrate that does not have a backbone. Such animals include insects, spiders and crabs.*

## *Flexible.*

*An adjective. Capable of bending easily without breaking.*

## *Genetic.*

*An adjective. Relating to genes or heredity.*

## *Habitat.*

*A noun. The natural home or environment of an animal, plant or organism.*

## *Herbivores.*

*A plural noun. Animals that feed on plants.*

## *Hibernate.*

*A verb. To spend the winter in a dormant (sleeping) state.*

## *Keratin.*

*A noun. A protein found in hair, feathers, hooves, claws, horns etc.*

## *Mammals.*

*A plural noun. Warm-blooded animals that breathe air, have a backbone and grow hair or fur at some point during their lives. All female mammals have glands that can produce milk. They normally give birth to live young.*

## *Matriarch.*

*A noun. A female who is the head of the family or tribe.*

## *Metamorphosis.*

*A noun. The process of transformation (change) from an immature form to an adult form in two or more distinct phases.*

## *Migrate.*

*A verb. When an animal moves from one region to another, especially regularly according to the seasons.*

## *Monogamous.*

*An adjective. Having only one mate at a time.*

## *Nocturnal.*

*An adjective. Active at night.*

## *Omnivores.*

*A plural noun. Animals that eat food of both plant and animal origin.*

## *Pollinators.*

*A plural noun. Creatures that move pollen from the male part of the flower to the female part of the flower.*

## *Predators.*

*A plural noun. Animals that naturally prey on others.*

## *Primates.*

*A plural noun. Any mammal, typically having flexible hands and feet with opposable digits, good eyesight and highly developed brains.*

## *Prey.*

*A noun. An animal that is hunted and killed by another for food.*

## *Regurgitate.*

*A verb. To bring (swallowed food) up again to the mouth.*

## *Reproduce.*

*A verb. To produce young.*

## *Rodent.*

*A noun. A gnawing mammal that includes rats, mice, squirrels, hamsters and porcupines.*

## *Sights.*

*A plural noun. A device on a gun that enables it to be aimed accurately.*

## THE CHALLENGE!

1. Which animal has the largest brain?
2. What is a female sheep called?
3. Why do pigs roll in mud?
4. What other name can you find for frogs’ eggs?
5. What does **metamorphosis** mean?
6. What name do you give to a creature that emerges from a butterfly egg?
7. What is the collective noun for lion?
8. What do you get if you cross a lion and a leopard (and no, this isn’t a joke)?!
9. What is a baby mouse called?
10. What is the fastest land animal in the world?
11. What are the scales on a tortoise’s shell called?
12. What group of animals do monkeys belong to?
13. What is the smallest breed of monkey?
14. What name do you give to a peacock’s train?
15. What is a male elephant called?
16. What is a skunk’s spray called?
17. What is a male skunk called?
18. How can you recognise a barn owl from the sound it makes?
19. What is the collective noun for magpies?
20. Who really said “Eureka!?”