

THE ARTICLE

New mammal species found

BNE: A wildlife expert in Laos has found a new species of animal – a rodent. It was found in a very strange place. Conservationist Dr Robert Timmins was walking through a food market when he found the new animal. It was being grilled in a food stall, ready to be served as a snack. Dr Timmins said: “It was for sale on a table next to some vegetables. I knew immediately it was something I had never seen before.” The rodent looks like a cross between a rat and a squirrel. It has short legs, long whiskers and a tail covered in thick hair. It is vegetarian and is active at night. Dr Timmins described how important his discovery was: “To find something so distinct in this day and age is just extraordinary.” The last new species to be identified was the bumblebee bat in 1974.

WARM-UPS

1. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics you are interested in, which do not look interesting and which look really boring:

wildlife / Laos / animals / strange places / food stalls / grilled food / markets / snacks / squirrels / rats / vegetarians / bats

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

2. RATS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with rats. Share your words with your partner / group and talk about them.

3. SMALL FURRY ANIMALS: Are you afraid of mice? Would you run away if you saw a rat? Would you hold and pet a hamster or rabbit? Do you think squirrels are cute?

Some small furry animals are cute, others are not. Talk about your feelings towards the animals below. Choose an adjective to describe each of them. Compare your adjectives.

- Squirrel
- Beaver
- Rat
- Hamster
- Mole
- Rabbit
- Mouse
- Guinea pig
- Porcupine
- Lemming

4. FOOD: Would you like to try barbecued rock rat? How about fried frogs' legs or snake soup? Give your opinion on the following foods that are eaten around the world:

- a. Frogs' legs (France and Italy)
- b. Sheep's' eyes (Spain and Italy)
- c. Raw horse meat (Japan)
- d. Live "dancing" shrimps (China)
- e. Sea slugs (Korea)
- f. Ant stomachs (Australia)
- g. Grasshoppers (Mexico)
- h. Rattlesnakes (USA)
- i. Fried pig blood (Hungary)
- j. Sheep brains (UK)
- k. Dogs (Philippines)
- l. Caterpillars (Africa)

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. A new species of animal has discovered a wildlife expert. | T / F |
| b. The new rodent was discovered in a very strange place. | T / F |
| c. A conservationist said the rat-like animal tasted delicious. | T / F |
| d. The rodent looks like a cross between a squirrel and a rat. | T / F |
| e. The animal is both vegetarian and nocturnal. | T / F |
| f. A conservationist said the discovery was extraordinary. | T / F |
| g. The last time a new animal was discovered was in 1948. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| a. expert | barbecued |
| b. species | rat |
| c. strange | unique |
| d. grilled | specialist |
| e. rodent | now |
| f. vegetarian | unlikely |
| g. distinct | class |
| h. in this day and age | herbivore |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| a. wildlife | a snack |
| b. new species | whiskers |
| c. served as | his discovery was |
| d. a cross between | of animal |
| e. long | and age |
| f. is active | expert |
| g. described how important | at night |
| h. in this day | a rat and a squirrel |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

RECONSTRUCTION: Put the sentences from each paragraph back into the correct order.

Conservationist Dr Robert Timmins was walking through a food market when he found the new animal.

Dr Timmins described how important his discovery was: "To find something so distinct in this day and age is just extraordinary."

Dr Timmins said: "It was for sale on a table next to some vegetables.

I knew immediately it was something I had never seen before."

A wildlife expert in Laos has found a new species of animal – a rodent.

It has short legs, long whiskers and a tail covered in thick hair.

It is vegetarian and is active at night.

It was being grilled in a food stall, ready to be served as a snack.

It was found in a very strange place.

The last new species to be identified was the bumblebee bat in 1974.

The rodent looks like a cross between a rat and a squirrel.

AFTER READING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... of the words **'rock'** and **'rat'**.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. TEXT RECONSTRUCTION: In pairs / groups, compare and talk about your answers to this exercise. After you agree, check your answers against the text.

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT RAT SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about rats.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

wildlife

market

grilled

vegetables

immediately

cross

whiskers

night

this day and age

bat

LANGUAGE

IDIOMS / SIMILIES: Look at the following idioms and similes that refer to small furry animals.

- In pairs / groups, try to guess their meaning.
- Match the idioms/ similes with their meanings in the right column.
- Use each idiom / simile to ask your own questions to your partner.

Idiom / Simile

Meaning

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. I'm more scared than a porcupine in a balloon factory. | a. Stop thinking a small problem is a huge, huge problem. |
| 2. She should try to squirrel away a few dollars each month. | b. I need someone to be a volunteer for my project / activity. |
| 3. She is such an eager beaver. | c. Someone who quickly tries to run away when problems or arrive. |
| 4. Like a rat deserting a sinking ship. | d. Suddenly unable to move or make decisions. |
| 5. Don't make a mountain out of a mole hill. | e. Saving a little money for something in the future is a good idea. |
| 6. They are like rabbits caught in the headlights of a car. | f. She made no sound at all. |
| 7. She was a quiet as a mouse. | g. It is difficult to be more afraid than how I'm feeling at the moment. |
| 8. Who's going to be my guinea pig? | h. She puts maximum effort into everything she does. |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. What did you think when you saw the headline of this article?
- b. Did you like reading the article?
- c. How do you feel about this new discovery?
- d. Were you surprised at anything you read in the article?
- e. Do you like grilled food and barbecues?
- f. Do you think there are more unknown species waiting to be discovered?
- g. Would you go to a zoo to see the new rodent?
- h. Would you like to be a conservationist?
- i. Is a conservationist's job?
- j. Which endangered species are most at risk?

STUDENT B's questions (Do not show these to student A)

- a. What adjective describes your feelings about this news?
- b. Are you surprised a new species was found?
- c. How do you think the conservationist felt when he saw the barbecued rock rat?
- d. Would you like to try grilled rock rat?
- e. What do you think about rats?
- f. Are you afraid of any animals or insects?
- g. Could you eat any kinds of animals?
- h. What is the strangest food you've eaten?
- i. What is the most disgusting food you've heard of?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ROLE PLAY: Role play the following people in a TV interview about the discovery of the Laotian rock rat. Team up with classmates who have been assigned the same role to develop your roles and discuss ideas and “strategies” before the role play begins.

Introduce yourself to the other role players before the role play begins.

Role A – TV interviewer

You need to ask lots of interesting science questions about the rock rat. You are also interested in trying it as a snack – you love eating different kinds of food.

Role B – The person who found the rock rat

You found the Laotian rock rat and brought the news to the world. You want to become famous. Pretend you are the new Indiana Jones. Pretend your story is full of adventure and excitement.

Role C – Laotian person

You live in the area in which the rock rat was found. You want money for your poor village. Try to sell your new product “fried rock rat” on TV. You know everything about rock rats.

Role D – Conservationist

You are a conservationist. You have news that the rock rat is an endangered species. Get publicity for the rock rat on TV. You have fallen in love with the rock rat and hate people who eat it.

Role E – Rock rat

You are a Laotian rock rat. You do not want to be eaten, nor do you want to be photographed, filmed or taken to zoos. An unusual thing about rock rats is that they can speak English.

Change roles and repeat the role play. Comment in groups about the differences between the two role plays.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

New mammal species found

BNE: A wildlife expert in Laos _____ _____ _____
species of animal – a rodent. It was found in a very
strange place. Conservationist Dr Robert Timmins
_____ _____ _____ food market when he found
the new animal. It was being grilled in a food stall,
_____ _____ _____ as a snack. Dr Timmins said: "It
was for sale on a table next to some vegetables. I
knew immediately it was something I had never seen
before." The rodent _____ _____ _____ a rat
and a squirrel. It has short legs, long whiskers and a
tail covered in thick hair. It is vegetarian and is
_____ _____ _____. Dr Timmins described how
important his discovery was: "To find something so
distinct _____ _____ _____ is just extraordinary."
The last new species to be identified was the
bumblebee bat in 1974.

HOMEWORK

- 1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.
- 2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find information on the Laotian rock rat. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.
- 3. ENDANGERED:** Choose an endangered animal. Make a poster about the animal and the danger it is in. Show it to your classmates in your next lesson. Ask your classmates what they think of the animal.
- 4. LETTER:** Write a letter to a conservation organization. Explain your thoughts on the discovery of the Laotian rock rat. Show your letter to the class next lesson. Did your classmates write similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE

a. F b. T c. F d. T e. T f. T g. F

SYNONYM MATCH

a. expert	specialist
b. species	class
c. strange	unlikely
d. grilled	barbecued
e. rodent	rat
f. vegetarian	herbivore
g. distinct	unique
h. in this day and age	now

PHRASE MATCH:

a. wildlife	expert
b. new species	of animal
c. served as	a snack
d. a cross between	a rat and a squirrel
e. long	whiskers
f. is active	at night
g. described how important	his discovery was
h. in this day	and age

IDIOMS / SIMILES

1. g 2. e 3. h 4. c 5. a 6. d 7. f 8. b

TEXT RECONSTRUCTION:

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It was found in a very strange place.

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