



# Mercia Marinas Mammal group Newsletter

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Not so much live news this month but here are some interesting facts about our animals.

## THERE ARE MAMMALS AND MAMMALS

We obviously fall into this category and know quite a lot about how we function but how do we compare to our animal friends?

**SKIN** – Without clothes mammals need fur to keep warm and even waterproof, as in the case of an Otter.



However, a thick fur coat is ideal in winter but they need a summer coat to so many will moult at least once or twice. This is triggered by day length and changes in temperature and controlled

by hormones in their blood. A hedgehog's spines are modified hairs but cannot be moulted all at once as lose their value as protection so are lost and re-grown over a long-time period.

**TEETH** – Carnivores need sharp canines for seizing prey but herbivores have broad ridged teeth like files to shred and grind plants. Rodents, such



as rats & squirrels have teeth which grow constantly and are kept trim by gnawing hard food.



If they do not gnaw frequently the front teeth grow too long making feeding difficult.

**EYES** – We are able to perceive distinct colours but animals do not normally see colour to the same extent as us. Animals active by day will see more colour than nocturnal ones who see shades of light and dark. On a really dark night they can see as well as we do in bright moonlight. The size, colour and positioning of animal eyes varies enormously. Eyes for stalking will face

more to the front and the field of vision will overlap to allow accurate judgement of distances.

**EARS** – Most animals need acute hearing in order to survive. Many can move each ear independently to enable them to scan all round. Bats hear ultrasonic sounds too high pitched for us, as are the squeaks of mice and rodents. Amazingly bats with cotton wool plugged ears are almost helpless but blindfolded can fly and catch food with little difficulty.



**BREEDING** – In animals, breeding is linked to seasons to ensure food is plentiful. Some mammals such as Badger and Stoat keep the eggs in the womb but they do not start to develop until conditions are best. Most



mammal males play no part in rearing the young however the male Fox brings food to the den to feed the female and cubs. Young born in a nest or den are naked and blind at birth but those born in the open such as deer are able to see and run quickly.

**SMELL** – Smell is the sense animals use the most – to find food, water, follow trails and recognise each other. They produce particular scents to aid communication, many of which are greasy so will not be washed away by rain. They mark distinct territories and some such as weasels eject a foul-smelling scent as a means of defence.



All our mammals here at the marina are using these amazing senses each and every day in order to survive. How well do we use ours? You decide.