

Animal Homes

Between mammals, birds, reptiles, insects and amphibians, there is understandably a very wide diversity of homes. Most full-time aquatic animals will not have any kind of fixed dwelling, and this includes fish, whales, dolphins and seals. Many herds of animals will also not have homes as they rely on their numbers for protection.

Each animal home can have a different name and within the whole animal kingdom you may find dens, nests, drays, dams, webs, sets, warrens, hives, lodges, mounds, tunnels, holts, and burrows, to name but a few.

Beaver Lodges and Dams

Beavers are medium-sized mammals found in North America and Europe. They live in dome-shaped lodges, which they build out of sticks and mud in deep water. The lodge has a chamber where the beaver lives and which can only be entered under water. To make sure that the water is deep enough for a lodge, beavers will often build a dam further downstream, to back up the water. Beavers can fell massive areas of forest in short amounts of time. They cement tree boughs and branches together with mud and stones, creating dams as long as 850 metres!



Photo courtesy of Walter Sigmund CC-A2.5

Weaver Bird Nests

Certain species of Weaver bird weave hanging nests high in the tree canopy. In one species it is actually the males who build the nests, using grass and other flexible vegetation. They first build a swing suspended from the chosen perch and then make a stiff ring for an entrance. Around this they construct a basket, into which they attract a female. In order to attract several females and ensure the maximum amount of offspring, they build a number of these baskets. Other species of Weaver bird build "villages" of many nests under one roof – often for as many as 95 pairs.



Photo courtesy of Tim Ross

Termite Mounds

There are many species of termite and they occur in tropical and subtropical places. Many dig and mould massive amounts of earth into huge structures. A mound can start with just a single pair of termites that create a small chamber just beneath a rock or stone. As time goes by and numbers increase, the chambers also increase in number and size. Termite mounds taller than 12 metres have been found in Africa! Mounds are often built along a north-south line with two larger flat sides facing east and west to absorb the heat from the rising and setting sun.



Courtesy of Verka Marakov, Slovakia

Army Ant's Bivouac

Army ants are always on the move, making it impossible to set up a permanent home that they could return to each night. A colony may have as many as 700,000 worker ants and the "bivouac", as it has been called, is made up mainly of the bodies of these individuals! The ants find a sheltered spot to stop each night and then link legs, using their strong claws to form chains. The temporary structure protects the queen and the young ants or larvae overnight, even controlling the air temperature around them. The structure is dismantled at first light.



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