

Animal Life

SLEEPY DAYS!
Who sleeps during the cold weather!

Frogs

Frogs are cold-blooded amphibians, which means their body temperature changes with the temperature around them. To keep their skin wet they live near ponds, rivers and streams but are often seen on land on rainy nights when their skin is kept wet by the rain. Basking in the sun will keep them warm but on chilly days they will need to shelter to stay warm. During a hot summer or cold winter they bury themselves in mud and leaves to protect themselves from the extreme temperatures. By remaining dormant in the mud they can save energy and will not need food for some time.

Frogs are carnivores, which means they eat other creatures such as insects and bugs and use their long sticky tongue to catch them. Hundreds of soft round eggs known as spawn are produced in the spring, which will hatch into tadpoles. Gradually their legs begin to develop and soon they look like adult frogs.



Bats

Bats hibernate in caves or roofs for the winter when temperatures are cold. They hang upside down by their feet from the roof of the cave or building they inhabit. They slow down their heart rate, breathing and growth rate during this time and survive off the fat stored in their bodies. Their body temperature drops to about 2°C and will remain like this until the temperature outside rises.



Squirrels

Did you know that squirrels don't hibernate - they curl up in their den or drey in bad weather but come out when they need food. Squirrels eat a lot of food in autumn which makes them fat but they do not eat enough to hibernate. They stock up on seeds and nuts from trees, which are their favourite, but will also eat berries, mushrooms and flowers.



The Hedgehog

Although hedgehogs mainly eat insects, they also eat slugs, worms, fruit and berries. Their backs are covered in about 5,000 spines but there is hair and soft fur underneath. Young hedgehogs are born naked but the spines break through several hours after they are born. Hedgehogs are good swimmers and climbers and make a lot of grunting sounds. They sleep during the day and come out at night

to find food when they will be hidden from predators. If an attacker gets too close the hedgehogs roll into a ball so that the head and feet are

protected. Sometimes leaves or grass get stuck to the spines helping them camouflage (blend in with their surroundings).

In winter when the weather gets cold hedgehogs curl up in a bed of leaves and sleep. Their body temperature drops to match the outside temperature and growth slows down to save energy, so much so that hedgehogs have been known to stop breathing for periods of up to an hour during hibernation. Before they sleep they eat as much food as possible, which they store as fat in their bodies, so as to survive long periods without food. On mild winter days hedgehogs have been known to sneak out of their warm nest to find food!

