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see how we live

# Night Animals



 Orpheus

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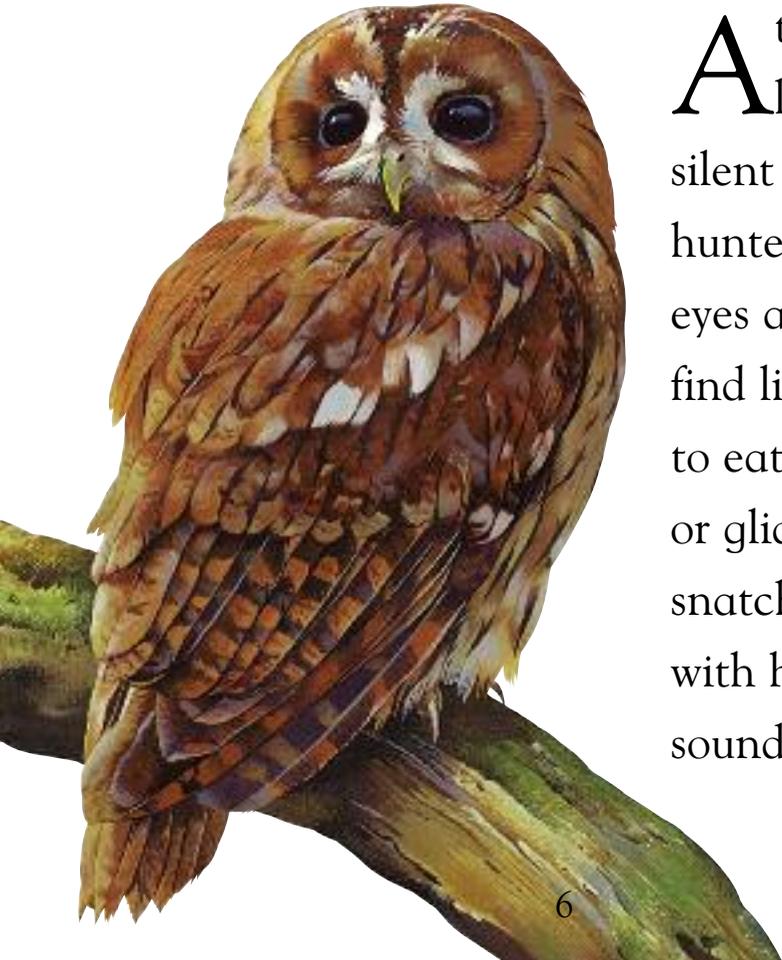
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## Night animals

**W**ho's awake while you sleep in your bed at night? Who goes hunting in the fields or in city streets, in the forests or the deserts? We do! We nocturnal animals prefer to sleep during the day and go in search of our food under the cover of darkness. Find out about our secret lives here.

# How does an owl hunt its prey?



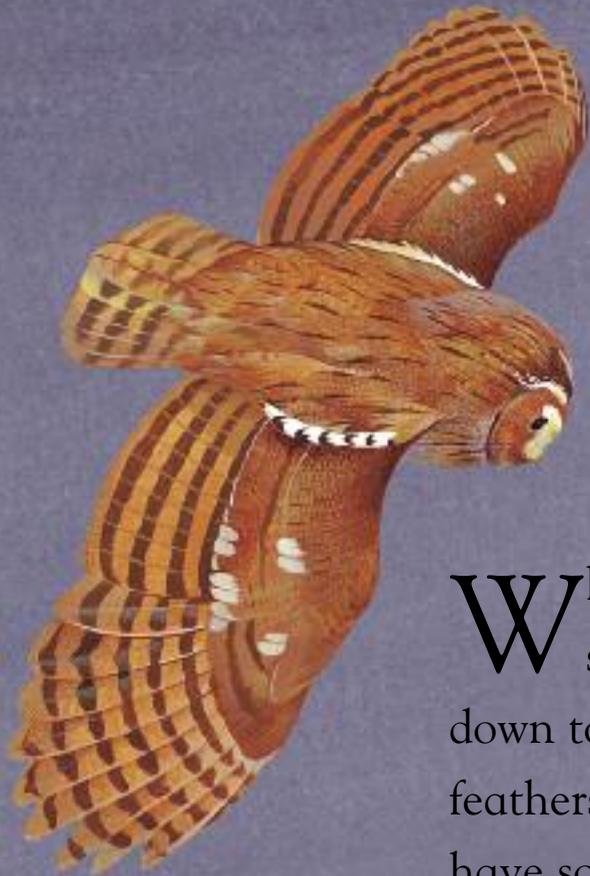
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A tawny owl like me is a silent and stealthy hunter. I use my eyes and ears to find little animals to eat. Then I fly or glide down to snatch my prey with hardly a sound at all.

The claws on my feet are called talons. They are long and very sharp. I have four toes. When I perch on a branch, or clutch my prey, one toe swivels round to the front to improve my grip.



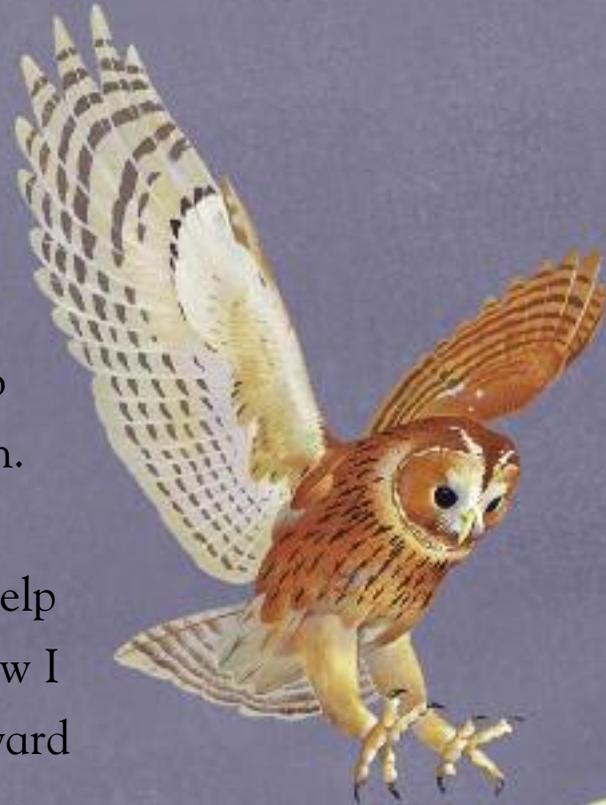
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**W**hen I spot something, I swoop down towards it. The feathers on my broad wings have soft edges. These dampen the noise wings usually make as they beat the air. This poor vole won't hear me coming.



**I** use my wings to change direction. Fanning out my feathers and tail help slow me down. Now I swing my legs forward and open my talons ...



**T**hat was easy! Now I shall fly off to enjoy my meal. Prey this size I can swallow in a single gulp. Besides small mammals, I eat frogs, birds, worms and fish.



**I**'ve swallowed the fur, teeth and bones, but I can't digest these things. So I cough up the remains in a small, neat ball called an owl pellet.

**I** have to catch prey to feed my babies as well. It takes several weeks for their adult feathers to grow. Until then, they are covered with soft, downy feathers.

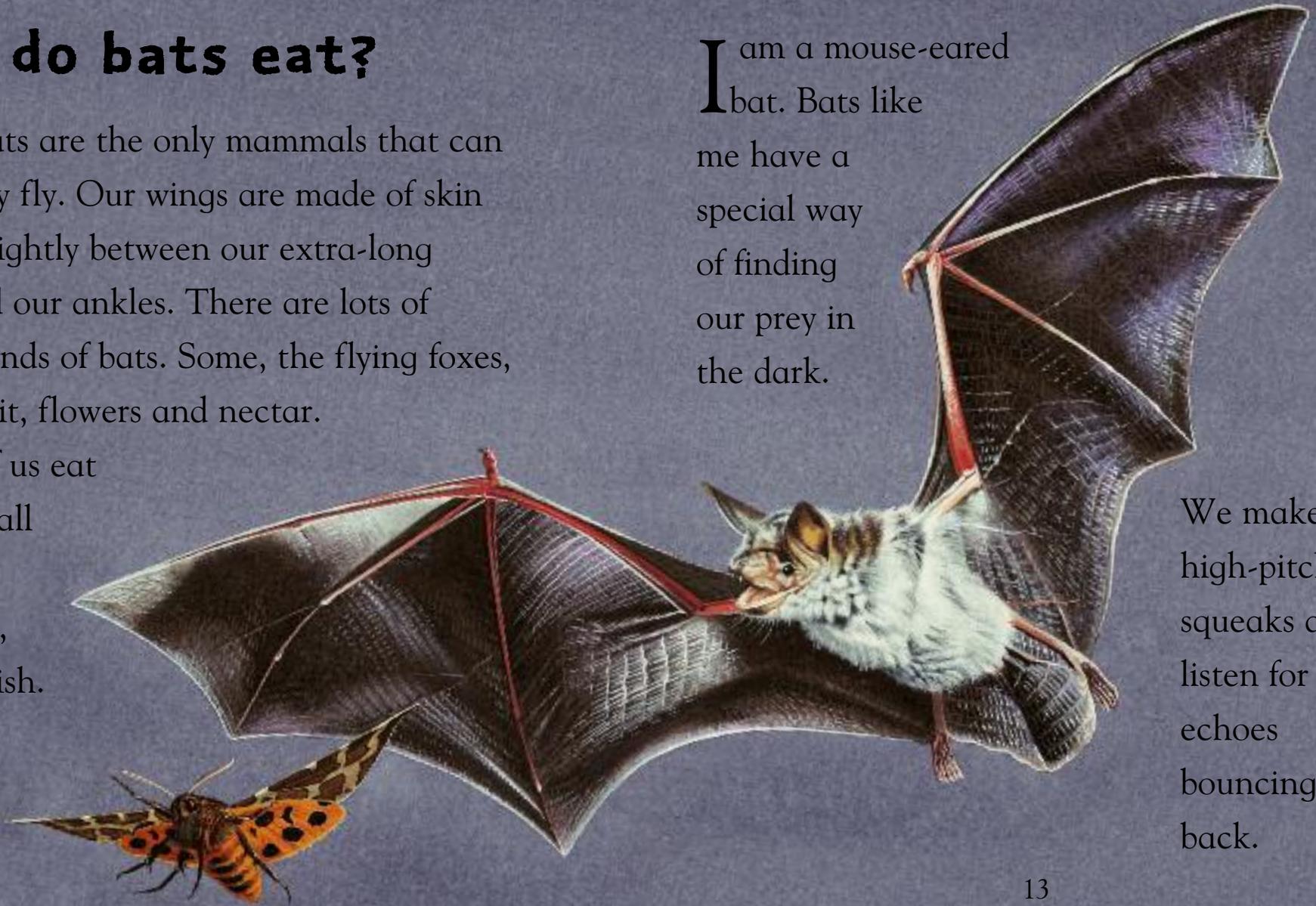


## What do bats eat?

We bats are the only mammals that can truly fly. Our wings are made of skin stretched tightly between our extra-long fingers and our ankles. There are lots of different kinds of bats. Some, the flying foxes, feed on fruit, flowers and nectar.

The rest of us eat insects, small mammals, frogs, birds, and even fish.

I am a mouse-eared bat. Bats like me have a special way of finding our prey in the dark.



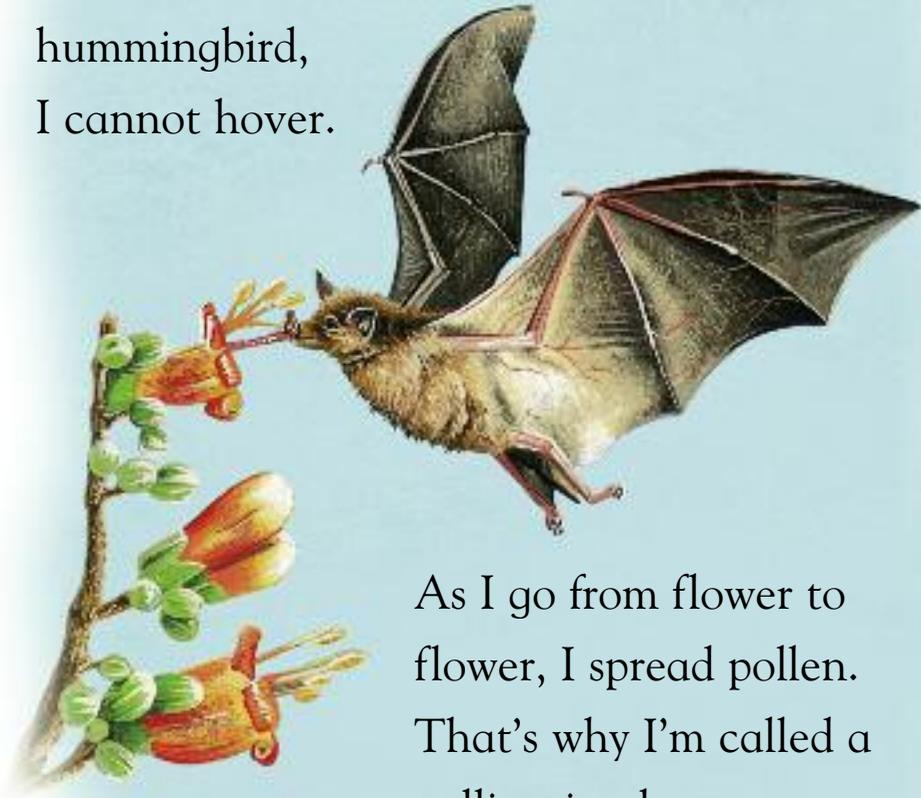
We make high-pitched squeaks and listen for the echoes bouncing back.

From these echoes, we can work out if our prey, such as a moth, is nearby. Other types of bat have very large ears or ridges on their noses. These may look a bit odd, but they give them extra help in listening for echoes.



We come out at night, and sleep during the daytime. We choose quiet places like caves, trees or the roofs of old buildings to roost in. Lots of us hang close together, upside down . Sweet dreams!

I have a very long, bristly tongue—perfect for dipping in to a flower and feeding on the nectar. I have to be quick about it because, unlike a bee or a hummingbird, I cannot hover.



As I go from flower to flower, I spread pollen. That's why I'm called a pollinating bat.



You may have heard of me—but I'm not as scary as you think. I'm a vampire bat and I feed on blood. Not people's blood, of course. Cows or pigs are my favourite places for a meal. I pierce their skin with my sharp teeth, but they don't feel a thing. Then I lick up their blood with my tongue.

I'm a flying fox (I *do* look a bit like a fox with wings, I suppose!). My large claws are perfect for gripping fruit like these bananas.

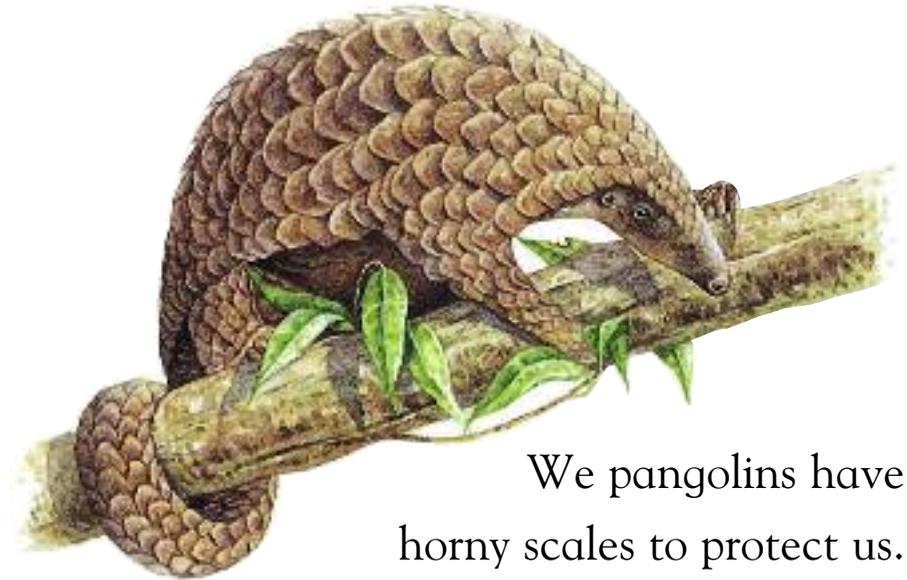


I'm a very unusual bat—a fisherman bat. As my name suggests, I catch fish from below the water's surface in lakes and rivers. I dangle my long legs in the water as I fly. It's not long before I grab a fish.

## Which animals search for insects at night?



Night is the best time to go hunting for insects. We armadillos and pangolins work alone. We both have long snouts which we use to sniff out our prey. Our strong claws are perfectly designed for breaking open nests. And our sticky tongues pick up lots of insects at once very nicely!



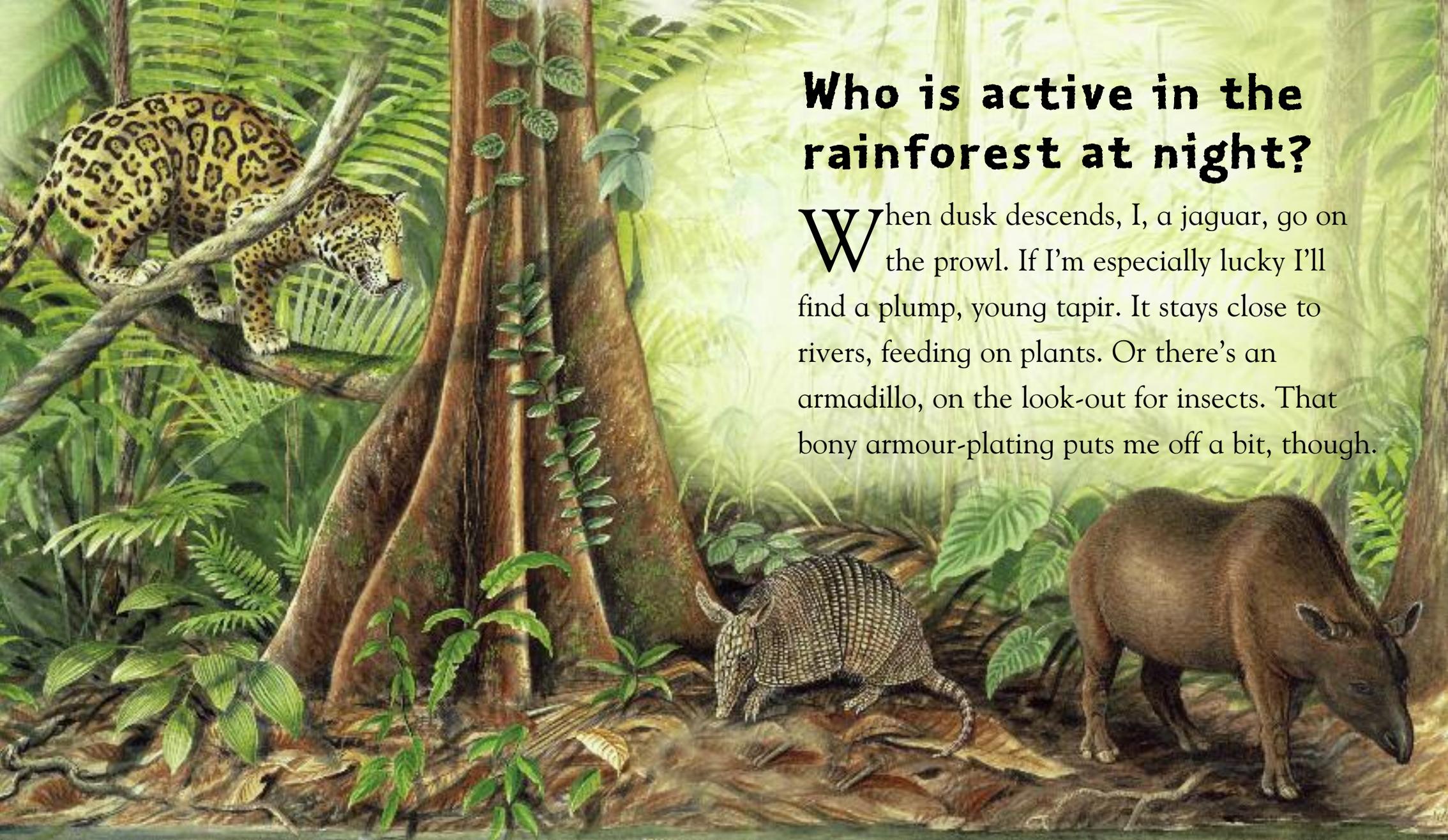
We pangolins have horny scales to protect us.



Everything about me is strange—even my name: aye-aye. I have very long, spindly middle fingers. I use them to scrape out insect grubs from under the bark of a tree. I listen for them using my large, bat-like ears.

I also go hunting at night, but a hedgehog's favourite dish is earthworms. I'll also eat insects, slugs and caterpillars. If danger threatens, I roll up into a spiny ball. This puts off all but the most determined of attackers.





## Who is active in the rainforest at night?

When dusk descends, I, a jaguar, go on the prowl. If I'm especially lucky I'll find a plump, young tapir. It stays close to rivers, feeding on plants. Or there's an armadillo, on the look-out for insects. That bony armour-plating puts me off a bit, though.

Meanwhile, up in the trees, we three long-tailed animals go about our business. On the left, a tamandua, a tree anteater; on the right a kinkajou, seeking out fruit and nectar; in the middle is a tree porcupine, a leaf-eater.



# Which animals raid our dustbins at night?

Some night animals have moved to our cities in search of food. We rats have long lived alongside people in cellars, sewers and roof spaces. In North America you'll find us and raccoons rifling through your rubbish dumps and dustbins for anything we can find to eat.

