THE ARTICLE

New mammal species found

BNE: The first new species of mammal to be discovered in more than three decades has been found in the unlikeliest of places. The Laotian rock rat, a rodent-like creature, was discovered on a skewer by conservationists at a market in Laos. It was being grilled in a food stall ready to be served as a snack. "It was for sale on a table next to some vegetables. I knew immediately it was something I had never seen before," said the discoverer Dr Robert Timmins of the Wildlife Conservation Society. Commenting on the significance of his find, Dr Timmins said: "To find something so distinct in this day and age is just extraordinary....This could be one of the last remaining mammal families to be discovered."

The latest addition to the animal family tree looks like a cross between a squirrel and a rat but is in fact more closely related to the guinea pig. Regardless of looks, it is distinct enough to warrant being classed as an entirely new species of rodent. It has short, stubby legs, long whiskers and a tail covered in dense hair. It is a nocturnal herbivore and lives among limestone rocks under the cover of the forest. It gives birth to one offspring at a time, rather than a litter. The last new species to be identified was the bumblebee bat in 1974. The latest discovery is reported in the British Natural History Museum's journal *Systematics and Biodiversity*.

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:

mammals / discoveries / Laos / conservationists / food stalls / grilled food / snacks

/ squirrels / rats / guinea pigs / new species

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

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

3. SMALL FURRY ANIMALS: Are you afraid of mice? Would you flee at the sight of a rat? Would you hold and pet a hamster or rabbit? Do you think squirrels are cute?

Small furry animals evoke different emotions in different people. Talk about your feelings towards the animals below. Choose an adjective to describe each of them. Compare your adjectives.

- Squirrel •
- Rabbit

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- Beaver
- Rat •
 - Guinea pig • Porcupine •

Mouse

Hamster • Mole

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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:

Lemming

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

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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 completely new addition to the rodent family was discovered.	T / F
b.	The new rodent was discovered on a barbecue skewer.	T / F
c.	A conservationist said the rat-like creature had an exquisite taste.	T / F
d.	The discovery is a significant find.	T / F
e.	The rodent looks like a cross between a squirrel and a rat.	T / F
f.	It has long, gangly legs.	T / F
g.	It gives birth to one offspring at a time.	T / F
h.	The last new species to be identified was the bumblebee bat.	T / F

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

a.	species	mix
b.	creature	brood
c.	skewer	now
d.	distinct	vegetarian
e.	in this day and age	child
f.	cross	class
g.	warrant	stick
h.	herbivore	unique
i.	offspring	beast
j.	litter	deserve

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

a.	species	and age
b.	found in the unlikeliest	addition
c.	discovered	legs
d.	served	of mammal
e.	in this day	as a snack
f.	The latest	to one offspring at a time
g.	a cross between	of places
h.	stubby	herbivore
i.	a nocturnal	a squirrel and a rat
j.	gives birth	by conservationists

WHILE READING / LISTENING

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

Paragraph 1

I knew immediately it was something I had never seen before," said the discoverer Dr Robert Timmins of the Wildlife Conservation Society.
"It was for sale on a table next to some vegetables.
Commenting on the significance of his find, Dr Timmins said: "To find something so distinct in this day and age is just extraordinary
It was being grilled in a food stall ready to be served as a snack.
The first new species of mammal to be discovered in more than three decades has been found in the unlikeliest of places.
The Laotian rock rat, a rodent-like creature, was discovered by conservationists on a skewer at a market in Laos.
This could be one of the last remaining mammal families to be discovered."

Paragraph 2

It gives birth to one offspring at a time, rather than a litter.
It has short, stubby legs, long whiskers and a tail covered in dense hair.
It is a nocturnal herbivore and lives among limestone rocks under the cover of the forest.
Regardless of looks, it is distinct enough to warrant being classed as an entirely new species of rodent.
The last new species to be identified was the bumblebee bat in 1974.
The latest addition to the animal family tree looks like a cross between a squirrel and a rat but is in fact more closely related to the guinea pig.
The latest discovery is reported in the British Natural History Museum's journal Systematics and Biodiversity.

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:

three decades	cross
skewer	warrant
immediately	stubby
this day and age	cover
bona fide	litter
last	journal

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

- 1. I'm more scared than a porcupine in a balloon factory.
- She should try to squirrel away a few dollars each month.
- 3. She is such an eager beaver.
- 4. Like a rat deserting a sinking ship.
- 5. Don't make a mountain out of a mole hill.
- 6. They are like rabbits caught in the headlights of a car.
- 7. She was a quiet as a mouse.
- 8. Who's going to be my guinea pig?

Meaning

- a. Stop pretending something is a crisis when it's just a small problem.
- b. I need someone to be a volunteer for my project / activity.
- c. Someone who quickly tries to abandon others when problems or signs of trouble occur.
- d. Suddenly unable to move or make decisions.
- e. Saving a little money for something in the future is a good idea.
- f. She made no sound at all.
- g. It is difficult to be more afraid than how I'm feeling at the moment.
- 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 article's headline?
- b. Did you like reading the article?
- c. How do you feel about this new discovery?
- d. Did you raise your eyebrows 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 looking for new species?
- i. Is the job of conservationist an important one?
- j. Which endangered species are most at risk?

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

- a. What adjective would you use to describe 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 rock rat on the skewer?
- 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?

POST 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 scientific questions about the rock rat. You are also interested in trying it as a snack – you love eating different kinds of food.
Role B – Discoverer
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. Exaggerate your story and emphasize the importance of your find.
Role C – Laotian local
You live in the area in which the rock rat was found. You want money for your poverty-stricken village. Try to sell your new product "fried rock rat" on TV. You know everything there is to know about rock rats.
Role D – Conservationist
You are a conservationist. You have news that the rock rat is an endangered species. Use this chance to publicize this fact 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. A trait unique to your species is that you 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

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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 highlighting the animal's plight. 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 and see if your classmates wrote similar things.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE

		_		_		_		
а. Т	г b. т	c. F	d. T	е. Т	f. F	g. T	h. T	
SYNONYM MATCH								
a.	. species class							
b.	creature			be	ast			
с.	. skewer stick							
d.	d. distinct unique							
e.	in this day and	age		no	now			
f.	cross mix							
g.	warrant			de	serve			
h.	herbivore			ve	getarian			
i.	. offspring child							
j.	litter brood							
PHRASE MATCH:								
a.	species			of	mammal			
b.	. found in the unlikeliest of places							
с.	discovered by conservationists							
d.	. served as a snack							
e.	in this day				and age			
f.	The latest addition							
g.	. a cross between a squirrel and a rat							
h.	stubby legs							
i.	a nocturnal herbivore							
j.	gives birth to one offspring at a time							
TRUE / FALSE								
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1.g 2.e 3.h 4.c 5.a 6.d 7.f 8.b	1. g	2. e	3. h	4. c	5. a	6. d	7. f	8. b
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TEXT RECONSTRUCTION:

BNE: The first new species of mammal to be discovered in more than three decades has been found in the unlikeliest of places. The Laotian rock rat, a rodent-like creature, was discovered by conservationists on a skewer at a market in Laos. It was being grilled in a food stall ready to be served as a snack. "It was for sale on a table next to some vegetables. I knew immediately it was something I had never seen before," said the discoverer Dr Robert Timmins of the Wildlife Conservation Society. Commenting on the significance of his find, Dr Timmins said: "To find something so distinct in this day and age is just extraordinary....This could be one of the last remaining mammal families to be discovered."

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