

Minibeasts

Minibeasts are small animals that are found in places like gardens, rivers and houses. There are lots of different kinds of minibeast such as spiders, beetles and butterflies. Some minibeasts have lots of legs; some have wings.



In the Garden

There are lots of minibeasts to be found in people's gardens. You might see bees buzzing around the flowers. Bees have yellow and black stripes to show other animals that they can sting.

You could also see butterflies gently flying with their big, colourful wings. You cannot find a baby butterfly because when they are younger, they are caterpillars. The caterpillars eat lots of food, and then build a special cover called a 'chrysalis', which they stay in until they change into butterflies. Butterflies can come in lots of different colours and sizes.

As well as creatures that fly, there are some minibeasts that slide along the ground and up walls. Snails and slugs both have soft bodies and live on the ground. Snails have a hard shell on their backs to keep them safe. Slugs do not have shells. They hide under leaves to keep safe. Slugs are seen as pests as they eat all the plants in people's gardens.

In Ponds and Rivers

Minibeasts don't just live on land but in and around water as well. One insect that lives near the water is the dragonfly. Dragonflies have four wings and long bodies. Some of their bodies can be blue and some are red. They fly very close to the water. They have very big eyes and can see things a long way away.

In Your Home

There are minibeasts that live in people's homes as well. Spiders are often found inside houses and flats. They find small cracks and crawl inside to make webs and lay eggs. In the UK, spiders are not dangerous to people but people are often afraid of them.

Questions about Minibeasts

Answer in full sentences.

1. Name one place where you could find a minibeast.

2. Where could you see a bee in a garden?

3. What is the difference between snails and slugs?

4. How many wings do dragonflies have?

5. Why do spiders come into houses?

6. Finish this sentence.

To help them see a long way, dragonflies have very big ...

Questions about Minibeasts

Answers

1. Name one place where you could find a minibeast.

Children to include one of the following in their answer: pond, garden or house.

2. Where could you see a bee in a garden?

You could find a bee near to flowers.

3) What is the difference between snails and slugs?

Snails have a shell but slugs do not.

4. How many wings do dragonflies have?

Dragonflies have four wings.

5. Why do spiders come into houses?

Spiders come into houses to make webs and lay eggs.

6. Finish this sentence.

To help them see a long way, dragonflies have very big **eyes**.

Minibeasts

Minibeasts are animals which can be found in many different environments. They are able to live in water, in the soil and in small cracks and openings. In the United Kingdom, there are well over 30,000 different kind of minibeast, such as stag beetles, caterpillars and snails. They can look very different. Some minibeasts, like butterflies, are able to fly, whereas others, like earthworms, move underground. There are species like caterpillars and millipedes that have longer bodies and a large number of legs, and live mostly on leaves.



In the Garden

Gardens hold many different species of minibeast. Bees are often found around flowers in gardens and local parks. They are important as they collect pollen to make honey and by moving from flower to flower, they help more flowers grow. If a garden has a hedge around it, you might be able to find a stag beetle underneath. These are the largest insects in Britain, and can grow up to 7cm long. They have a hard outer shell and very large jaws that look like the antlers on a deer's head. Not all beetles are this big. Most of the beetles that make a home in gardens are very small. Most beetles like to live in old, rotting leaves or bark so that they are not easily seen.

In Ponds and Rivers

Other habitats where minibeasts can be found in great quantities and variety are in ponds and rivers. There are creatures that live in or near water that are like the animals found in gardens. Leeches are very similar to slugs. They have soft, stretchy bodies but live their lives in swamps and rivers. Lots of minibeasts start as larvae (babies) in water and when they are fully-grown, they are able to fly or live on land. Insects like dragonflies and mayflies grow from larva into large, four-winged insects, which live on the reeds and grasses that surround the water.

Staying Alive

Most minibeasts do not have a skeleton like humans; they have a shell on the outside of their bodies to protect them. However, some minibeasts' bodies are only soft. These animals often try to hide or blend in with the plants around them so that they are not seen. The bodies of slugs are completely soft and birds and other predators can easily eat them. Snails carry a hard shell on their backs and are able to pull back into this shell if they feel threatened. Though it is not very popular in the UK, snails are eaten by people in some countries in the world.

Questions about Minibeasts

Answer in full sentences.

1. How many different species of minibeast are found in the United Kingdom?

2. Name two features of millipedes.

3. How did stag beetles get their name?

4. How are the skeletons of most minibeasts different from humans?

5. What is a habitat?

6. What name is given to baby insects?

7. How do snails react if they are scared?

8. Which minibeasts have you spotted before? Where did you see them?

Questions about Minibeasts

Answers

1. How many different species of minibeast are found in the United Kingdom?

There are over 30,000 different species in the United Kingdom.

2. Name two features of millipedes.

Millipedes have long bodies and many legs.

3. How did stag beetles get their name?

Stage beetles got their name as they have long jaws like the antlers of a deer.

4. How are the skeletons of most minibeasts different from humans?

Humans have a skeleton on the inside of their bodies; insects have a shell on the outside.

5. What is a habitat?

A habitat is where an insect / minibeast / other animal lives.

6. What name is given to baby insects?

Baby insects are known as larvae.

7. How do snails react if they are scared?

If a snail is scared, it hides back into its shell.

8. Which minibeasts have you spotted before? Where did you see them?

Children to give an appropriate answer referring to minibeasts.

Minibeasts

Minibeasts are a group of animals that are all 'invertebrates'. This is a term for animals that do not have a backbone. Minibeasts can be found in many contrasting environments. They are able to survive and thrive in places that other animals wouldn't be able to, such as in tiny cracks in walls and within the soil beneath our feet. In the United Kingdom, there are well over 30,000 different species of minibeast, such as stag beetles, caterpillars and snails. The appearance of minibeasts can vary greatly. Some species, like ladybirds, are able open their shells to release wings, allowing them to fly. Other species such as earthworms are able to generate slime, which allows them to move easily underground. There are also species like caterpillars and millipedes that have elongated bodies and a large number of legs. Some are coloured to allow them to easily hide on leaves and branches.



In the Garden

Gardens hold a dizzying array of minibeasts. Honeybees and bumblebees are often found in the vicinity of flowering plants. They are incredibly important to the life of the garden as they collect pollen to make honey and by hopping from flower to flower, they transfer the pollen to the parts of the plant needed for more flowers and plants to grow. This is known as pollination.

Minibeasts need the right conditions in which to thrive. If a garden or park has a hedge skirting round it, you might be lucky enough to find a stag beetle. These are the largest insects in Britain, and can grow up to 7cm long. They have a hard outer shell, known as an exoskeleton, and large, extended jaws that look like the antlers on a deer's head. Finding a stag beetle is increasingly rare as they are quickly becoming extinct. Soon, this species will have disappeared from the United Kingdom forever. If you are on the hunt for beetles, the best places to find them are dark and moist. They especially like to hide in rotting wood and leaves, as they have food and also somewhere to live in safety.

In Ponds and Rivers

Minibeasts are also found in ponds and rivers. There are insects that spend their entire lives in or near water. Minibeasts tend to have brief lives, with most living much less than a year. A large number of minibeasts begin their lives as larvae (babies) born in water and then once they have matured to adulthood, they may then have the ability to fly or live on land. Insects like dragonflies and mayflies emerge from larvae, transforming into large, four-winged insects which spend the rest of their lives on the tall reeds and grasses that surround the water. Not all minibeasts that live in ponds and rivers are insects. Some spiders live in water. Because water spiders don't have gills they have a clever way to get the air they need to breathe. They spin webs on the surface and collect air bubbles to fill it. They use these air bubbles to breathe whenever they need to!

Questions about Minibeasts

Answer in full sentences.

1. Name two places where you might find a minibeast.

2. Why can't you see a ladybird's wings if it isn't flying?

3. Where would you look if you were trying to find a beetle?

4. Why are bees important?

5. Why is it hard to find a stag beetle?

6. How are stag beetles different from earthworms? Give two ways.

7. How do water spiders make sure they can breathe?

8. Write a short description of a minibeast you have seen. Use adjectives to give a full description.

Questions about Minibeasts

Answers

1. Name two places where you might find a minibeast.

Children to include 2 appropriate answers from the text: gardens, ponds, cracks, soil, hedges.

2. Why can't you see a ladybird's wings if it isn't flying?

Ladybirds keep their wings under their shell if they aren't using them for flying.

3. Where would you look if you were trying to find a beetle?

If you were trying to find a beetle, you would look somewhere dark and moist, like amongst rotting leaves.

4. Why are bees important?

Bees are important because they create honey but also pollinate flowers, helping new flowers grow.

5. Why is it hard to find a stag beetle?

It is hard to find stag beetles now as they are dying out. There are not many left.

6. How are stag beetles different from earthworms? Give two ways.

Children to provide an appropriate answer that references key features of each e.g. earthworms can produce slime and do not have any legs; stag beetles have large jaws that look like antlers and an exoskeleton.

7. How do water spiders make sure they can breathe?

They spin webs on the surface and collect air bubbles to fill it. They use these air bubbles to breathe whenever they need to!

8. Write a short description of a minibeast you have seen. Use adjectives to give a full description.

Children to write a short description of a minibeast describing its features.