

# Animal Homes



by Mary Holland

# Animal Homes

Just like humans, animals use their homes for shelter and to raise their young. Animal homes might be easy to see, or they may be hidden (camouflaged) for protection. Some animals are great builders and other animals borrow homes that other animals have made. Different animals might just use natural places like caves or holes in trees to make a home. And some animals might even carry their home on their back! Sticks, mud, leaves, cotton, and grass are all things that animals might use to build a home. Whether by digging, spinning, building or borrowing, animal homes are as varied as the animals themselves. This is a perfect sequel to Mary Holland's *Animal Anatomy and Adaptations* series.

Animals in this book include red-bellied woodpeckers, potter wasp, beaver, red squirrel, pileated woodpecker, eastern gray squirrel, Baltimore oriole, bald-faced hornet, eastern tent caterpillar, spittle bug, black bear, woodchuck, red fox, eastern chipmunk, and humans.

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The *For Creative Minds* includes

- Home-Building Materials
- Which Are Animal Homes:
- Match the Animal to its Home

Thanks to Torey Caviston, Environmental Education Coordinator at DeVries Nature Conservancy for verifying the accuracy of the information in this book.

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**Mary Holland** is a naturalist, nature photographer, columnist, and award-winning author with a life-long passion for natural history. After graduating from the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources, Mary worked as a naturalist at the Museum of the Hudson Highlands in New York state, directed the state-wide Environmental Learning for the Future program for the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, worked as a resource naturalist for the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and designed and presented her own "Knee-High Nature Programs" for libraries and elementary schools throughout Vermont and New Hampshire.

Her other children's books with Arbordale include *Otis the Owl*, *Ferdinand Fox's First Summer* (NSTA / CBC Most Outstanding Science Trade Book and Moonbeam Children's Book Award), *The Beavers' Busy Year*, *Yodel the Yearling*, *Animal Ears*, *Animal Skins*, *Animal Noses*, *Animal Tails*, *Animal Eyes*, *Animal Legs*, and *Animal Mouths* (NSTA / CBC Most Outstanding Science Trade Book). Mary's book *Naturally Curious: a Photographic Field Guide and Month-by-Month Journey Through the Fields, Woods and Marshes of New England* won the 2011 National Outdoor Book Award for the Nature Guidebook category. *Naturally Curious Day by Day* was published in 2016. Mary lives in Vermont with her lab, Greta. Visit Mary's blog at [naturallycuriouswithmaryholland.wordpress.com](http://naturallycuriouswithmaryholland.wordpress.com).



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Animals use their homes for shelter and for raising their young. They make their homes in many different places—in the ground, in water, under bark, on flowers, under rocks, and inside trees. They also make them out of lots of different materials, including leaves, sticks, rocks, feathers, mud, saliva, and spider silk.

This beaver builds its lodge using trees and mud.



Sometimes branches fall off a tree and the resulting injury to the tree causes decay that leave holes (cavities). These cavities are used by many animals as homes in which they raise their babies. A snug hole keeps young red squirrels from getting wet and cold. When they are old enough, the young squirrels will be able to climb out of their home and jump from branch to branch.



Sometimes animals make their own tree cavity to use as a nest. Woodpeckers have big, strong bills which they use to chip away wood. They make a deep hole in a tree and lay their eggs in it. When the eggs hatch, the parents feed insects to the young woodpeckers. As soon as the young woodpeckers can fly, they leave their nest.



Some animals live in shelters that they make as well as in cavities. Many eastern gray squirrels make a nest for their young in tree cavities. In the spring, summer and fall some eastern gray squirrels build their homes in the forks of trees limbs. Using twigs, bark, and leaves, they make a big ball lined with soft moss and grass. This hollow ball is called a drey. Flying squirrels, red squirrels, and eastern gray squirrels use dreys as temporary shelters.



# For Creative Minds

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## Home-Building Materials

Match the material and the animal that uses it to build its home.

Mud Dauber Wasp

Osprey

Paper Wasp

Spittle Bug



This bird builds its nest in high areas near water using **sticks and tree branches**.

This small insect makes a sticky **foam** home along plant stems or leaves.

This type of wasp gathers fibers from dead **wood** and plant stems. It mixes those fibers with **saliva** (spit) to make its papery home.

This type of wasp scrapes up mud that it carries to a well-protected location to build a tube nest. Different muds give the tube different colors.

Which of these animals make their home under a rotting log?

Ants

Centipede

Salamander

Snake



Beetle Larva

Earthworm

Slug

Answers: sticks and tree branches-osprey; foam-spittle bug; saliva and wood-paper wasp; mud-mud dauber wasp. Rotting Log: all



Birds usually use natural material like grasses, leaves, sticks, moss, and mud to build their nests. Sometimes, when a bird is building its nest near humans, it recycles man-made things it finds by using them in their nest. Some of the more unusual items found in bird nests include:

- light bulbs
- coat hangers
- barbed wire
- paper
- plastic
- glass
- nails
- aluminum foil
- cigarette butts

Can you find the cigarette butts (white cylinders) in this northern mockingbird nest?

A snag is a dead tree that is still standing. In North America, about 85 species of birds, at least 50 mammal species, and roughly a dozen reptiles and amphibians rely on snags for shelter and nesting.

Can you think of an animal that might live in a snag?



Snag



Painted Turtle



Snail

And some animals like turtles and snails have shells that are part of their bodies (exoskeleton) to help protect them. It's like carrying around a home on their backs!

## Which Are Animal Homes?

Which of these are animal homes? What kind of animal do you think might live in a home like this? Have you ever seen an animal home like any of these?



honeybee comb



muskrat lodge



woodchuck burrow



chipmunk hole



spider web



tree cavity



nest



red fox den

Answers: all

## Match the Animal to its Home

Match the animal to its home.



1: drey



2: den



3: den



4: lodge



5: den



6: nest



A: hornet



B: black bear



C: beaver



D: squirrel



E: red fox



F woodchuck

Answers: 1D; 2F, 3E, 4C, 5B, 6A

To Jody, whose home is always welcoming.

Thanks to Erin Donahue for the use of her spider web photograph.

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