

# NATURE PROBE



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Birds have different kinds of feathers. Some feathers help the bird fly. These feathers have a stiff shaft. They are on the wings and tail. Down feathers help to keep the bird warm. Some feathers help to give the bird its shape.

**PREENING** Birds look after their feathers carefully. Have you watched a bird having a bath? They clean their feathers with their beaks, and comb them back into place. This is called preening. They can also make them waterproof by taking oil from a special gland and spreading it with their beaks. Can you find out where this gland is?

**MOULTING** Every year birds lose their feathers and grow new ones. Some birds moult quickly. Ducks take a long time to moult. They only lose a few feathers at a time.

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"Hi, everyone!  
I'm Ernie Echidna. My friend  
Bruce the Bandicoot and I help  
the editor. We do all the hard work!"



D is for doona,  
So cosy and warm.



Are you cosy under a doona or quilt, now that the cooler autumn nights are here? If your doona is stuffed with feathers they may be the soft down feathers of a duck.

A man at a factory where doonas are made told me about the sorting machine. The feathers are put into an air blowing machine which sorts them out by weight. The lightest feathers are called down. The heaviest feathers are the ones that help the bird to fly. Even when they have been squashed the down feathers spring back into shape.

Most of the feathers they use come from Taiwan. Some feathers come from ducks that have been eaten at restaurants in Australia.

Duck feathers are also used in pillows and sleeping bags.



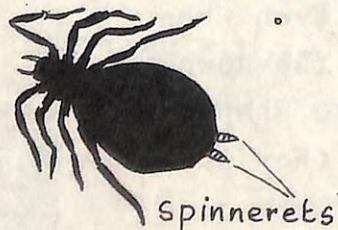


# What a beautiful TRAP!

TAKE CARE WITH ALL SPIDERS!

Two Australian spiders are very dangerous.

The spider does not eat the insects. She sucks the juice from their bodies.



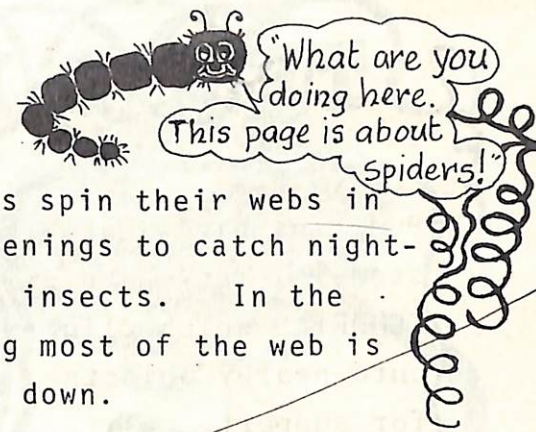
The silk thread is very strong. Find out the other uses spiders have for this thread.

Did you know that most spiders cannot see very well?

Spiders spin their webs in the evenings to catch night-flying insects. In the morning most of the web is pulled down.

Spiders build webs to trap food. Most spiders do not catch their food this way. Some spiders are quick and leap at victims and others hide and wait for insects.

The female spider builds the web. She uses silk which comes from spinnerets which are under her body at the back. Some threads are sticky, and some threads are dry. The dry threads are the framework of the web. What are the sticky threads for?





# TENDRILS

Pumpkins have weak stems. They have TENDRILS which cling onto nearby objects for support.

The pumpkin tendril coils in one direction for half the length, and in the other direction for the other half. It can

stretch out like a spring and not lose its grip.

Other plants use other ways of climbing. Find out what twining means.

Make two lists. one for twining plants, and one

for plants that have TENDRILS.

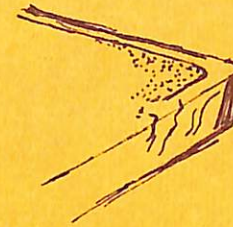


BEWARE!

Pumpkins love water.

If this pumpkin is watered too much its going to take over the magazine.

# Mice



"I think mice  
Are rather nice."

These words are from a poem by Rose Fyleman. Is this the way you feel about mice?

Mice are rodents. RODENTS are a group of animals that have two pairs of long, and sharp front teeth. These teeth are for gnawing and, they grow all the time. Mice will gnaw at anything to keep them worn. If they are not worn down they grow and injure or kill the mouse.

There are millions and millions of mice in the world. The house mouse has spread from Central Asia all over the world. They carry disease and contaminate food.

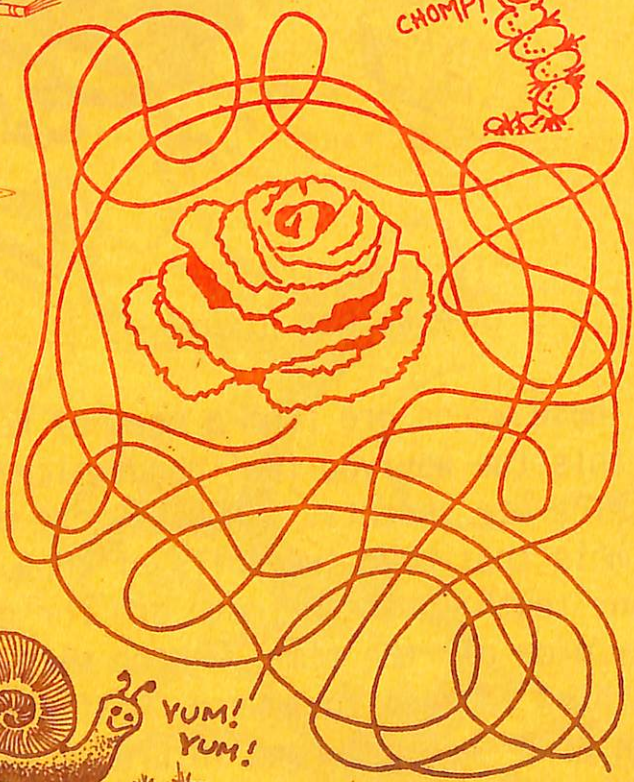
The mother mouse has five or six babies at a time. If there is plenty of food she may have more than six litters a year. Mice are mainly active at night. Find out more about the house mouse and its habits, and write your own poem or story.



"SOMEONE" will have to improve their spelling!

# EEEZZY PUZZLE

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Follow the lines to see who reaches the lettuce.



Thanks for the drawings  
Mrs. Prohasky



ANSWER The snail.

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RIDDLE: Q: What is as large as an elephant but doesn't weigh anything?

A: An elephant's shadow.

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