

Future rats could be the size of sheep

6th February, 2014



Rats that are the size of sheep might be a good horror movie story. However, scientists from the University of Leicester in England say that in the future, there could really be giant rats on the Earth. They could be as big as sheep and weigh up to 80kg. Rats are spreading all over the Earth. They are now the strongest animals

on many small islands. One of the reasons for this is that they travel on ships and relocate to areas that never had rats before. Another reason is that many larger animals are becoming extinct, so there are fewer animals that might kill rats. Researcher Dr Jan Zalasiewicz said: "Given enough time, rats could probably grow to be...the world's largest rodent."

Dr Zalasiewicz said rats are one of the best examples of a species that we have spread around the world, and have successfully adapted to many of the new environments. He said: "There will be future thin rats, future fat rats, slow and heavy rats, fast and ferocious rats, probably future aquatic rats - the list goes on." After the dinosaurs died out, many small animals slowly grew bigger and bigger. The same thing could happen with rats if there are no animals left that hunt and kill them. Dr Zalasiewicz also believes that "super-rats" will start killing other species to make them extinct. This will have a big impact on food chains. He did not say what humans would do about giant rats running around everywhere.

Sources: Daily Express / Sky News / Nature World News

Writing

We should spend a lot more money to stop animals becoming extinct. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

sheep / horror movie / giant rats / strongest animals / small islands / relocate / extinct / examples / species / adapted / environments / dinosaurs / hunt / food chains

True / False

- The article is about a future horror movie. T / F
- Scientists say rats in the future could weigh as much as 80kg. T / F
- Rats become stronger as larger animals become extinct. T / F
- Rats are already the world's largest rodents. T / F
- Humans have helped spread rats around the world. T / F
- A researcher said there could be slow rats in the future. T / F
- After the death of the dinosaurs, most animals became smaller. T / F
- The researcher said humans would invent special guns to kill giant rats. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. movie | a. as much as |
| 2. up to | b. effect |
| 3. strongest | c. all over |
| 4. relocate | d. adjusted |
| 5. reason | e. most powerful |
| 6. around | f. mention |
| 7. adapted | g. cause |
| 8. goes on | h. film |
| 9. impact | i. continues |
| 10. say | j. move |

Discussion – Student A

- What experiences have you had with rats?
- What do you think of the idea of rats the size of sheep?
- How possible is it for rats to become as large as sheep?
- How would nature change if rats were as large as sheep?
- Are rats useful?
- Why do some people keep rats as pets? Would you like one?
- Why are rats so successful?
- What would you really like to know about rats?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Rats that are the size of sheep might be | a. the new environments |
| 2. weigh up to | b. largest rodent |
| 3. relocate to areas that | c. becoming extinct |
| 4. many larger animals are | d. hunt and kill them |
| 5. grow to be the world's | e. 80kg |
| 6. a species that we have spread | f. goes on |
| 7. adapted to many of | g. around the world |
| 8. the list | h. a good horror movie |
| 9. no animals left that | i. chains |
| 10. This will have a big impact on food | j. never had rats before |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you do when you see a rat?
- Why are so many people afraid of rats?
- Are rats necessary?
- What do you think of the idea of "super-rats"?
- What will happen to the Earth if super-rats make other species extinct?
- How many rodents can you name? What's your favourite?
- What will humans do if giant rats are running around everywhere?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- hrrroo movie
- scinsitest from the University of Leicester
- agpenirsd all over the Earth
- tereocla to areas that never had rats before
- animals are becoming ttcxien
- guoneh time
- one of the best epmxseal
- a ceepssi that we have spread around the world
- adapted to many of the new nnetivrsmoen
- future qatiauc rats
- After the raissondu died out
- have a big ciatpm on food chains

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. a	3. e	4. j	5. g
6. c	7. d	8. i	9. b	10. f

Role Play

Role A – The Giant Rats

You think "The Giant Rats" would be the best movie. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their movies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): "Deadly Mobile Phones", "Revenge Of Your Enemies" or "Facebook Shares Secrets".

Role B – Deadly Mobile Phones

You think "Deadly Mobile Phones" would be the best movie. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their movies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): "The Giant Rats", "Revenge Of Your Enemies" or "Facebook Shares Secrets".

Role C – Revenge Of Your Enemies

You think "Revenge Of Your Enemies" would be the best movie. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their movies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): "Deadly Mobile Phones", "The Giant Rats" or "Facebook Shares Secrets".

Role D – Facebook Shares Secrets

You think "Facebook Shares Secrets" would be the best movie. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their movies. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): "Deadly Mobile Phones", "Revenge Of Your Enemies" or "The Giant Rats".

Speaking – Horror movies

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best horror movie ideas at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- giant rats
- killer worms
- zombie children
- insects attack
- deadly mobile phones
- Facebook shares secrets
- revenge of your enemies
- invasion of monster puppies

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.