

Eastern Mole

(Scalopus aquaticus)



DID YOU KNOW:

The mole's scientific name means digging foot. The eastern mole's front feet are much larger than its hind feet. These enlarged front feet have large claws so they can dig underground.

EATING HABITS:

Moles catch most of their food underground. Earthworms are their favorite food, but they also eat many insects like sow bugs and millipedes. Spiders are also on the menu, along with some plant matter and even an occasional snake or vole (another mammal that lives underground). Moles are always hungry and usually eat 1/2 their body weight each day. If you weigh 80 pounds, that would be like eating 40 pounds of food every day.

THE YOUNG:

Eastern moles usually give birth to four babies in early spring. The babies are blind and naked. Only the mother nurses and cares for the young. At 10 days of age, they have gray, velvety fur; at 4 weeks, they are old enough to care for themselves.

HABITAT (HOME):

Moles live underground in meadows, pastures, our lawns, and other places with loose, well-drained soil. They are found in the eastern half of the United States, including Missouri and Kansas.

They construct two kinds of tunnels; the first is barely under the surface and is used to find food; the second kind of tunnel is deeper underground.

Moles live solitary lives, so each mole makes its own deep tunnel and large chamber in the tunnel to protect it from heat, drought and cold and also for nesting.



DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Moles have a strong odor that some predators do not like. This musk is used to mark the tunnels with scent so they can find their way. Living underground offers a lot of protection, unless a coyote, fox or other mammal digs into the mole's tunnel. Snakes may overpower young moles down in their tunnels.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Moles are active day and night and rest for only about three hours a day. Moles must stay busy to keep well-fed.
- Moles have small eyes, but they are not really useful.
- Moles can dig their near-the-surface tunnels at about a foot per minute and deeper tunnels at the rate of 12 feet per hour. They use the hand-like paws as shovels.
- Moles are valuable because they help till and form soil and eat destructive larvae.

