

# FAMAZING FEETS!

by Lee Lamb

**T**urns out we humans have pretty soft and boring feet. Sure, they let us stand up and balance on two legs. We can run, dance and swim. But when it comes to rocks, snow, water or even sidewalks, we have to strap on boots, snowshoes, flippers or sneakers. Wild animals, on the other hand, have adapted all kinds of cool foot designs that are super-specialized to where and how they live.

## HOOFIN' IT

Elk walk and run on their tiptoes, which are called hooves. A hoof is basically a giant, hard, very tough toenail. An elk's hoof is cloven, or split into two halves. These halves fit snugly side-by-side and are pointy in the front and rounded in the back. Elk hooves are great on rough and rocky ground. They're good for digging through snow to get to the grasses underneath. And they can be serious weapons. Cow elk will often "kickbox" with their front hooves, slashing at coyotes, bears and wolves—and even at each other when they get mad.

## HANGIN' AROUND

How does a squirrel scamper across a telephone wire without falling off? How about a bat hanging upside down from a cave roof? They both have long toes that can grip tightly, kind of like your hands—except with really sharp claws. You've heard that spiders can climb up a water spout ... but how? All eight feet are covered with thousands of very tiny hairs, called setae. When the hairs come into close contact with tiny molecules on a surface—whether it be a spout, wall or leaf—the two stick together.

## GET ON THE GOOD FOOT

The oversized paws of snowshoe hares let them hop along on top of deep soft snow. Ducks may look a little clumsy waddling on land, but their webbed feet are perfect for swimming. Using the skin between their toes, ducks push against the water and shoot forward. And what about snakes? Snakes don't have feet, silly.

**TIE THE TOOL TO THE TOOTSIE:  
WHICH OBJECT IS THE BEST MATCH  
WITH EACH ANIMAL'S FOOT?**



