

THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT!

by Lee Lamb

You're camping in the woods, it's the dead of night and the moon is casting creepy shadows on the wall of your tent. Suddenly, a loud *SNAP!* shatters the silence. You imagine a grizzly bear, Bigfoot or the swamp monster looming outside, and you wiggle deeper into your sleeping bag. In the morning, you see heart-shaped tracks in the dirt: the late-night rover was just an elk breaking a branch as it strolled past your tent.

MIDNIGHT MARAUDERS

Elk see very well in the dark and like to roam at night. They hit meadows where they can fill their bellies while being able to see a long ways and have plenty of room to run from predators. During the fall, they've learned that munching in the moonlight helps them avoid two-legged hunters. In the summer, it keeps them out of the blazing sun. At dawn, elk head for the trees to rest and chew their cud.

TALKIN' & CRACKIN' KNUCKLES

Elk keep track of each other in the dark by talking a lot. And by cracking their knuckles. The "knuckles" in elk's feet make clicking sounds with every step, and each animal makes its own special click. Hearing those clicks helps elk stay in touch.

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Animals that are active at night are called nocturnal (nok-tur-nl). Nocturnal critters don't have to compete with their daytime—or diurnal (die-ur-nl)—neighbors for space, food, water or shelter. For example, bats leave their caves to gobble insects at night, while swallows hunt those same bugs during the day.

SUPER SENSES

Nocturnal animals have lots of tricks for finding their way around in the dark. Owls have really big eyes that help capture more light from the moon and stars, and they have special feathers that allow them to fly silently.

Mountain lions have great night vision, too, and they can move their ears in almost every direction to help pinpoint sounds. Mice "feel" their way around in the dark with their super-sensitive whiskers.



WHOSE EYES ARE THOSE?

CAN YOU MATCH THESE EYES TO THE CREATURE THEY BELONG TO?