

Keep Texas Wild



NATURE'S NURSERY

Is being 'adorable' a survival instinct?

»LOOK BUT DON'T TOUCH!

THERE'S ALMOST NO ONE ON THIS PLANET so grumpy that they don't smile when they see a baby animal. Those over-sized eyes, those wobbly legs, that soft curly fur - they're hard to resist! When you think about it, that is nature's plan. Babies are cute so we will gladly provide them with whatever they need. But when it comes to wild animal babies, it is best to look, but not touch. Their animal parents can provide everything the babies need.

Red fox

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» MAMA'S BOYS (AND GIRLS!)

» Pocket pampered

Opossums are the only marsupials in North America. Marsupials have a pouch like kangaroos. Baby opossums are blind and only as large as honey bees when they are born. They crawl up to their mother's pouch and stay there for three months. After that, they climb out and cling to their mother's fur for a few weeks until they fall off and start looking for food on their own.

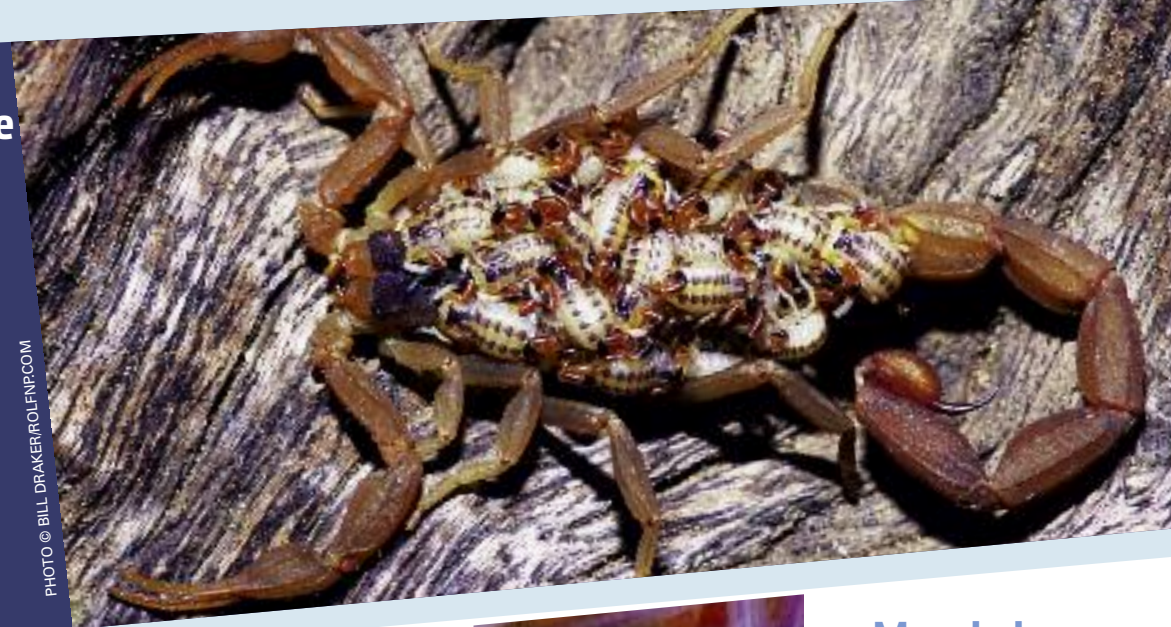
PHOTO © RICK & NORA BOWERS/KAC PRODUCTIONS



» Hitching a ride

Striped bark scorpions have litters of a few dozen babies who are born live. The young climb up to the mother's back and ride her like a bus until the first molt. The babies will then molt, or shed their outer covering, six more times before they mature. These scorpions grow up to be only an inch or two long, but their sting can be quite painful.

PHOTO © BILL DRAKER/ROLFINPCOM



» Polliwogs, wrigglers and squealers

There are special names for babies in the animal world. You've heard of puppies and kittens and cubs — those are also names for animal babies other than dogs and cats and bears. Here's a list of some baby animal names you may not know.



MOSQUITO: WRIGGLER

PHOTO © CLIVE VARLACK



SKUNK: KIT, KITTEN

PHOTO © SIBAKAZUJI/MI



EAGLE: EAGLET

PHOTO © TOM & PAT LEESSON



» More baby animal names

- ALLIGATOR: HATCHLING
- BAT: PUP
- BEAVER: KIT, PUP
- CLAM: LITTLENECK
- FROG: POLLIWOG, TADPOLE
- GOAT: KID
- HAWK: EYAS, BRANCHER
- HEDGEHOG: PIGLET, PUP
- MOUSE: KITTEN, PINKIE
- OPOSSUM: JOEY
- OWL: OWLET, HOWLET
- QUAIL: CHEEPER, SQUEALER
- SNAKE: SNAKELET
- TURTLE: HATCHLING

» Pretty in pink

The state mammal of Texas is the nine-banded armadillo, an animal that wears a suit of armor. Baby armadillos are pink and always come in sets of four, always identical. Baby armadillos have soft shells that feel like human fingernails. The shells harden as the animal grows.

PHOTO © HEIDI & HANS JUERGEN KOCH/MINDEN PICTURES



» Orphan babies

Have you ever found a baby bird or squirrel that has fallen out of the nest? Or discovered a fawn lying alone in the woods? Do you wonder if their mother has abandoned them? Of course, you want to help them, but the right way to help them is usually by doing nothing. Their chance of survival is much better in the wild. Many times a doe will leave her fawn to find food, and will come back soon. Sometimes the bird or squirrel mother is nearby, watching and waiting for you to leave so she can rescue her fallen baby.



Spike's Activity Page



» WILD ART



Now



In 10 Years



In 50 Years

Some animals, like frogs, can change quite a bit from the time that they are born to when they are fully grown adults — and so do we! Find a picture of yourself as a baby, and compare it to a picture of yourself now. How have you changed? What do you think you'll look like in five years? In 10 years? In 50 years? Draw a picture of what you will look like in 50 years.

» KEEPING IT WILD

Celebrate marsupials (animals that carry their babies in a pouch, like opossums, see page 46). Hold a "Pocket Days" filled with pocket activities you make up yourself. Pretend you are a marsupial mother. Create a special baby to carry in your pocket during the day.



» WILD MATH



For many animals, taking care of babies is a full-time job! While in the nest, black-capped vireo babies are fed almost constantly by both their mother and father. If it takes the father 15 minutes to find food and return to the nest, how many trips would he make between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m.?

NEXT MONTH: Bees and other pollinators



TEACHER RESOURCE

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