

# Mammal Skulls and Teeth

# Squirrel



# What do we know about squirrels?

Am I nocturnal?

What do I eat?

Where do I sleep?

What might eat me?



# What do we know about squirrels?

1. Am I nocturnal?

No – I sleep at night and look for food in the day time

2. Where do I sleep?

Up in the trees



3. What do I eat?

Nuts, acorns, flower buds, seeds in pine cones, fruit, tree bark, birds' eggs and insects

4. What might eat me?

Foxes, stoats and birds of prey

What else can we learn by looking carefully at it?

How do I  
protect myself?



How do I find my food?

# What else can we learn by looking carefully at it?

## 5. How do I protect myself?

My soft hair protects me from scratches and bumps. It keeps me warm.

I stay dry inside tree holes or in my nest.

To escape from danger, I leap up into the trees and jump from branch to branch. I can run fast on the ground, too!



## 6. How do I find my food?

I use my eyes and nose to search for food. In autumn, I bury nuts and acorns and use my memory to find them later.

# How does the squirrel protect itself?

What do you notice about:

1. Its eyes?

2. Its ears?

3. Its whiskers?

4. Its tail?

5. Its fur?

6. Its legs and feet?



# How does the squirrel protect itself?

What do you notice about:

## 1. Its eyes?

Big eyes look out in all directions to look up, down and sideways when leaping from branch to branch.

## 3. Its whiskers?

It has long, black whiskers and a short, rounded nose. If the whiskers can fit through a gap, so can the squirrel.

## 5. Its fur?

It has grey/brown speckled hair on its back and face so it is well camouflaged.

## 2. Its ears?

It has small, upright, rounded ears to listen out for danger.

## 4. Its tail?

The long, bushy tail helps it balance in the trees.

## 6. Its legs and feet?

Its back legs and feet are longer than the front. This means it can push off from the ground. They grip onto tree trunks and branches with sharp claws and they hold food in their front claws.



What have we learned? What do you notice about these squirrels?





# Can we find out any more, when we look at a squirrel skull?

What kind of teeth do I have?

Where do my eyes go?

Where does  
my brain go?



What is this hole?

# Can we find out any more, when we look at a squirrel skull?

1. What kind of teeth do I have?

Huge incisors to gnaw and nibble tough food.

Small molars to chew and grind

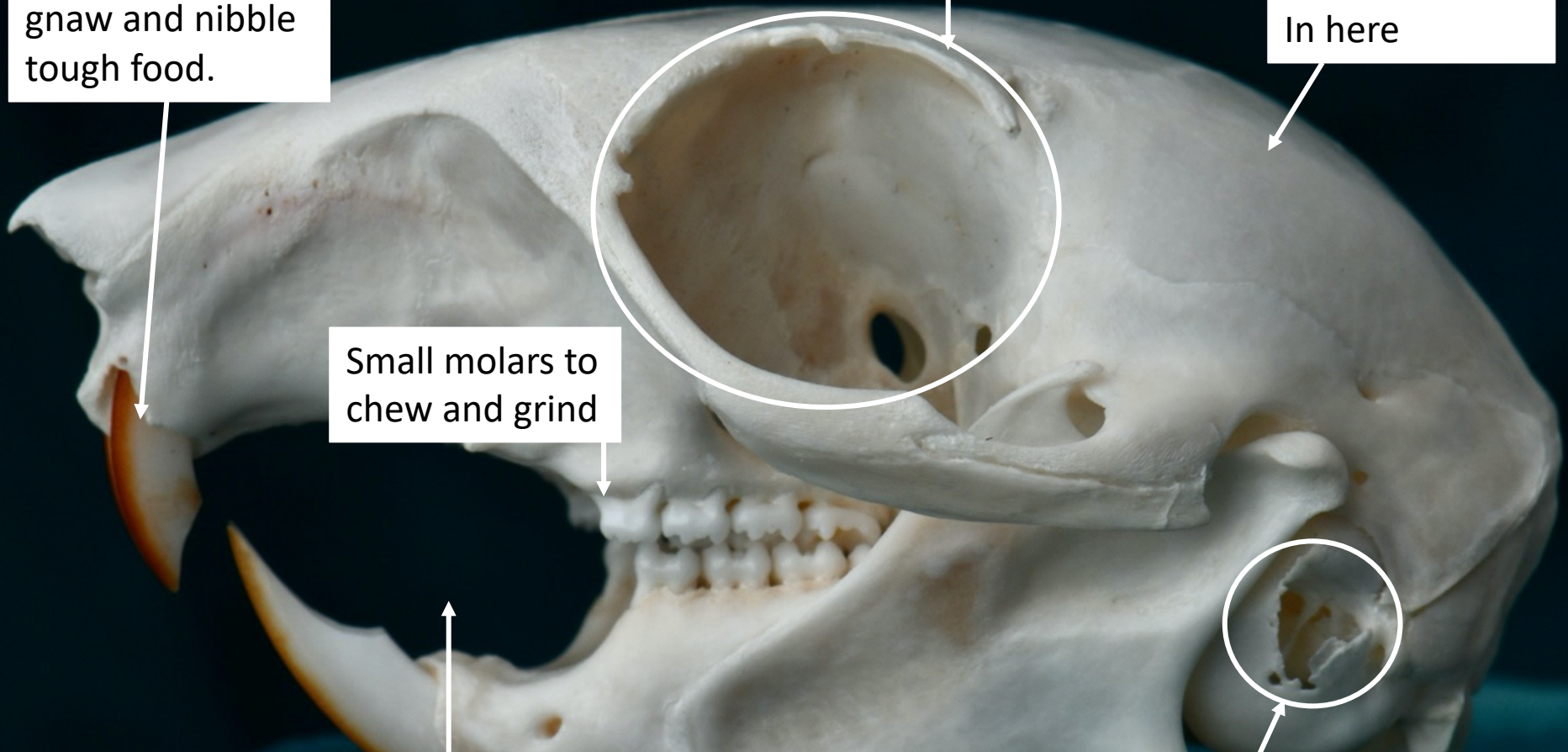
2. Where do my eyes go?  
Huge eye socket



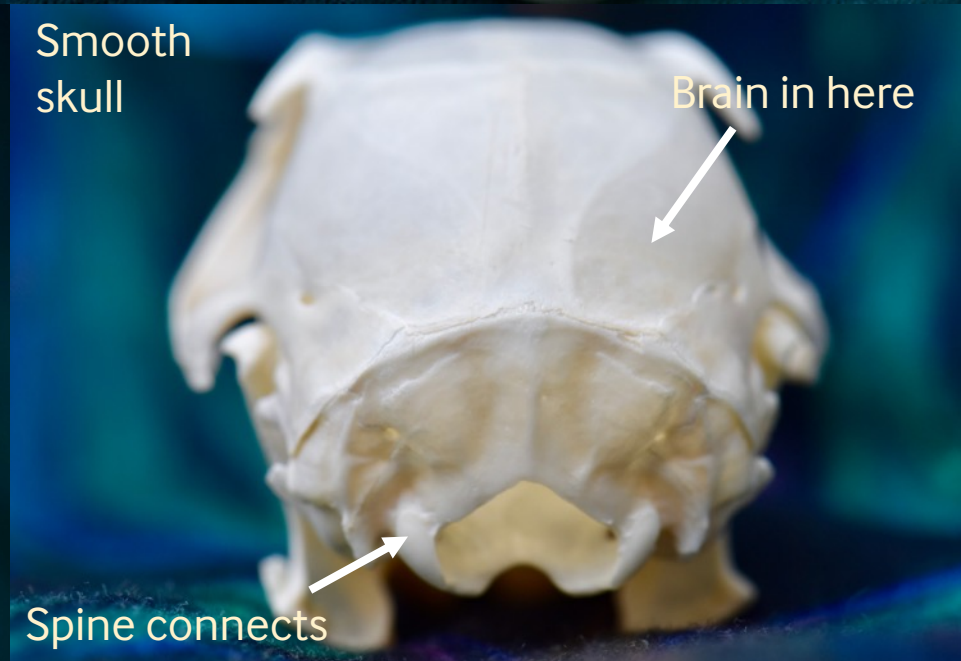
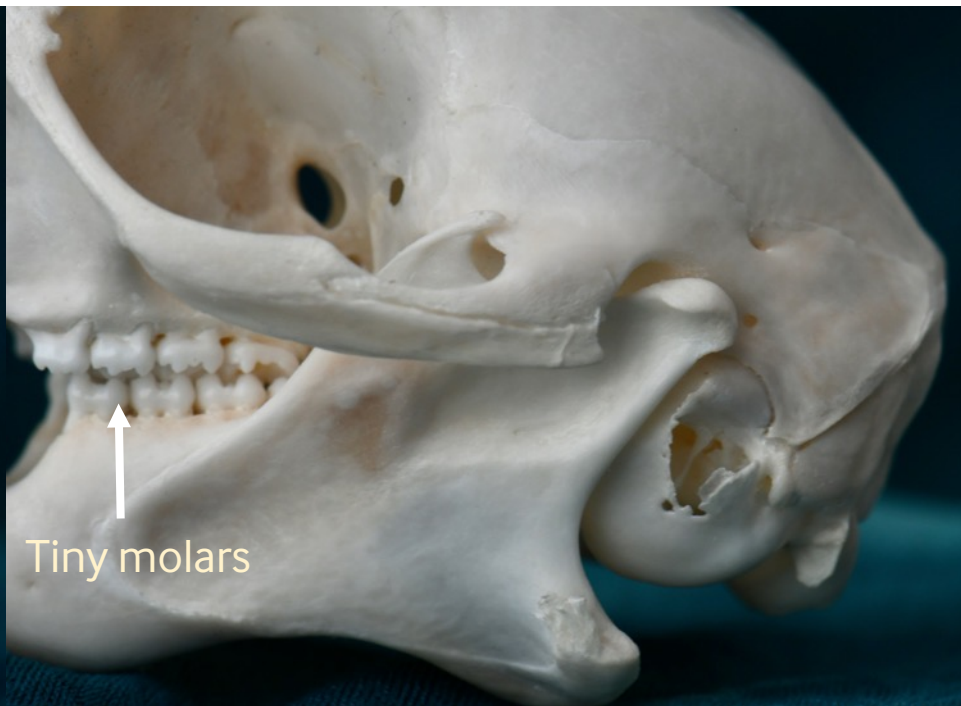
3. Where does my brain go?  
In here

4. What is this space for?  
Squirrels suck their cheeks into this gap to block off the throat, when gathering nuts, so they don't choke.

5. What is this hole?  
Ear hole. Sounds caught by the ears, go in here



# Squirrel skull - what else can you see in these pictures?



Let's compare a squirrel skull with a badger skull. What is the same and what is different? What does this tell us about a badger?



# Let's compare the sizes of different animal skulls

| Animal      | Skull Length | Skull Height |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| Hedgehog    | 3.5cm        | 0.8cm        |
| Squirrel    | 6cm          | 2cm          |
| Rabbit      | 8.5cm        | 3.5cm        |
| Badger      | 13cm         | 6cm          |
| Fox         | 15cm         | 6cm          |
| Fallow Deer | 26cm         | 13cm         |



Badger



Rabbit



Squirrel

# Extra Background Information for Teachers

- Squirrels are **omnivores**. They eat mainly plants such as acorns, chestnuts, beech nuts, fungi, seeds in pine cones, fungi and fruit. They also eat birds' eggs and chicks and insects.
- Their **huge incisors** have no roots and keep growing throughout their life. There is an orange layer of tough enamel on the front to strengthen them. The back of the incisors is softer and so wears down to a sharp point. Squirrels chew and grind up tough food with their molars. If they collect too many acorns or nuts, they carry some in their mouth.
- Squirrels live in the trees. They build a ball-shaped nest of twigs and leaves, high up in the branches or inside a tree hole. Their nest is called a '**drey**'.
- **Habitat**. Squirrels live in the trees, in woods, gardens and parks in towns, cities and the countryside.
- **Badgers** are omnivores. They eat earthworms, beetles, mice, birds' eggs and chicks, crops and fruit. Unlike squirrels, badgers have canines and they have smaller incisors. They have a solid, heavy body with powerful legs and sharp claws. They are much larger, heavier and slower than squirrels. See the Badger PowerPoint, for more information.

## Find Out More

[The Nature Collection](http://www.thenaturecollection.co.uk/photos.html) is an extraordinary collection of animal bones, skeletons, feathers, antlers, skins and photographs and was created by Susanna Ramsey. Click here to find out more about the skeletons of our local animals and for information on a range of British wildlife products created with the TTS schools resources catalogue <http://www.thenaturecollection.co.uk/photos.html>

The Mammal Society

<https://www.mammal.org.uk/species-hub/full-species-hub/discover-mammals/species-grey-squirrel/>

The Wildlife Trusts

<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/mammals/grey-squirrel>

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/other-garden-wildlife/mammals/grey-squirrel/>

The British Wildlife Centre

<https://britishwildlifecentre.co.uk/planyourvisit/animals/grey-squirrel/>





This slideshow was created by the Primary Science Teaching Trust and The Nature Collection

