

"They have HUGE front teeth that they use to dig tunnels underground where they look for roots and bulbs to eat. Their lips close behind their teeth so that they don't get a mouthful of sand when they dig."

"What if I use the mole hills for my toilet and then scratch the sand hill back into the burrow? Maybe the rats won't like it and will go away to bother someone else."

Denfred laughed. "That's a very good idea Stripes."

Well, it seems I can be an eco-cat in many different ways.

Activity suggestion:

Draw a picture of what you think a mole rat looks like.

Is it a mole or a rat?

What does a mole rat eat?



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THE MOLE RAT



BY STRIPES
THE ECO-CAT

I had such a nightmare last night, but it wasn't a dream - I was wide awake. You know how cats like to go out and explore at night? It's because so many interesting creatures only go out after dark to avoid the heat and predators.

The little field mouse thinks he's safe because it's dark, but cats and owls and other predators can see very well in the dark. Not that I would catch a little stripy field mouse - I just like to see them scurrying around for seeds and things to eat.

So there I was taking in a little night life and minding my own business, when suddenly I had the fright of my life! A huge creature popped out of the ground right in front of me. Man, was he scary! He was brown and furry and bigger than me. But the scariest thing was his enormous teeth. They were so big he couldn't close his lips over them, so the lips closed behind the huge gnashers.

I'll tell you what - you don't want to be bitten by those teeth - they could take your head right off your shoulders if you are a smallish cat like me.

When I got my wits back I said, "Excuse me, sir", and beat a very hasty retreat. I ran so fast not even

a cheetah could have caught me. Rather scaredy cat than dead cat.

The next morning when my humans came to work I took Denfred outside to show him where the monster had so frightened me. All that was left was mounds of earth like mini mountains.

"Ah", said Denfred, "the mole rats have been busy again. We humans are really fed up with the mole rats in our garden at the Green House. If you stomp down on one mound, another one pops up. And as for growing vegetables - the only ones who get to eat them are the mole rats."

Denfred said he once saw a whole plant disappearing underground as a one of these fiends pulled it down into its burrow by the roots.

But I was very confused. "What exactly are they, moles or rats?" I asked.

"They are actually rats that live underground in sandy soil, just like a mole, so they are called Cape Dune Mole Rats. They can grow very big - bigger than you, Stripes".