Big Ears and Sticky Fingers
Welcome, Fact Detective!

We hope you enjoy this book.

Your quest today is to find out which leafy sea dragon parent looks after the eggs. You’ll discover the answer in one of the ‘Find out!’ buttons!

Good luck – and happy reading!

Big Ears and Sticky Fingers

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Staying Alive

If it is cold, you can put on a coat. If it is hot, you can take your jumper off. But animals can’t change their clothes to match the weather! They need special features to help them stay alive.

The place where an animal lives is called its habitat. The animals in this book live in some of the toughest habitats on Earth.
Big Ears

The sandy deserts of North Africa are baking hot in the day. There is very little rain. So how does this fennec fox survive?

The fennec fox is about the size of a cat, with enormous furry ears. The fox loses heat through its ears and this helps to keep it cool. Big ears are also brilliant for listening out for prey.

Where in the world?

Location: Sandy deserts, North Africa
Habitat: Desert – hot, dry, sandy

Wild fact

Fennec foxes have furry feet so they can walk across hot sand without burning their toes.
Sticky Fingers

A strange-looking animal lives on the island of Madagascar. It has big ears, large front teeth, and long, thin fingers like sticks. It is called an **aye-aye**.

The aye-aye is **nocturnal** and it lives in the rainforest. It taps on a tree with its thinnest finger and listens for the hollow burrows of insect grubs. Then it chews a hole in the bark, sticks its thinnest finger in and pulls out a juicy grub.

**Wild fact**

Aye-ayes have sharp curved claws on their feet for climbing through trees.

**Where in the world?**

- **Location:** Madagascar, Africa
- **Habitat:** Rainforest – warm, wet
Snow White

It is cold and snowy in the **tundra** but the **snowy owl** feels at home. Its white feathers match the snow and camouflage the owl as it hunts for small animals like **lemmings**.

The owl has good **eyesight** for spotting its prey. It flies low over the ground and snatches the prey in its sharp **talons**.

**Wild fact**

Snowy owls have thick, warm feathers. They even have feathers on their legs and toes!

**Where in the world?**

Location: North America, northern Europe, northern Asia
Habitat: Tundra – cold, snowy, windy
Sea-loving Lizards

The **marine iguana** (say ig-wa-na) is a lizard from the Galápagos Islands. Its favourite food is seaweed. It scrapes seaweed off rocks with its knife-sharp teeth.

The sea around the islands is stormy and cold but the iguana has features that help it survive. It has long claws for gripping slippery rocks. It has a big flat tail for swimming.

**Where in the world?**

*Location:* Galápagos Islands, South America
*Habitat:* Rocky coasts – wild, wet, cold

**Wild fact**

Marine iguanas swallow salt from sea water when they eat. They sneeze to get rid of the salt!
Hot Baths

These monkeys are Japanese macaques (say mu-kaks). They live in the mountains, where it is freezing cold in winter. The monkeys have a clever way of keeping warm.

They sit in pools of warm water. The water is heated by hot rocks underground. The monkeys also have thick fur to keep them warm when they get out of the water.

Wild fact
Sometimes the monkeys make snowballs – just for fun!

Where in the world?
Location: The mountains of north Japan, Asia
Habitat: Mountain forests – cold, snowy, windy
Tight Squeeze

The **green anaconda** is a snake that can grow as long as a bus! It lives in and around water in the tropical forests of South America.

The anaconda lies in shallow water. Its eyes and nostrils are on top of its head, so it can still see and breathe. It waits for an animal, such as a small deer, to come for a drink. Then it pulls the animal into the water and wraps its body around it. It squeezes the prey to death and swallows it whole.

**Wild fact**
Anacondas have dark green or yellow skin with big black spots. This camouflage hides them from their prey.

Where in the world?
Location: Tropical forests, South America
Habitat: Rivers and streams – muddy, swampy, warm
Caring Dad

The **midwife toad** from the mountains of Mallorca has a flat body. It can squeeze into cracks in the rocks to hide and stay safe.

The toad’s habitat is very dry, but toad **tadpoles** need water to grow in. So after the female toad lays the eggs, the male toad wraps strings of eggs around his back legs. When the eggs are ready to hatch, he finds a puddle of water for the tadpoles to swim in.

**Wild fact**

Male toads carry the eggs for up to a month. They shelter in damp places so the eggs do not dry out.

**Where in the world?**

- **Location:** Mallorca, Europe
- **Habitat:** Mountains – rocky, dry, steep
Antifreeze Fish

The Southern Ocean around Antarctica is icy cold. Most fish would quickly freeze to death.

But the Antarctic toothfish has special antifreeze in its body that stops ice forming in its blood.

This huge toothfish is a fierce hunter. It has sharp teeth for eating fish and squid. But it has to watch out for seals and whales that like eating toothfish.

Where in the world?
Location: Antarctica
Habitat: Ocean – freezing, stormy

Wild fact
The Southern Ocean is often icy. Under the ice, the water is dark. Antarctic toothfish have special eyes for seeing in the dark.

large body that can be over 2 metres long
Freezing ocean
sharp teeth
**Dragon Disguise**

The **leafy sea dragon** is a fish that lives among clumps of seaweed. But you need to look closely to spot it! It has a yellow-green body with flaps of skin, so it looks like the seaweed.

**Where in the world?**

Location: South and west coasts, Australia
Habitat: Coasts – rocky, weedy, sunny

The sea dragon’s camouflage hides it from other hungry fish. Its body is quite hard and spiky, which makes it a horrible meal for any predators.

**Wild fact**

Leafy sea dragons eat tiny shrimps. They can suck up hundreds of shrimps with their long, thin snouts.
Glossary
antifreeze: a chemical that stops a liquid from freezing in the cold

camouflage: patterns and markings on an animal’s body that help to hide it

features: body parts or behaviour that help an animal to survive

habitat: the place where animals and plants live

lemmings: small furry animals that live in the tundra

nocturnal: asleep during the day and active at night

predators: animals that hunt and eat other animals

prey: animals that are hunted and eaten by other animals

snout: nose and mouth

tadpoles: tiny animals that hatch out of eggs and turn into toads or frogs

talons: long, sharp claws

tundra: cold icy land in the far north of the world

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Good reading, Fact Detective!
Did you find out which leafy sea dragon parent looks after the eggs?
The answer was on page 22.