

STUDY QUESTIONS

TO “GO EAT WORMS!”

Study and learn facts and ideas based on this Young Naturalists nonfiction story in *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer*, July-August 2026, www.mndnr.gov/mcvmagazine.

Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine is your guide to wild things. Every other month, six times a year, the magazine arrives in your school library. Each one has a story for Young Naturalists like you. **Are you curious about wild things?** Young Naturalists tells true stories that can answer all kinds of questions such as these—

Have you ever heard of a purple wartyback? How about a pink heelsplitter, pimple-back, or monkeyface? All are Minnesota freshwater mussels. Read Young Naturalists stories to learn which species (kinds) of critters live in Minnesota—frogs, salamanders, snakes, wild cats, wild dogs, weasels, mice, and rabbits.

Want to **peek inside the den of a red fox** and see how the kits grow up? Are you a rock hound searching for agates? Have you ever wondered what’s alive under snow? How animals see? Why is a bluebird blue? How birds fly?

Would you like to hear the true story of **giants of the ice age**? Young Naturalists also tells you about the underground universe. You can read the story of a tiny owl that went to a hospital with an injured wing. Find out about a boy who worked in a logging camp. Read the story of Ojibwe children today hunting and gathering like their ancestors did.

Learn how to get started **camping, snowshoeing, ice fishing, or canoeing**.

Find these stories and more online at www.mndnr.gov/young_naturalists.

Your knowledge of wild things helps you explore and enjoy the outdoors. Have fun!

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1. WHY ARE SHREW TEETH RED?

- a. The tooth enamel has iron in it, which strengthens the teeth
- b. The blood of their prey stains the teeth red
- c. They have blood vessels near the teeth, which makes the teeth look red
- d. Shrew are predators, and so they have strong jaws and red teeth

2. SHREWS ARE PREDATORS. WHAT IS THEIR PREY?

- a. Worms and grubs
- b. Insects
- c. Voles, snails, and other shrews
- d. All of the above

3. TRUE OR FALSE:

All of Minnesota's shrews are nocturnal.

4. WHY DO SHREWS NEED TO EAT SO MUCH?

- a. It takes a lot of energy to catch their prey
- b. They need a lot of food to help them travel great distances
- c. It's how they maintain their body temperature and stay hydrated
- d. Their strong jaws require a lot of energy for biting and chewing prey

5. WHICH SHREW USES ECHOLOCATION, SIMILAR TO BATS AND DOLPHINS?

- a. Arctic shrew
- b. Smokey shrew
- c. Least shrew

d. Northern short-tailed shrew

6. WHAT IS ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NORTHERN SHORT-TAILED SHREW AND THE LEAST SHREW?

- a. The northern short-tailed shrew is solitary, and the least shrew is cooperative
- b. The northern short-tailed shrew is often confused with a mouse, and the least shrew is often confused with a vole
- c. The northern short-tailed shrew uses food caching to store prey, and the least shrew uses venom to kill prey
- d. The pups (babies) of the northern short-tailed shrew are born in burrows underground, and the pups of the least shrew are born in open grasslands and shrubby areas

7. WHICH OF MINNESOTA'S SHREWS WAS DISCOVERED MOST RECENTLY?

- a. Prairie shrew
- b. Smokey shrew
- c. Masked shrew
- d. Pygmy shrew

8. TRUE OR FALSE? THE VENOMOUS BITE FROM THE NORTHERN SHORT-TAILED KILLS THEIR PREY.

9. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING IS THE SHORTEST IN LENGTH?

- a. Water shrew
- b. Pygmy shrew
- c. Least shrew
- d. Masked shrew

10. WHICH PHYSICAL TRAIT OF THE WATER SHREW ALLOWS IT TO WALK UPRIGHT ACROSS THE SURFACE OF WATER?

- a. A long tail that helps them balance
- b. Their small size
- c. stiff hairs on their hind feet that trap air bubbles
- d. An optic nerve that make them buoyant

CHALLENGE QUESTION:

HOW DOES THE HUMAN HEART RATE COMPARE WITH THE HEART RATE OF A MINNESOTA SHREW?

MINNESOTA COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS PRACTICE ITEMS

WHAT QUESTION ABOUT THE AMERICAN SHREW DOES THE ARTICLE ANSWER?

- a. How long does it live?
- b. How fast can it swim?
- c. How long can it hold its breath?
- d. Where does it go during the winter?

2. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD BE CONSIDERED A MAIN IDEA FROM THE STORY?

- a. Shrews are among the oldest mammals in Minnesota.
- b. Even though they belong to the same family, the different types of shrews that live in Minnesota have different adaptations that help them survive.
- c. There is a kind of shrew that produces venom that weakens their prey so that they can store it and eat it later.
- d. Shrews are found in a variety of habitats throughout Minnesota.

3. THE LAST SECTION OF THE STORY GIVES US CLUES ABOUT THE AUTHOR'S PURPOSE FOR WRITING THIS STORY. WHAT CAN WE INFER FROM THAT LAST SECTION ABOUT WHAT THE AUTHOR WOULD LIKE US TO DO, NOW THAT WE'VE READ THE STORY?

- a. The author hopes we learn more about other mammals.
- b. The author wants us to help make sure that shrew and other wildlife have enough to eat.
- c. The author encourages us to pause the next time we are outside to remember and appreciate that nature is all around us and in constant motion.
- d. The author would like readers to donate money to help make sure the shrew don't go extinct.

4. IF YOU LIVE IN MINNESOTA, WHICH SHREW MIGHT YOU HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF SEEING?

- a. Northern short-tailed shrew
- b. Least shrew
- c. Arctic shrew
- d. Smokey shrew

5. WHAT STORY DETAIL BEST SUPPORTS THE STATEMENT THAT THE EXISTENCE OF SHREWS PROVES THAT SMALL DOESN'T MEAN WEAK?

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6. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DOES THE AUTHOR USE TO HELP YOU VISUALIZE HOW THE SHREWS DIFFER IN SIZE?

- a. Photos
- b. "Did You Know?" fact boxes and sidebars
- c. Diagrams
- d. Ruler and measurements

VOCABULARY

Predator

Prey

Crevice

Pygmy

Gluttonous

Venom

Food caching

Boreal

Optic

Vibrissae

Buoyancy

Relentlessness