

> Natural predators... or not



Eagles and foxes are the marmot's fiercest enemies in the wild. To defend itself, it has a 300° field of vision which allows it to see in front, behind and overhead. Its keen sense of smell and good hearing complete its range of defence.

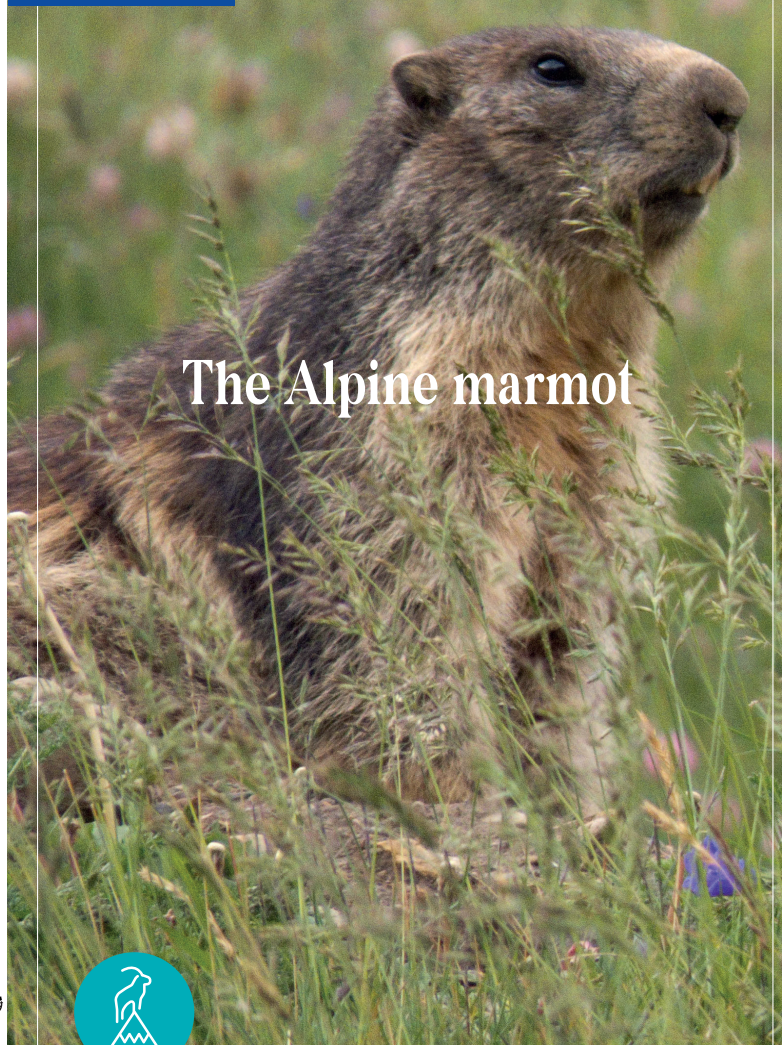
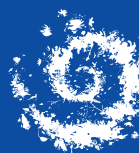
Another threat comes from hikers who think they are being nice by sharing their biscuits and cereal bars with the marmots, forgetting

that these animals don't go to the supermarket or buy fast food. This can cause skin diseases and bad fats, and even prove fatal during hibernation.



Expert opinion

- 1- **TRUE.** Marmots have glands that secrete an odorous liquid and they identify each other by smelling their cheeks.
- 2- **TRUE.** Marmots do not drink water, just dew and water from plants.
- 3- **TRUE.** But we have no photo to show you. A little privacy, please!
- 4- **FALSE.** A marmot's hands are made for digging and don't have thumbs.
- 5- **FALSE.** 1 km, but that's still not bad, is it? See if you can do as much.



The Alpine marmot



Famille: Scuriidae
Taille: 50 to 60 cm
Life expectancy: 15 to 18 years
Gestation: 35 days
Litter: 2 to 6 babies/year

Distinctives features

- ✓ Great whistler
- ✓ Curious
- ✓ Don't digest chocolate very well

At the start

> A tour of the world later

To follow in the footsteps of the first marmots, you will need a sturdy pair of shoes and quite a lot of time!

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| -60 Million years ago | Origin of the species in central Asia |
| -15 Million years ago | Conquered the Far West |
| -1 Million years ago | Arrived in Europe |
| -100 000 years ago | Made it to France |

Alternatively, a hike of just a few hours in the Vanoise park will suffice to find the local representatives: *Marmotta marmotta*.



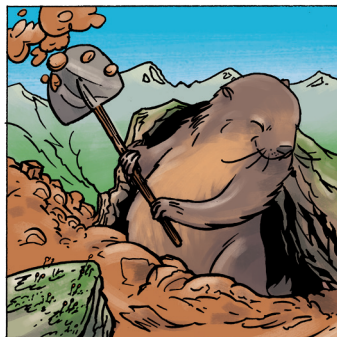
Family album: amongst the Alpine marmots' close relatives is the red squirrel, also found in France. Do you think there is a family likeness?...

Habitat

It is in the mountains, 1000 to 3000 m above sea level, on soft ground made of stones and scree, that marmots set up their summer quarters and dig their winter burrows.

> Outstanding builders

Marmots use their front paws to dig and their back paws to clear the earth, a technique that the heroes of *The Great Escape* would envy!... The animal is perfectly built for digging tunnels. But that's not all. Marmots are also experienced architects, capable of designing a burrow of over 100 tunnels, with a bedroom, toilets, emergency exits and a small, south-facing terrace... opening on to 1 to 4 ha of terrain.



Daily life

> I spent most of my time in the dark...

... but that doesn't mean that I bump into the walls. With the vibrissa (whiskers) on my muzzle that act like SatNav, I find my way easily in the dark.

Comfortably installed in my burrow, I live with my whole tribe of around a dozen marmots (the parents and their children from the last 2 or 3 years). I am a diurnal animal, getting up before the sunrise and going to bed an hour before sunset. During the day, I play, dig, have lunch, have dinner and sleep a lot; often with my eyes open, in Neighbourhood Watch style.



> Living a double life

I don't see the time go by in winter, for the very good reason that I hibernate for 6 months. The cold, the snow and the lack of food mean I have to live in slow motion. This is why my temperature falls to 8°C and my heart rate goes from 130 beats/minute down to 15. I didn't wait for any environmental regulations to start saving energy...

> The appetite of an ogre

After 6 months without eating, I obviously spend the rest of the year eating as much as I can. I eat 400g/day in two meals, the equivalent of 6kg/day for you. Over 6 months, that is a total of 70 kg.

My favourite menu:

- Apero: a few insects, grasshoppers...
- Starter: dandelion salad
- Main course: légumes
- Dessert: some berries and flowers

True or false? Answers on the back page

- 1/ To identify each other, marmots give each other a big kiss on the cheek.
- 2/ Marmots eat a lot, but they aren't big drinkers.
- 3/ Marmots groom themselves like cats.
- 4/ Marmots stick their thumb out to hitchhike from one spot to another.
- 5/ A marmot's whistle can be heard over 2 km away.