Barking Deer
by Guy Belleranti

Imagine a small deer that barks like a dog. If it sounds like an imaginary animal, it's not. It's a real animal called the muntjac.

There are a number of species of muntjacs. The smallest, the Leaf muntjac, may be the world's tiniest living deer. It's only the size of a cat and weighs 10 to 20 pounds. The largest, the Giant muntjac, while much larger than the Leaf muntjac, still only weighs around 90 pounds.

Muntjacs are non-herding, solitary deer. They live in forests and dense vegetation. They usually come out to eat in the late evening or in the early morning before sunrise. They have good senses, especially hearing and smell. When they sense danger from predators like tigers, leopards, wolves or birds of prey they bark loudly and for a long time. This bark can be heard for miles, and it warns other muntjacs of nearby dangers. Male muntjacs also bark to attract females during breeding season. Because of this unique barking ability muntjacs are sometimes called the "barking deer".

Both male and female muntjacs have hair-covered bony knobs on their foreheads. Small antlers grow out of these knobs on males. Males also have small, inch-long upper canine tusks. They can use these for protection or to fight for territory.

Most muntjacs live in South Asian countries like India, Burma, China, Sri Lanka and Indonesian Islands. But people did bring one type, the Reeves muntjac, to England in the 1800's. Many now consider this muntjac a pest because it is spreading across Great Britain, eating crops and native plants and damaging wild bird habitats.
Name: __________________________________

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1. Name four predators of the muntjac that are mentioned in the article.

___________________________________________
_______________________________________________
_______________________________________________

2. The Leaf muntjac is....
   a. larger than the Reeves muntjac
   b. about the same size as the Giant muntjac
   c. smaller than the Reeves muntjac
   d. larger than the Giant muntjac

3. ________________ and ______________________________

4. According to the article, male muntjacs have inch-long upper canine tusks. What does this mean?
   a. They have short antlers on their heads.
   b. They have one-inch ears above their eyes.
   c. They have lots of sharp upper teeth inside their mouths.
   d. They have large upper teeth that stick out of their mouths.

5. On which two continents do wild muntjacs live?
   _______________________________________ and _______________________________________
Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

____ 1. imaginary
   a. plant life

____ 2. tiniest
   b. large, spotted cats

____ 5. bony
   e. thick

____ 6. pest
   f. moving together in a large group

____ 7. vegetation
   g. smallest

____ 8. dense
   h. so thin that you can feel bone

____ 9. leopards
   i. area of land which an animal protects as its own
ANSWER KEY

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1. Name four predators of the muntjac that are mentioned in the article.
   - tigers, leopards, wolves, and birds of prey

2. The Leaf muntjac is....  c
   - a. larger than the Reeves muntjac
   - b. about the same size as the Giant muntjac
   - c. **smaller than the Reeves muntjac**
   - d. larger than the Giant muntjac

3. PREVIEW

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4. a. They have short antlers on their heads.
   - b. They have one-inch ears above their eyes.
   - c. They have lots of sharp upper teeth inside their mouths.
   - d. **They have large upper teeth that stick out of their mouths.**

5. On which two continents do wild muntjacs live?
   - Asia and Europe
Match each vocabulary word from the article with the correct definition.

**1. imaginary**
- **a.** plant life

**2. tiniest**
- **b.** large, spotted cats

**3. herding**
- **f.** moving together in a large group

**4. territory**
- **i.** area of land which an animal protects as its own

**5. bony**
- **h.** so thin that you can feel bone

**6. pest**
- **c.** unwanted animal

**7. vegetation**
- **g.** smallest

**8. dense**
- **e.** thick

**9. leopards**
- **b.** large, spotted cats