

# Home Sweet Home

in the heartland

Young people can help protect the Missouri environment by becoming National Geographic "Geography Action" Habitat Heroes. Learn more at [www.nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/geographyaction).

This week's feature highlights the Missouri habitats of **caves, rivers and cities**. **Caves** abound in Ozark karst limestone areas. They provide unique animal habitats with no light and constant temperature. The Eastern Pippistrelle bat lives there, weighs a third of an ounce, eats insects, and its guano (droppings) provide energy for other cave creatures.

The grotto salamander, a troglobite, cannot live outside the cave. Unlike bats that can fly out to feed, as the grotto salamander matures it loses its pigment and its eyelids fuse shut so it becomes a cave creature.

**Rivers and streams**, along with wetlands, springs and lakes, form much of Missouri's aquatic habitats. What is included in your local watershed? There are an amazing variety of creatures living in these habitats and the Missouri River catfish is one of the most famous. Research local reptiles, amphibians and fish in your area.

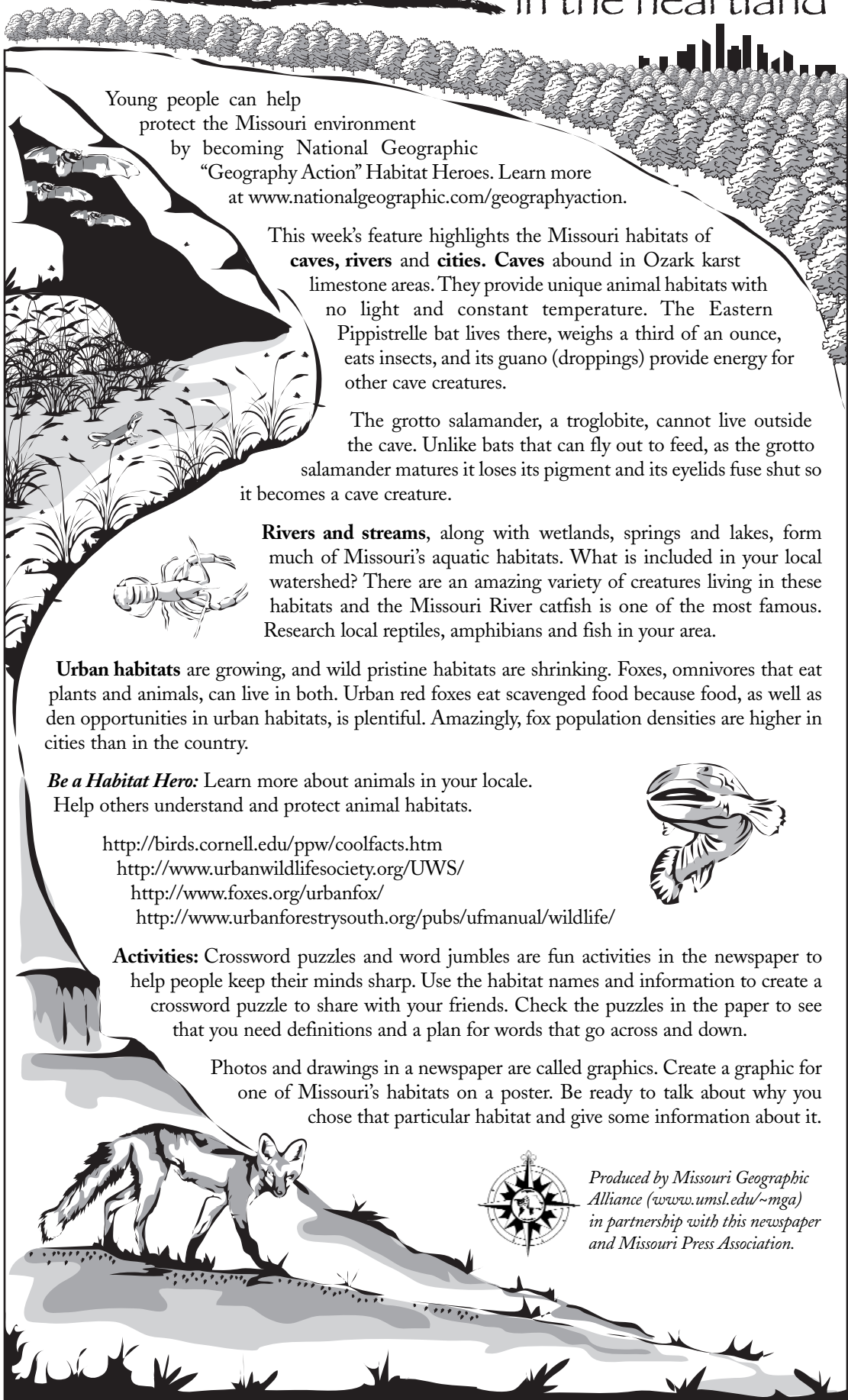
**Urban habitats** are growing, and wild pristine habitats are shrinking. Foxes, omnivores that eat plants and animals, can live in both. Urban red foxes eat scavenged food because food, as well as den opportunities in urban habitats, is plentiful. Amazingly, fox population densities are higher in cities than in the country.

**Be a Habitat Hero:** Learn more about animals in your locale. Help others understand and protect animal habitats.

- <http://birds.cornell.edu/ppw/coolfacts.htm>
- <http://www.urbanwildlifesociety.org/UWS/>
- <http://www.foxes.org/urbanfox/>
- <http://www.urbanforestrysouth.org/pubs/ufmanual/wildlife/>

**Activities:** Crossword puzzles and word jumbles are fun activities in the newspaper to help people keep their minds sharp. Use the habitat names and information to create a crossword puzzle to share with your friends. Check the puzzles in the paper to see that you need definitions and a plan for words that go across and down.

Photos and drawings in a newspaper are called graphics. Create a graphic for one of Missouri's habitats on a poster. Be ready to talk about why you chose that particular habitat and give some information about it.



Produced by Missouri Geographic Alliance ([www.umsl.edu/~mga](http://www.umsl.edu/~mga)) in partnership with this newspaper and Missouri Press Association.