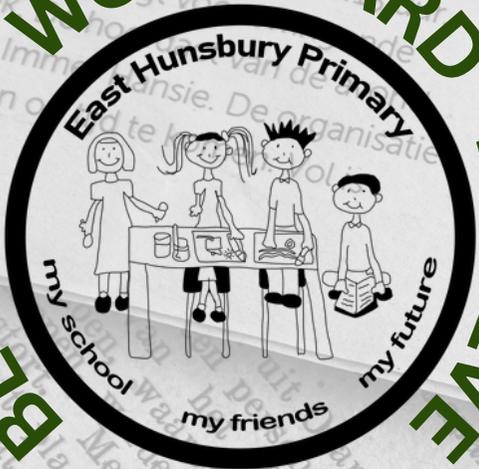


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IN THE

SPOTLIGHT

YOUR WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

The weekly newspaper for children

**WHAT'S IN THE
NEWS THIS WEEK?**

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Snake a look at this!

It's the Year of the Snake in the Chinese New Year celebrations for 2025, which has got us thinking here at Picture News, what types of snakes can we find in the United Kingdom?

There are only three types of snakes that are native to the UK: the adder, the grass snake, and the rarest of the three, the smooth snake. Smooth snakes, as their name suggests, have flat scales and are smooth to the touch. They look similar to an adder, but their heads are rounder, and their markings aren't as defined. 'Smooth snakes are smaller than most people imagine, usually only growing to 60-70 cm in length!', says Steve Allain, a zoologist.



Pictured: A smooth snake.
Source: Canva.

They live in sandy dunes in just three counties in England, although they have been reintroduced into two more places, to try to preserve them further. Unfortunately, building work on their natural habitats has caused a big decline in this wonderful, rare species. If threatened, they can bite but are not poisonous. They can also give off a foul-smelling odour to scare off potential predators! Phwoar!

Have you ever seen a snake?

Umbrella Day has got you covered!

On Monday 10th February, it's National Umbrella Day! It is unknown who first invented the canopy shaped accessory, but we do know that it was used in ancient Egypt, China and India, and then later in Ancient Greece and Rome. Initially, it was mainly used to protect people from the sun, and then as a shelter from the rain too.

Like many things, umbrellas have changed and improved over time – becoming more lightweight, portable and easy

Pictured: Smart Umbrellas – connect to your phone!
Source: Canva.



to whip out when needed. Now, you can even buy 'Smart Umbrellas' that open and close by themselves, can connect to an app via Bluetooth, and tell you when it's going to rain. They even vibrate when your phone rings, so you never miss a call!

Did you need your umbrella today?

Who should be involved in key decisions for the world?



It is important for prime ministers to sort out problems as they are the ambassadors for their countries. Ethon

Purrrfect Happy Ending!

A beloved pet has been reunited with his family, after being missing for 11 days! Chewie, the Norwegian forest cat, was rescued by staff at a McDonald's drive-thru, 30 miles away from his home. 'We're just so relieved and it's so amazing to have him home,' said owner, Sophie Morrish. After the feline approached customers in the car park, staff became concerned as he was close to busy roads. The cat was taken into a back office, where he



Pictured: Chewie, the Norwegian forest cat.
Source: Cats Protection St Albans Branch on Facebook.

could safely wait for Jo Weaver from Cats Protection, St Albans, to scan his microchip. This revealed he was a long way away from his home in Essex. His owner was contacted, and he was able to return home to join his very worried family. The Cats Protection charity pointed out that reunions like this are only possible if people keep their pet's microchip information up-to-date. Richard Forte, from London Colney McDonald's, said they were 'incredibly proud of the restaurant team for going above and beyond', and 'reuniting Chewie with his grateful owner and creating a purrrfect happy ending'.

Did you know that all pet cats in England should have a microchip?



Pictured: Chewie, the Norwegian forest cat.
Source: Cats Protection St Albans Branch on Facebook.

Popular Pongy Plant

A super-smelly plant, named Putricia, has drawn massive crowds at the Royal Sydney Botanic Garden, Australia. The *Amorphophallus titanum* plant, famous for its 'deadly' stench, is said to smell of many things – from rotting food, sweaty socks and even garlic! Putricia (named from a staff competition - a combination of the words 'putrid' and 'Patricia') was placed in a special display area, allowing people to watch it bloom. It's a very rare plant – there are only around 1000 in the world – and has the biggest and smelliest flower-spike. It only appears for 1-2 days and won't flower again for years. Long lines of people queued up to experience the smell for themselves. Up to 20,000 people are estimated to have visited the special display. A livestream of the flower preparing to open had millions of views! Describing the plant's aroma,



Pictured: Putricia, the *Amorphophallus titanum*.
Source: Botanic Gardens of Sydney on Facebook.

Paul Nicholson, from the Botanic Gardens, said, 'If you've got some wet teenage socks, throw that into a blender, then you get some cat food you've left out in the sun, whack that in your blender, and then get some day-old vomit. Put that in the blender, blend it all up, rip the lid off. That's the kind of smell you're getting. It's actually stunningly beautiful as well.'

Do you know any facts about *Amorphophallus titanum*?

Do you think you would have waited in line for hours to experience this?

Who should be involved in key decisions for the world?



It would be good if the leaders of all the countries could work together to make the world a better place.

Stacey