

Fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

takes centre stage	inquisitive	foraging	blunt	intimidating
subdue	outlet	staple	canine	capitalising

Ferret electricians



“Ferrets are, if you want to be polite, 1) _____; if you want to be 2) _____, they’re nosy little devils,” says James McKay of the National Ferret School. Their curiosity, shape and flexibility mean they can get to places and do jobs no human could manage. Ferrets wriggled under the floor of St Paul’s Cathedral to enable TV transmission of the royal wedding in 1981 and cabled the Millennium Dome. How does the cabling work? The ferret wears a special harness attached to a long, light nylon line. Once it has threaded the line through a pipe, the line is attached to a heavier pull rope to thread the cable. Although there is some training involved, it is really a case of 3) _____ on the ferrets’ natural inclination to investigate holes. A bit of salmon oil at the far end of a long pipe as a reward can help them find their way. The furthest one of McKay’s ferrets has travelled is about 250 metres.

Reading to a dog



In a world where technology often 1) _____, the simple act of reading to a furry friend can have a profound impact on children. For many of them, reading in front of their peers or adults can be 2) _____. Dogs provides a non-judgmental and supportive audience for children. Dogs are patient listeners who offer unconditional love and acceptance, allowing kids to practise reading aloud without fear of criticism. This practice enhances their reading skills, fluency, and comprehension, potentially leading to improved academic performance. Interacting with dogs has been proven to reduce stress and anxiety levels. Reading to dogs offers a therapeutic 3) _____ for children, helping them relax and unwind while engaging in a beloved activity. The presence of a friendly and supportive 4) _____ companion creates a calming and soothing environment. This positive association with reading nurtures a lifelong love for books and encourages children to become avid readers.

Honey-hunting birds



5) _____ for wild honey is a tricky business. Bee nests are hard to find, and their inhabitants sting to defend themselves. But in a rare collaboration, honey hunters in Africa get help finding bees’ nests from a small brown bird called the greater honeyguide. People use a specific sound – a loud trill – to attract birds and they lead the honey hunter to a nest, typically hidden in the branches or hollows of a tree, and then the honey hunter uses smoke or tools to 6) _____ the bees and scoop out the honey. As a reward, the guide gets the beeswax, a 7) _____ of its diet. Collaborations like these between humans and wild animals are extremely rare, with only a few examples documented around the world. And those we know of are fast disappearing. Once widespread across the continent, honey hunting with honeyguides is

now practiced by just a few ethnic groups in East Africa, particularly in rural areas of Mozambique, Tanzania, and Kenya.