



MAMMALS

Learn more about the mammals in the beautiful nature surrounding Areias do Seixo.



◆ European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

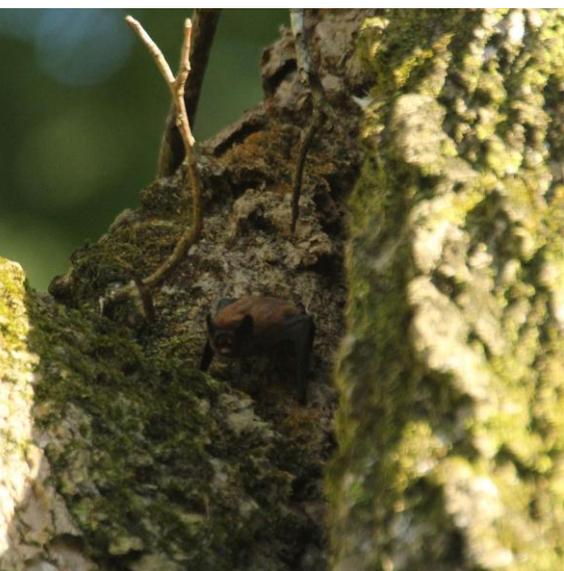
Rabbits came originally from south-west Europe and north west Africa. The grass and plants they graze at dawn and dusk are of such poor nutritional value that rabbits eat their faeces to squeeze every last bit of remaining nourishment. Thumping their back legs sends a warning to others that one of their numerous predators is about. Here they are relatively numerous and find food on the various environments around the Areias do Seixo.

Degree of Difficulty: 8

Colour status: Green

Feeds on: grass, stems, roots

Season: all year round



◆ Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

Forages close to ground within and along the edges of broadleaf deciduous woodland, riparian vegetation, and Mediterranean and sub-mediterranean shrubland. Feeds mainly on midges, moths and craneflies. Summer roosts (breeding colonies): natural and artificial underground sites in the southern part of the range, attics and buildings in the northern part. Winter: hibernates in underground sites (including cellars, small caves and burrows). Sedentary, winter and summer roosts usually within 5-10 km. You can spot them by nightfall over the gardens as they fly looking for insect near artificial light source. Here they serve as prey to the Long-eared owl.

Degree of Difficulty: 6

Colour status: Green

Feeds on: mostly insects

Season: all year round



◆ Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

Hedgehogs are the only Portuguese mammal with spines. When threatened they will roll into a tight ball, with the spines providing sharp protection from predators. Young hedgehogs are born with soft spines under the skin to protect their mothers, with a second set of spines emerging within days. One peculiarity to all hedgehogs is the way they cover their spines in foamy saliva, the reason why they do this remains a mystery although it has been suggested it might be a sexual attractant, or be used to reduce parasites, or as additional protection. Hedgehogs aren't fussy when it comes to food: worms, slugs, frogs and even bird eggs can be taken during a two kilometre nightly forage, a resistance to snake venom can also put snake on the menu.

Degree of Difficulty: 8

Colour status: Green

Feeds on: worms, slugs, frogs, bird eggs, snakes

Season: all year round



◆ Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

Red foxes have overtaken grey wolves as the most widespread canines in the wild. Distributed throughout the northern hemisphere, red foxes are highly adaptable and occupy territories in deserts and tundra as well as urban areas. They live in family groups in dens and eat most things including small mammals, fruit, carrion and the contents of dustbins. As well as having excellent vision, smell and touch these bushy-tailed true foxes can produce 28 different calls. The best times to spot them are at dusk and at dawn.

Degree of Difficulty: 9

Colour status: Green

Feeds on: rodents, reptiles, eggs and birds.

Season: all year round



◆ Egyptian mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*)

The Egyptian mongoose is a small carnivore, about 20 cm high and 90 cm long, with a long tail that it drags whilst walking. It was introduced in Iberia by the Arabs, hundreds of years ago, and it is specially know for its ability to eat snakes. It is of a brown greyish colour and is active mainly at dawn and dusk, but can be spotted by daytime as well, depending on the time of the year. To spot this animal is very hard, but when it happens, it is usually in small family groups.

Degree of Difficulty: 9

Colour status: Green

Feeds on: rodents, reptiles, eggs and birds.

Season: all year round, but more conspicuous in Spring



◆ Iberian mole (*Talpa occidentalis*)

It is a burrowing species, and like its congener the European mole (*T. europaea*) it is found in a variety of habitats so long as there is deep soil that is not excessively stony, sandy, or waterlogged. It is often found in meadows and pastures. In southern parts of its range it is restricted to upland areas. It feeds on invertebrates, especially earthworms. It is endemic from Portugal and Spain and a rare sight, if you can spot one, at night, or at dawn. Here it can be spotted on the gardens, specially at night when it comes out looking for worms.

Degree of Difficulty: 9

Colour status

Feeds on: invertebrates, mostly earthworms

Season: all year round, but mostly from March to October