

Important Animals

The Ancient Egyptians loved animals. They worshipped them, kept them as pets and feared them. Lots of animals had strengths that the Egyptians admired. These might have been strength or beauty, or the ability to ward off predators. This meant that lots of Egyptian gods were shown to look like animals.

Cats

Cats were one of the most important animals in Egypt. They were drawn in tombs as long as 4,500 years ago. We can see from these pictures that they were domesticated (kept as pets). Some even show them sitting underneath their owner's chairs. Even back then, cats had their feet under the table! Mummified cats have been found in important tombs as well. It is also possible that cats were kept to hunt pests like mice and rats.

The Egyptian's loved cats so much that they worshipped them. Bastet was known as a god who protected children. In drawings, she often had the head of a cat or lion. Most gods who were part cat were female, but there was one male cat-god. Re (Ra) was a sun-god who often fought against Apophis.

Sacred Ibis

A sacred ibis is a type of bird that was common along the Nile. The Ancient Egyptians worshipped them for thousands of years. It is thought that they worshipped them from around 5,300 BCE. Even the Romans carried on the practice of worshipping them. They were raised in captivity by the Egyptians as well. Unfortunately, the sacred ibis is now extinct in Egypt.

Ibis birds also appeared in the Egyptian hieroglyphic language. An ibis on a perch was the symbol for the god Thoth. He was the god of knowledge. Thoth was always shown with the body of a man and the head of an ibis. As the god of writing and knowledge, Thoth was present at the weighing of the soul with Anubis.

Crocodiles

Crocodiles are one of the most dangerous animals on the Nile, and the Egyptians feared them. Just like other dangerous creatures, the Egyptians worshipped them. The god Sobek had the body of a man and the head of a crocodile. He was worshipped as the god of the waters. Egyptians hoped that by praying to Sobek, they would be kept safe around the water.

Hippopotamus

You may not know it, but hippos are the deadliest animal in Africa. The Egyptians certainly knew it and worshipped them regularly. The goddess of motherhood and protection had the body of a hippo, the legs of a lion and the face of a crocodile. These three animals represented the most fearsome and protective animals that the Egyptians knew. She may not be well-known now, but Taweret was one of the most worshipped gods at the time.

Now have a go at answering the questions about what you have just read. Make sure you answer in sentences. *The words in italics will help you to begin your sentences.*

1. Which god protected children?

The god that...

2. When did the Egyptians start worshipping the ibis?

Egyptians started...

3. Which god was represented by an ibis?

The god represented...

4. What is the deadliest animal in Africa?

The deadliest...

5. Which animal is now extinct in Egypt?

The animal now extinct...

6. Why might Egyptians have worshipped Sobek?

Egyptians...

7. Find and copy a word that tells you the Egyptians were scared of crocodiles.

The word...

8. What evidence is there that cats were allowed into Egyptian homes?

We know that cats were allowed...

9. Why was Taweret made up of a lion, hippo and crocodile?

Taweret...

10. Who was the god of knowledge and what did he look like?

The god of knowledge...