NEWS LESSON

The Animals That Were Here Before the Houses



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. How would you react to a capybara outside your front door?
2. What wildlife do people welcome near their homes?
3. When do people start calling an animal a problem?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**rodents**	☐	A	people who work together to change something
2	**wetland**	☐	B	made by people, not found in nature
3	**artificial**	☐	C	small animals with big front teeth, like mice and rats
4	**campaigners**	☐	D	areas of short grass in a garden
5	**investigation**	☐	E	land that is very wet, with a lot of water
6	**complaints**	☐	F	words that say you are not happy about something
7	**routes**	☐	G	an official check to find out what happened
8	**lawns**	☐	H	ways to go from one place to another

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Capybaras walk across lawns and roads in Nordelta, near Buenos Aires. In September 2026, a resident was filmed firing a gun at them.

1 Imagine looking out of your kitchen window and seeing an enormous brown animal eating the grass beside your swimming pool. For some people living in Nordelta, an expensive neighbourhood near Buenos Aires in Argentina, that is an ordinary morning rather than a surprise.

2 The animals are capybaras, called carpinchos in Argentina. They are the world's largest living rodents and are related to guinea pigs, although they are far bigger. They love water and usually live in groups near rivers, lakes and wetlands. Nordelta was built on wetland, where capybaras already lived. In Nordelta, they can be seen walking across lawns, crossing roads and resting beside the artificial lakes that were built for the residents.

3 For some residents, the animals are a wonderful part of local life and visitors love taking photographs of them. Other people are much less happy. They worry about their pets, damaged gardens and animals suddenly turning up in front of cars at night. In September 2026, a resident was filmed firing a gun at capybaras near his home. The incident led to complaints and an investigation.

4 Animal campaigners say the bigger problem is not the capybaras themselves. As people moved in and built more homes, the animals lost a great deal of their natural space.

5 Finding a solution is difficult. Moving capybaras somewhere else is not always simple, and residents also need to feel safe in their own gardens. Campaigners have suggested protecting the natural areas that are left and creating routes where animals can move around without crossing busy streets. None of this is quick, and it costs money that somebody has to agree to spend.

6 The story has become famous partly because capybaras look calm and friendly in photographs. But the argument behind it is serious: when people build a new community in an animal's home, who has the right to stay? That question matters far beyond Argentina, because towns and cities everywhere are still growing into places where animals already live.

Sources: El País Argentina. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Nordelta was built on land where capybaras already lived. T F NG
2. No living rodent is bigger than the capybara. T F NG
3. The resident who fired the gun was arrested. T F NG
4. All residents of Nordelta enjoy having the animals nearby. T F NG
5. Capybaras usually live alone. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

damaged	enormous	natural	ordinary	serious	tidy	wealthy

1. The whale was so _____ that it could hardly fit inside the small bay.
2. Seeing a cat on the garden wall is an _____ sight, so nobody looks twice.
3. After the storm, the _____ fence had to be repaired.
4. Farmers worry that building on _____ areas will harm the wildlife.
5. The police said the crime was _____, so they began an immediate search.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. In Nordelta, they can be _____ walking across lawns. (SEE)
2. In September 2026, a resident _____ firing a gun at capybaras. (FILM)
3. The incident _____ to complaints and an investigation. (LEAD)
4. _____ capybaras somewhere else is not always simple. (MOVE)
5. Campaigners have _____ protecting the natural areas that are left. (SUGGEST)

7 Language focus: collocations

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. A collocation is a pair of words that go together naturally. Learn them as a pair, like take a photograph.

busy	deal	heavy	make	protect	safe	take

1. Visitors love to _____ photographs of the capybaras.
2. The animals lost a great _____ of their natural space.
3. Residents want to feel _____ when they walk home at night.
4. Drivers must be careful on a _____ road with heavy traffic.
5. Campaigners want to _____ the places where animals live.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. If homes are built in an animal's habitat, who should adapt?
2. Would you accept a less tidy garden to leave more room for wildlife?
3. What would make sharing a neighbourhood with wild animals workable?

9 Role-play: a capybara on the lawn

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · the resident

Capybaras keep eating your garden and you're worried about your dog. Explain the problem and ask what the community will do. You can accept a plan, or ask for something different.

Student B · the wildlife campaigner

You think the animals were here first. Listen to the resident, then suggest ways to share the space. Try to find a plan you both accept.

Useful phrases

I'm worried about my dog.
They were here long before the houses.
What do you suggest we do?
I'd be happy to try that.
That isn't fair to the animals.
Can we meet halfway?

Afterwards, tell the class: what plan did you agree, and who gave up more?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 C · 2 E · 3 B · 4 A · 5 G · 6 F · 7 H · 8 D

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 T · 3 NG · 4 F · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 enormous · 2 ordinary · 3 damaged · 4 natural · 5 serious

6 Verb forms

1 seen · 2 was filmed · 3 led · 4 Moving · 5 suggested

7 Language focus

1 take · 2 deal · 3 safe · 4 busy · 5 protect

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