

Spotted Hyena

- Spotted Hyenas live an average of 20 years in the wild.
- They are Africa's most common large carnivore.
- Hyenas are most active after dark.
- They are fairly large in build and have relatively short torsos with lower hindquarters, and sloping backs. About 37 to 60 inches in length; 30 to 33 inches at the shoulder and weigh 77 to 176 pounds.
- They have a sandy, ginger-colored coat with black markings on their body and legs. They sport a cool, short mane on their neck and shoulders.
- They have **excellent, sharp night-time vision** and very good hearing. They are fast and can run for long distances without tiring.
- Spotted hyenas appear similar to dogs, but they are actually more closely related to cats.
- They live together in large groups called **clans** that may include up to 80 individuals. There's a strict hierarchy, where **females rank higher than males**, and the group is led by one powerful **alpha female**. (*Males fear females intensely.*) Cubs inherit the mother's status in the clan.
- Hyenas make a variety of vocalizations, including wailing calls, howling screams, and the well-known "laughter," which can be heard up to 3 miles away and is used to alert other clan members of a food source.
- A Female hyena gives birth to one or two cubs a year, which she nurses in a **den** (*the center of clan activity.*) As the youngsters grow up, males will often leave to join a different clan, whereas females will remain in the same clan for life.
- Cubs begin to eat meat from kills near the den at about five months, but they are suckled for as long as 12 to 18 months — an unusually long time for carnivores. This is probably because most kills are made far from the den, and hyenas, unlike jackals and hunting dogs, do not bring back food and regurgitate it for their young.
- At about one year, cubs begin to follow their mothers on their hunting and scavenging forays. Until then, they are left behind at the den with a babysitting adult.
- **Do NOT believe** what you may read that they only get food from scavenging. About **70% or more** of their diet is composed of **direct kills** which leaves about 30% from scavenging. (*They can scavenge on just about any carcass.*) They are more likely to take from a leopard or cheetah than a large pride of lions. They will steal from a group of lionesses and cubs if hyenas have much larger numbers. Also, if a group of lions have had their fill, the lions they will walk away and let the hyenas have the remains rather than to fight.
- Hyenas follow vultures to locate carcasses.
- These hardy beasts are skilled hunters that will take down buffalo, wildebeest, elands, zebra, young hippos or gazelles. They also kill and eat rabbits, birds, lizards, snakes, and insects. (*Male lions will actually take over hyenas' kills. The males will walk into a clan of feeding hyenas and take the carcass from them.*)
- Packs work together effectively to isolate a herd animal, sometimes one that is ill or injured. They run down the prey – even up to 4 miles - until it becomes exhausted. (*They begin eating before death.*)
- The victors often squabble over the spoils. Adults can quickly consume 30lbs in a single meal.
- Their **powerful jaws** are among the strongest in relation to the size of any other mammal. Reinforced, oversized teeth and a crushing bite to pulverize bones lead to the nickname of "**Bone Crushers**."
- These jaws along with the digestive tract allow them to process and obtain nutrients from skin and bones.

- The only parts of prey not fully digested are hair and horns.
- Highly nutritious mineral content is obtained from the bone marrow. Digested bones make their droppings an easily visible, chalky white.
- They are territorial with **large territories** of up to 7000 acres. *(For me - that's why the extremely small enclosures at zoos can be heart breaking! Though I appreciate that we can see and photograph them.)*
- Hyenas mark and patrol their territories by depositing a strong-smelling substance produced by the anal glands on stalks of grass along the boundaries.
- The Maasai people of Kenya and Tanzania actually use hyenas as “undertakers” by leaving their dead to be consumed by hyenas – which in their beliefs – delivers a person’s spirit to the afterlife.
- Find more hyena pictures and info about the other animals at: www.theater4church.com/Animals.htm

