

Animals of the World: Mammals



THE ZEBRA



Zebras are quadrupeds easily recognized by their distinct black fur with white stripes. They belong to the Equus genus, along with horses and donkeys.

There are three species of zebras: the common zebra, the mountain zebra, and the Grevy zebra. They all inhabit the African continent, and are concentrated in the southern zone.

All zebras have stripes; however, the arrangement, thickness, and number of stripes is unique for each zebra. They are like fingerprints, no two are exactly alike. Its striped coat is useful for camouflage in tall grasses. Although the grass is not black or white, this camouflage system is effective because most cats are colorblind; they have problems differentiating colors. This is how the zebra is able to hide from its main predators, the lions of the savannah.

Zebra stripes have other functions than just to camouflage them in the grass. Because of the unique patterns of the stripes, they attract the opposite sex for mating. The stripes also help to reduce the zebra's body temperature by minimizing the heat absorption from direct exposure to the sun.

Zebras are very similar to horses, at least in height and weight. A zebra can weigh 300 kilograms and measure 150 centimeters high. There isn't any difference in the size of males and females.



Zebras are sociable animals that live in herds. They spend all day together; they even eat and sleep in groups. This helps them survive; predators are confused when approaching a group of zebras because with all the white stripes and black body, predators are not sure if there is just one large animal or several of them together.

Zebras are constantly vigilant, watching for predators, like hyenas or lions, that are approaching the herd. When they are attacked, the rest of the family defends the weaker zebras. To do this, they try to fend off and scare the predators away with their large numbers.

Zebras are herbivorous animals; they only consume herbs and leaves. They usually eat during the morning, but will spend the entire day eating, if necessary. They will travel almost 20 kilometers a day to find food, but they always return to their point of origin.

During the dry season, zebras migrate to areas with more water, whether in rivers or lakes. They are not the only animal that makes this annual migration, other African mammals also looking for water sources during drought, such as antelopes or giraffes, also migrate.

Female zebras can have a baby every year. At birth, the young stand and start walking immediately, just like horses and other quadrupeds. Newborn babies are brown and white, but as they grow, the brown darkens to black.



Name _____

Date _____

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Answer the questions.

1. Zebras are _____
- a. carnivorous, nocturnal quadrupeds.
 - b. deaf, herbivorous quadrupeds.
 - c. sociable, herbivorous quadrupeds.
 - d. daytime, carnivorous quadrupeds.



2. There are several types of zebras, _____
- a. and they live in the Americas.
 - b. and they usually live in Africa.
 - c. and they live in Europe.
 - d. and they usually live in Asia.

3. The stripes on their fur are used to camouflage zebras in the rivers.
- a. True
 - b. False

4. According to the text, the main predators of zebras are _____
- a. elephants.
 - b. cheetahs
 - c. horses.
 - d. lions.

5. What does the word predator mean in the text?
- a. a playful and fun animal
 - b. a sociable animal
 - c. an animal that hunts other animals for food.
 - d. a scary animal



Name_____

Date_____

6. One of the species of zebra is_____

- a. the mountain zebra.
- b. the savannah zebra.
- c. the river zebra.
- d. the desert zebra.

7. Why do zebras always go together?

- a. It's cold, and they want to get warm.
- b. They are scared.
- c. It's hot where they live.
- d. They are a very sociable animal.



8. Zebras always return to their starting place despite_____

- a. traveling more than ten kilometers during the day.
- b. wanting to live in another place.
- c. having weak and short legs.
- d. wanting to sleep in unfamiliar places.

9. When there is a drought, zebras_____

- a. move to areas where they can find water easily.
- b. accumulate water in their body, so they don't get dehydrated.
- c. look for dry places to stay, along with giraffes and antelopes.
- d. settle in places like caves or holes dug in the mountain.

10. Zebras are amazing animals; their fur changes color as they grow.

- a. True
- b. False

