

SPOTTED HYAENA



Crocuta crocuta

STATUS

- Lower Risk – Conservation Dependent

ORIGIN

- Hyaena belong to the Carnivora order, but belong in their own family, separate from dogs and cats.
- They are more closely related to cats than dogs.

DISTRIBUTION

- Spotted hyaena are found in most arid and savannah zones of Africa, south of the Sahara Desert.
- They are the most abundant large carnivore in sub-Saharan Africa.

HABITAT


- Spotted hyaena are mostly found in savannah grasslands

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- “Clans” of Spotted hyaena can include from 5 to 90 individuals. They are led by a dominant female matriarch.
- Females are dominant in the social hierarchy, followed by young, with males being the least dominant.
- Many males leave the clan when they are mature, and females tend to mate with males from other clans.
- Spotted hyaena communicate by scent, body postures and sounds, with 11 distinctive calls recognised.

DESCRIPTION

- Spotted hyaena are the largest and most common hyaena with a powerful build, jaws and head.
- Their jaws can crush the bones of all the prey animals they eat and their digestive system then dissolves all the bones and teeth.
- The spots on the Spotted hyaena fade and their colour lightens with age.

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- They eat vertebrates and particularly ungulates (hoofed animals)
 - Spotted hyaena genitalia look identical to the untrained eye.
 - Spotted hyaena have a long ambling stride. They lope at about 10 kph, gallop at 60 kph and can run at 40 - 50 kph for several kilometres. This way they can outlast and run down faster prey animals.
 - When attacking prey, (usually young or female animals) Spotted hyaena bite the legs or grip tails. The victim is usually disembowelled.
 - They are the longest lived of all hyaena species and can live for up to 35 years.
 - They scavenge some of their food, moving in on the kills of other predators, such as Cheetah, but studies show that a significant share of their food is obtained by hunting for themselves.
 - Spotted hyaena have acute senses of sight, smell and hearing .

POINTS OF INTEREST

- The gestation period of Spotted hyaena is 16 weeks. They give birth to 1-3 young, but often the first born cub, if female, will kill and eat the next.
- Babies are born with their teeth fully developed.
- Hyaena are well-known for their “laughing”. This is the croaking, birdlike bark that resembles human laughter. However, it usually indicates intense fear.