

Whole Story, The

13 X 1 HOUR

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Elephants

Elephants are not only the largest land mammals on Earth, they are also the most adaptable. In the Kunene desert, they trek for days in search of water to drink. In the rainforests of Ghana, the smaller, more agile elephants are especially inventive. In unique footage, the forest elephants are seen spraying themselves with half-chewed food and saliva to cool down.

2. Spiders

Whether small enough to fit the head of a pin, or large enough to fill a dinner plate, spiders are amazing animals. Supreme hunters of the invertebrate world, they are the most numerous predators on Earth. But, they are also nature's master craftsmen, fashioning exquisite webs of the finest silk – a natural fibre so tough that it ranks with advanced human innovations.

3. Lions

Lions: super-charged hunting beasts admired for centuries for their strength and prowess. More than any other animal, lions symbolise Africa. The roar of a lion fills the night – the world's most spine-tingling sound. But the mighty warrior's life is fraught with danger, the sleek female's with the cares of child-minding, warring with neighbours, and risking all in the hunt.

4. Eagles

Bones like honeycomb, skull-filling eyes, wings the length of a piano, a neck that turns almost full circle, the keenest vision of all vertebrates. The eagles of Africa are impressive. Some dine on large fish – airlifting them surfboard-style in deadly talons. Others swoop on prey over four times their own weight. Others simply tuck into fruit and nuts!

5. Crocodiles

Africa's crocodiles face stiff competition for their food. Fortunately for them, they are blessed with an even greater variety of prey. Over millions of years, these two factors have honed them into versatile, opportunistic hunters – master predators from the age of the dinosaurs.

6. Beetles

With more than 3,000 known species around the globe, beetles are the most numerous life form on earth, accounting for nearly one in three animal species. Equal parts aviator, woodworker, sewage disposal, and athlete, the beetle is one of the great survivors. With their endless adaptability, beetles have outlived the dinosaurs and are still going strong in the 21st century.

7. Hyenas

Manic cackler of the African night, it's the animal whose calls send trickles of unease down the spine. Regularly seen scavenging abandoned kills, or slipping through the trees in the dead of night, going about its stealthy carnivorous business, the spotted hyena is the one African animal that seems to be nobody's favourite.

8. Cheetahs

The cheetah is nature's boy racer. A creature of grace and beauty, the cheetah lives in the fast lane. At full sprint in pursuit of prey, a cheetah can reach 100kph. It accelerates from 0 to 72kph in 2 seconds. It out-performs every racing car. Caring, tolerant and shy, this is perhaps the most endearing and impressive of Africa's big cats.

9. Snakes

Through the ages, snakes have symbolized not only evil, but also wisdom, health and life – a constant source of terror and fascination. Snakes come in one basic shape, but a wide range of sizes. Whether they are small as a pencil or tall as a pillar, the world's 2,500 snake species have slithered their way around the world.

10. Frogs

The world of Africa's frogs is versatile, vibrant, noisy and sometimes bizarre. From some of the world's biggest – weighing as much as a small dog – to fingernail-sized rainforest miniatures, Africa boasts an array of colourful species. Unsung heroes of nature, frogs devour mosquitoes and crop pests, and have made a significant contribution to modern medical research.

11. Baboons

One primate has colonized more of Africa than any other. The baboon is at home everywhere from rainforest to mountaintop. Anywhere that has food, water, and shelter is baboon territory, making them the most successful, diverse and widespread monkey around. Socially advanced, devoted to their young, fearless in defence of the group, the baboon's similarity to humans is clear.

12. Sea Mammals

Dolphins, whales and seals: the sleek, elegant, smart African mammals of the sea. Seals are the only mammals that inhabit both the worlds of the sea and the land; equivalent to a large

catamaran, dolphins can race through water at incredible speeds. Did you know that land animals originated in the sea and that some eventually returned?

13. Ungulates

From tanks to watchtowers, trumpeters to dressage experts, Africa's plant-eaters are the most varied of its land animals. Ungulates wield some of the natural world's mightiest weapons, yet by nature they're pacifists – grazers and browsers – content to mow their way through grass, bush and tree, the gardeners of the wild.