

Nature's Greatest Moments Animal Antics - Wildlife (Series 5)

10 x 5 MINUTES

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Animal Records - Cheetah

Recorded at a record-breaking speed of 114 km an hour (71 miles per hour) makes the cheetah the uncontested record holder on land. This incredible speed is a huge asset in the hunting department. The cheetahs' thin and lanky body is designed for speed, powerful legs and a spine like a spring, which bends and enables longer strides, adding greater distance to each stride. But speed alone is not enough to guarantee a successful hunt.

2. Living Fossils - Monitor Lizard/Leguana

The first monitor lizards probably originated in northern Asia at least 90 million years ago. Its body, covered in ventral scales which are rectangular and arranged in rows, is designed to withstand not only the fierce elements through which it has evolved but also serves as much needed protection against its many predators. Competition between reptiles is stiff and there is no love lost between the Monitor Lizard and this Cobra.

3. Living Fossils - Lemur

The lemurs of Madagascar exist in isolation as if the giant Island was held in time while the rest of the world evolved into the future. Lemurs are part of the prosimian or primitive primates family, which also include, bush babies found in Africa, and old world monkeys found in Asia, Borneo and the Philippines. They are social animals with long limbs, flexible toes and fingers, and long noses. Just how they got to Madagascar remains a mystery. The most popular theory is that pioneering lemur forebears floated across the Mozambique Channel on logs and clumps of vegetation during glacial periods when the sea level was relatively low.

4. Under the Earth - H. Mole Rat

About a meter (1,094 yards) below the Kalahari sands in Southern Africa lives a very strange creature. It's small and has big buckteeth and despite having small eyes its also blind. It's the Hairy Mole rat, and almost never goes above ground, where it's too dangerous.

5. Animal Sight - Lion

However unlikely it may seem the lion and the owl have something in common, they both have excellent night vision. Lions, like most of the feline species, seem to enjoy the darkness of night and this is largely due to the fact that they like to see without being seen. Lions have 6 times better night vision than humans but this does not take away from the fact that they have excellent day vision as well, which both helps and hinders their hunting technique.

6. Teeth - Hippo

Despite being the most prolific human Killer on the continent, the Hippopotamus is actually an herbivore whose diet consists mainly of juicy water borne vegetation and sweet savannah grasses. The only reason a hippo ever leaves the safety of its watery home is to go in search of greener pastures. So what does he need his powerful jaws and large teeth for if all he eats is grass, which he sometimes walks as far as 25 km (15,5 miles) in a day to find?

7. Colonies - African Buffalo

The African savannah is home to one of the biggest ungulates, the African Buffalo. This powerful animal stands up to 2 meters tall and can weigh almost a ton. Dangerous horns are an excellent indication of age and gender. Males sport horns that are joined in the middle and females and youngsters do not have this hard protective shield. Buffalo horns are made of keratin, compressed hair and bone, and unlike the rhinoceros, which also has a horn of compressed hair it does not grow back if broken. When it is time for the herd to move, the dominant female leads the way, while other less dominant individuals stay in the centre of the group protecting their young.

8. Young Naughty Animals - Vervets

Vervets are “old world” Guenons and are the most communicative of all the monkeys. The Vervets’ behavioural repertoire includes at least sixty physically distinct gestures and 36 physically distinct sounds, which play a role in communication. Young Vervets tend to be overly exuberant in the communications technique and use various facial and body actions to get a message across. Babies are born with their eyes open and spend the first week of life clinging onto mom’s tummy. In monkey society, babies are hard currency and are used to win favour and influence others. Everyone wants to hold and cuddle them.

9. Equipment - Elephant Trunk

Made up of 100 000 muscles, an elephant’s trunk is the most exceptional multipurpose tool of all and very handy when it comes to reaching for the juiciest leaves high up in a tree. At the tip of the trunk are two “fingers” that can pick up something as small as a single piece of straw or grab a large bunch of leaves. Due to its extreme flexibility, there is very little an elephant’s trunk can’t do. This long, extended nose is also very tough and can transform a thorny delicacy into a juicy meal.

10. Skin & Hair - Penguins

It is May on the West Coast of Southern Africa and nesting season for the African Penguin. After an incubation period of 40 days, a helpless and blind chick emerges from the egg. Although a thin sooty-grey down sparsely covers the hatchling, it is not nearly enough protection and the chick is still very dependent on mom to stay warm and dry. But there is another, more dangerous threat than the elements - kelp gulls. And if these penguin parents aren't diligent in looking after the helpless chicks the aerial predators would not hesitate to take advantage.