

Hyenas



There are many fascinating animals in Africa. The hyena was definitely one I won't forget. I was on safari in Botswana, Africa and that is where I had my only encounter with a spotted hyena, as seen in the photograph to the left. How it all came about is

rather interesting. We were finishing our evening safari when our guide received a message that a leopard had been spotted. It is difficult to see a leopard because they are not usually out in the open like the lions. He immediately took us to the sight. This leopard had made a kill (a small impala) and had brought his dinner up in a tree. Our guide informed us that the leopards often do this to keep the other cats from stealing their meal. In the photo above you can see the leopard on the right and the impala on the left. The hyena was circling the tree in hopes the impala would fall down and he could escape with the leopard's dinner.



Hyenas are **scavengers** because they feed on dead animals they didn't kill. Even though hyenas love to get an easy meal they aren't just scavengers. They hunt for their food as well. Hyenas are carnivores, which means they eat only meat, but they are not that selective when it comes to what kind of meat. Hyenas will eat wildebeest, antelope, hippos, birds, jackals, lizards, foxes, porcupines, baby elephants, baby giraffes, and any other meat they can kill. Hyenas work together in clans to take down their prey.

Hyenas will eat every part of an animal, including the bones and hooves. Nothing is wasted and extra food is usually hidden. To the right is a picture of our guide holding a hyena poop. It looks like a powdered sugar donut hole. He explained that hyena manure is white because they eat all the bones of the dead animals. Other animals will eat the hyena poop because they need the calcium. The hyenas keep the grasslands clean because they eat all of the dead animals. We never saw a decaying carcass or the skeleton of an animal. The hyena plays an important role in the African grassland ecosystem.



Check for Understanding

Check your comprehension by answering the following questions. Circle the correct answer.

1. What does the word *scavenger* mean in the article above?
 - A. they are not hunters
 - B. they hunt alone
 - C. they eat dead animals they didn't kill
 - D. they search for food
2. In the article it said a hyena was a carnivore. What is that?
 - A. they hunt in clans
 - B. they eat only meat
 - C. they eat only plants
 - D. they steal other animals food
3. Which of the following is **NOT** true about the hyena?
 - A. they are scavengers
 - B. they hide extra food
 - C. they will eat a porcupine
 - D. they eat both plants and animals

4. Why do other animals eat hyena poop?

A. it is easy to find

C. it looks like a powdered sugar donut

B. they love the taste

D. it contains calcium they need

5. Write down one fact and one opinion that the author wrote about in the article. How do you know it's a fact and an opinion?

6. Write 3 interesting things that you learned about hyenas from this article.

Check for Understanding

Answer Sheet

Check your comprehension by answering the following questions. Circle the correct answer.

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Opinion- There are many fascinating animals in Africa. It is opinion because of the word fascinating, you can't prove they are fascinating.

Fact- Hyena work together in clans to take down their prey. It is a fact because you can prove it.

6. Write 3 interesting things that you learned about hyenas from this article. *Answers will vary*
