



Wild Animals

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True or false: Chimpanzees make their own beds! Hippos turn pink when they leave the water. A rhino walks on tiptoe. A giraffe can wrap its extremely long tongue around its head. While these statements may sound like delightful fiction they are actually tantalizing facts about wild animals of Africa. These facts and more are found in one of a series of books designed to introduce young readers to topics such as wildlife, transportation, ocean creatures and rain forests. Each book contains a busy mix of illustrations and photographs, vocabulary words, facts, puzzles and a story incorporating material from the earlier factual sections.

In *Wild Animals* the authors mention twelve African species including the lion, giraffe, rhino, elephant, and weaverbird. In a typical section, the text relates that lions live in prides and that when the mother brings food home, “the father lion always digs in first.” The fact tip on the lions’ page reveals that “When two lions from the same pride meet, they rub their heads together. This shows that they are friends.”

One photograph shows a tired father lion sleeping, his head resting on one leg and another dangling as he naps on a large branch of a tree. A second shows cute lion cubs learning “to be fierce by playing and trying to fight with the mother lion.” A handsome watercolor illustration of a roaring lion in the center of the double-page spread points to and explains the parts of the lion: coat, paw, teeth, and roar. (“A mighty roar frightens other animals away.”)

The book, developed in consultation with the London Zoo, shows a particularly intriguing photograph of a baby cheetah with its mother. The surprising, long, fuzzy, silver mane from the top of the cheetah cub’s head down its back makes the baby look as if it had served as a model for characters in “Star Wars.”

The book has both an index and table of contents so that youngsters can become familiar with these reference tools as they enjoy the pictures, games, and puzzles.

LINDA SALISBURY (November / December 2000)

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