

LESSON PLAN: HYENAS

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Objective: Education is a big part of the Wildlife Waystation's mission. Lesson plans are available to download for students, teachers and anyone interested in learning more about wild and exotic animals.

Rocco, Domino, Winnie, Kombo



The four spotted hyenas arrived at the Waystation in the summer and completed their quarantine period. They came from a facility that conducted animal study behavior. They needed a permanent home at the end of their assignment. They now have a team of volunteers dedicated to enriching their lives by providing food and toys.

Animal Facts:

Hyenas are native to Africa. They live in open savannahs, grasslands and arid mountainous regions of East, West and South Africa. There are four species of hyenas: spotted, striped, brown and aardwolf. Striped hyenas are also found in India. Spotted, striped and brown hyenas are carnivores but the aardwolf is an insectivore. It catches termites with its long sticky tongue. Even though hyenas are known for being scavengers and eat carrion, they are good hunters too. Stripped hyenas are solitary, whereas spotted hyenas live in large clans of up to 80 individuals. Brown hyenas live in small clans. Nocturnal aardwolves live in pairs with their offspring.

The spotted hyena is referred to as the laughing hyena because its vocalizations sound like laughs. It is the most common large carnivore in Africa. It has a strong long neck, a large skull and strong legs. Each foot has four digits with claws. Its jaws are so powerful that the spotted hyena's bite is 40% stronger than that of a leopard! Males weigh about 120 lbs but females are bigger at about 140 lbs. Their fur is short and yellow-greyish with irregular dark spots. Their social life is complex – they keep track of each individual's rank and can form coalitions to gain power. They defend their territory through vocal displays and scent marking. Patrols also ensure no intruders are in sight. They share a large den with multiple entrances where they sleep.

QUIZ & LEARN

1. How many species of hyenas are there?
2. Which hyena species is known as the laughing hyena?
3. How many termites can an aardwolf eat in one evening?
4. Where do hyenas live?
5. Who are the hyenas' closest living relatives?
6. How long have hyenas been on earth?
7. How big is a hyena's heart compared to that of a similar sized mammal?
8. Who's the boss in the hyena world?
9. Who said: "Did we order this dinner to go, because there it goes!"

(See how you did by checking out the answers at the bottom of the page).

Did You Know?

There is a hyena that eats termites

Hyenas are more closely related to cats than dogs.

Spotted hyenas are born with their eyes open.

Hyenas can survive without water for days.

Females are 10% larger than males.

Hyenas can eat aluminum pots & pans.

Hyenas can travel long distances.

Hyenas only expose their lower teeth in threat.

There is a hyena known as "beach wolf".

African villagers often leave their garbage out for hyenas to eat.

Once, a hyena saved a man's life by untying him from a pole!

Project

Make your own wild Christmas tree decorations – including a hyena smiling face! Instructions and templates in this issue. You can also download this and other projects from our website's Education Corner - <http://wildlifewaystation.org/education>

Quiz Answers:

1) Four – the Spotted, Striped, Brown hyenas and the Aardwolf 2) Spotted 3) 300,000 4) Africa and India 5) The mongoose and meerkat 6) 24 million years 7) Twice as large 8) females 9) Banzai from the Lion King