

Write Your Own Guidebook!

The African Baobab tree is home to numerous animals that depend on this amazing tree for shelter and food. Some of these animals are listed below. These creatures also live in places other than a baobab tree.

Use the following phrases to write short information pieces for the animals given. Pretend that you are writing for a friend who has never seen or heard about these animals. You want to give the reader a clear picture of what the animal looks like and how it lives. Make your writing very descriptive. If there is a word you do not know, use a dictionary to find out its meaning.

FRUIT BAT (*Pteropus livingstonii*)

APPEARANCE:

Large bat. Wingspan of up to 6 feet. Very long webbed fingers serve as wings. Covered by thin skin. Five-toed feet. Red eyes. Shiny black ears. Golden spots on brown fur.

HABITAT:

Dense forests in Africa.

HABITS:

A nocturnal, flying mammal. Rest upside-down by feet during the day. Have weak legs. Don't walk very well. Live in huge colonies called camps. One male lives with eight females. Eat fruit juice and fruit nectar. Chew fruit and spit out seeds. Vital for pollination and spreading seeds. Good sense of smell.

FASCINATING FACTS:

Can't land very well. Stops by crash-landing into bushes. Disturbs other bats. Causes noisy fights. Threats to survival: loss of habitat, storms and hunting.

BABOON (Cercopithecinae)

APPEARANCE

Largest type of monkey. Grow to about 35 inches long. Weigh 30 to 100 pounds. Large, muscular body. Brown to silvery fur. Face and buttocks can be hairless or brightly colored. Rounded ears. Eyes close together under brow. Long hairless snout. Have a dog like face with cheek pouches. Long arms and legs. Arms have five-fingered hands. Legs have five-toed grasping feet. Males have large, pointed canine teeth.

HABITAT

Savannahs, open woods, grasslands, rocky areas and dry areas in Africa.

HABITS

Noisy. Ferocious. Intelligent. Lives on ground in troops. Troup size varies from a few to thousands. Omnivores. Grasses, roots, insects, small mammals and snakes. Hunted by leopards, cheetahs, wild dogs, people.

FASCINATING FACTS

Bark loudly and bare teeth when threatened.

LONG -TAILED MEALYBUG (*Pseudococcus longispinus*)

APPEARANCE

Very small. 1/6 to 1/4 inch in length. White and waxy. Oval shaped. Little black “hairs” stick out all over. Has one “tail” that is equal to body size.

HABITAT

Outdoors in the warmer parts of Africa and throughout the world.

HABITS

Are hosts. Live off plants. Begonia, orchids, pineapples, potato, sugar cane, African baobab. Lots others. Have pierce-sucking mouthparts. Insert into plant and suck sap. Damages plants. Don't produce an egg sack. Eggs hatch as soon as they are laid.

FASCINATING FACTS

Species cannot be identified outside a lab setting.

LILAC-BREASTED ROLLER (*Coracias caudate*)

APPEARANCE

14 inches. Green head. Lilac throat and breast. Azure blue abdomen. Brown back. Whitish forehead and brow. Blue tail has outer two feathers. Long and pointed. Sexes are alike.

HABITAT

Widespread in eastern and southern Africa. Found in open scrub and woodland.

HABITS

Perch solo or in pairs. Noisy. Aggressive. Territorial. Eat insects and small vertebrates. Take prey from ground. Lay 2-3 eggs. Nest in cavities in dead trees and termite mounds. Eggs incubated by both sexes for 22-24 days. Has loud, harsh squawk. "Zaaak, Zaaak."

FASCINATING FACTS

Preys on animals fleeing from bush fires. Swoops up prey and returns to tree. Batter prey before eating it whole.

DIK-DIK (*Madoqua kirkii*)

APPEARANCE

Dwarf antelope. Length is 1.8 – 2.1 feet. Height is 14-16 inches. Weight is 8.1 to 12.1 pounds. Soft, yellowish-gray to reddish-brown hide on top. Gray flanks and legs. Whitish-gray coat below. Skinny legs. Males have short horns. Extended snout.

HABITAT

Live in dry, heavily forested areas of East-Central Africa.

HABITS

Feed on leaves, shoots and fruits. Will stand on back legs to reach high foods. Need large amounts of salt. Can go for months without water. Mark territory with dung. Live in pairs. Stay together their entire lives. More active at night. Gestation period of 5 months. One baby born at a time. Baby stays hidden. Mother calls baby out when it is time to nurse. Full-grown at 7 months. Life span of 10 years.

FASCINATING FACTS

Named from the sound it makes when alarmed “dik-dik.” Hides used for making gloves. Hunters think they are pesky. Warns other animals.

BUFFALO WEAVER (*Dimenellia dinemelli*)

APPEARANCE

8 inches in length. White head and neck. Rest of body is brown and white. Red tail coverts. Dark brown tail, beak and feet.

HABITAT

Eastern Africa, primarily Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. Found in dry savannah, thorn scrub and acacia woodland.

HABITS

Eat seeds of grasses and shrubs, small insects, worms and fruits. Forages on ground. Nests in colonies. Nests of grass stalks and plants. Found high in trees in a fork of branches. Has tubular entrance on the bottom. Line with fine grasses and feathers. Both sexes work on nest. Lay 2-5 eggs with dark brown spots. Incubation period of 14 days. Fledge (leave nest) in 3 weeks.

FASCINATING FACTS

Hang up-side down.

WALKING STICK (Phasmatidae)

APPEARANCE

Extremely long-bodied. Green, gray, or brown bodies. Most are wingless. Long antennae. Less than an inch to over 1 foot in length. Resemble twigs or grass stems.

HABITAT

Mostly tropical and temperate rainforests. Also found in temperate regions of Europe and North America.

HABITS

Very slow moving. Herbivores: leaves and some berries. Use a stinky spray for self-defense. Nocturnal. Cannot fly, only walks. Females drop eggs to ground. Hatch two winters later.

FASCINATING FACTS

Arms and legs grow back when lost. Sheds skin. Excellent camouflage. Some have sharp spines, which resemble thorns. Possibly longest insects in the world.

PRAYING MANTIS (Stagmomantis)

APPEARANCE

2/5-12 inches in length. Colors vary: light greens to pinks. Long body. Triangular-shaped head. Large compound eye on each side. Straight forewings. Strong, spiny legs held together in praying fashion.

HABITAT

Live in tropical, subtropical, and warm temperate areas throughout the world.

HABITS

Carnivorous insects and other invertebrates such as spiders, crickets, grasshoppers. Eats vertebrates such as small tree frogs, lizards, mice and hummingbirds. Is motionless while waiting for prey. Bites the neck and paralyzes it. Females lay eggs in the autumn. Lay eggs in "ootheca," a frothy liquid that turns into a hard, protective covering. Eggs hatch in spring. Camouflage is crucial to their survival. Have many enemies.

FASCINATING FACTS

Only insect that can pivot head from side to side in a full 180-degree angle. Eyes can pick up movement 60 feet away.