

# Write Your Own Guidebook!

You've read Maggie's guidebook featuring various African animals. Now it's your turn to write your own guidebook. 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 don't know, use a dictionary to find out its meaning.

Try and draw the animal without using any other picture or resource. You will have to read carefully to form a good picture in your mind!

## **LEOPARD**

### **Appearance**

Brownish-yellow fur with black spots. Can be all black (Black Panthers) Long, dark tail. Yellow eyes. Length: 3.5-5.5 feet. Tail: 2-3 feet. Weight: 65-175 pounds.

### **Habitat**

Found in sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, parts of China, India, Siberia, and Southeast Asia.

### **Habits**

Nocturnal animals. Carnivores. Eat wildebeest, impala and gazelle. Carries its prey into trees. Can carry animals three times its weight.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Threatened species: loss of habitat, loss of prey, and over-hunting. Do not roar. Have a raspy cough.

## **AARDVARK**

### **Appearance**

Thick body. Stiff hair. Curved back. Huge donkey like ears. Long, narrow, pointed snout. Long, sticky tongue. Bristles around its mouth. Long kangaroo like tail (2 feet) that tapers to a point. Short, stumpy legs. Four strong claws on each foot. Droopy eyelids with long lashes. Length: 6 feet. Weight: 140 pounds.

### **Habitat**

African savannahs, open grasslands, woodlands, and scrub.

### **Habits**

Nocturnal. Sleep in burrows during the day. Tongue has sticky saliva for food. Insectivores. Diet of ants and termites.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Named by the Dutch. Aardvark means “earth pig.” Not common. Females give birth only once a year. Life span in the wild unknown.

## **CHEETAH**

### **Appearance:**

Small head. Teardrop lines extend from corner of eyes to mouth. Brown fur with small black spots. Orange eyes. Streamlined body. Long, thin, powerful legs. Body length: 7 feet. Weight: 125 pounds.

### **Habitat**

African cheetah: Grasslands and plains of east and central Africa.  
Asian cheetah: Remote areas of Iran and Afghanistan.

### **Habits**

Shy, not very socialable with each other. Hunts during the day. Selects prey from a distance, then gives chase. Powerful jaws. Suffocates prey by clamping the windpipe. Needs to rest after kill. Loses catch to scavengers.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Fastest land animal. 60 mph. Purrs and yelps. Poor survival rate. 75% infant mortality. Shrinking numbers in Africa. Loss of habitat. Asian Cheetah almost extinct.  
2-4 cubs born in a litter. Cubs stay with mother for 18 months.

## **MONGOOSE**

### **Appearance**

Weasel-like. Pointed faces. Small, sleek bodies. Yellowish-brown hair that is coarse and shaggy. Sharp claws on toes. Long tail. Length: 8-25 inches. Tail: 6-21 inches.

### **Habitat**

Found in a variety of environments: forests, marshes, grasslands and scrublands in Africa, Asia the Caribbean, and Hawaii.

### **Habits**

Uses claws to scratch the ground for food, to catch prey, and to dig burrow. Fierce hunters. Eats small animals: snakes, frogs, and insects. Some eat eggs, fruit and seeds.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Can be very destructive to fauna. Illegal to import into USA, even to zoos.

## **LION**

### **Appearance**

One of the largest cats. Powerfully built, muscular build. Golden colored coat of short hair. Tufted tail. Black at the end, also the back of the ears. Male lions have mane. Covers side of face and neck. Has sensory whiskers. Length: 6 feet. Weight: 420 pounds.

### **Habitat**

Savannahs of Africa and some grasslands of India.

### **Habits**

Nocturnal. Carnivorous. Eat antelopes, zebra, wildebeest. Live in organized groups called prides. Prides have 20-30 lions. Most are female. Females help to take care of the young. Cubs will nurse with different females. Hunt in cooperative groups. Ambush its prey. One group chases the prey towards others who are waiting to pounce. Males get to eat first. Females second. Babies last.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Two species are extinct: the Barbary lion and the Cape lion.

## **OSTRICH**

### **Appearance**

Largest, heaviest living bird. Males are jet black with white plumage; bright red or blue skin. Females are grey-brown plumage and skin color. Long white legs crowned with white feathers. Long swan like neck with white feathers. Pink beak. Largest eyeballs of any bird. Two inches across. Height: 9 feet. Weight: 345 pounds.

### **Habitat**

Native to the dry savannahs of Africa. Desert areas and in open country.

### **Habits**

Diet: Mostly vegetation: plants, fruit, seeds, leaves, shrubs. Some small animals like lizards. Ingest stones to help with digestion. Fastest running bird (43 mph). Can outpace lions, leopards and hyenas. Cannot fly. Stretch their necks out and lay on the ground to keep from being seen.

### **Fascinating Facts**

One ostrich egg weighs as much as 24 chicken eggs. Two hours to boil. Ostrich kicks can kill predators, like a lion. Females can recognize their own eggs.

## **GORILLA**

### **Appearance**

Body covered with brownish hair, except upper chest, fingers, palms, armpits and bottoms of their feet. Silverbacks (adult males) have a silver-gray color across back and upper thighs. Large head. Bulging forehead. Long arms. Five back toes with opposable thumb. Five-fingered hands. No tail. Largest primate. Height: 4.6-5.6 feet. Weight: 225-400 pounds.

### **Habitat**

Tropical forests, swamp clearings, and forests within Africa.

### **Habits**

Mostly herbivores: fruits, stems, flowers, bark, leaves. Also invertebrates such as termites and ants. Eat 50 pounds of food daily. Rarely drink water. Difficult to study. Very shy and secretive. Males beat chest to scare off intruders. Gestation period is 250-285 days.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Newborns clutch to mother's belly for two months. Disperse seeds in their dung. Generate new plant life as they travel. Verge of extinction. Loss of habitat.

## **AFRICAN GREY PARROT**

### **Appearance**

Named for its slate gray feathers. Bright red tail feathers. Yellow eyes. Hooked black beak. Gray feet. Length: 13 to 16 inches. Wingspan: 18 to 20 inches. Weight: about one pound.

### **Habitat**

Western and central Africa. Found in rainforests, savannahs.

### **Habits**

Diet: seeds, nuts, berries, fruit. Very social birds. Thousands of birds form a communal nesting area. Two to four eggs in a clutch. Lay in a tree cavity. Male gets food for female during incubation period. Incubation period: 30 days.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Highly intelligent. Very talkative. Can learn up to 500 words. Romans kept them as pets.



## **IMPALA**

### **Appearance**

Medium size. Slender build. Graceful. Long necks. Coat is smooth, shiny, chestnut brown. Tan torso. White belly, throat, lip, and line over eye. Black strip on haunches. Small, white tail with black stripe. Long legs. Hoofed feet. Very large ears. Big eyes. S-shaped, long, ringed horns (males only). 18 to 37 inches long. 33-39 inches tall at shoulder. Weight: 88-165 pounds.

### **Habitat**

Found in southeastern and south-central Africa in savannahs.

### **Habits**

Live in herds of 50 to 100. 6 to 20 are females and young. Herbivores. Will eat shrubs, herbs, and leaves when grasses are not available. Spend most of their time browsing. Water dependent, but does not live near source. Do not need to drink very often. Are nocturnal and diurnal. Primarily diurnal. Rest at night. Feed between midnight and 3 am.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Amazing leapers. Jump up about 10 feet. Can cover 30 feet in a single bound when running. Ability helps them to escape predators.

## **CHIMPANZEE**

### **Appearance**

Have very long arms. 50% longer than the height. Short body with black fur. No hair on face, fingers, palms, armpits and bottom of their feet. Five-fingered hands. Five-fingered grasping toes. Height: 2-4 feet. Weight: 60-150.

### **Habitat**

Variety of environments in western and central Africa. Concentrated in the tropical rainforest belt.

### **Habits**

Live in small, stable groups called communities. 40-60 chimps. Omnivorous. Leaves, fruit, seeds, termites, ants, and small animals.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Highly intelligent. Plan ahead and use tools. Use sticks to get ants and termites. Use chewed-up leaves like a sponge to drink. Our closest living relative. 99% of genetic material is the same as humans.

## **WILD DOG OR CAPE HUNTING DOG**

### **Appearance**

Typically tricolored: black, white and tan. Looks spotted. Large ears. Large, sharp, jagged teeth. Long, white, bushy tail. Height: 30-38 inches. Weight: 45-80 pounds.

### **Habitat**

Can be found all over the Northern and Southern Savannah. Wanders the plains, grasslands and lowland forests.

### **Habits**

Considered diurnal. Will travel 6 miles in one day in search of food. Hunt in packs of 10-20 dogs, mostly males. Make excited sounds and lick each other's faces before hunt. Swallow meat in huge chunks. Regurgitate food for young. Can go without water for a long time if food is moist.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Rare. Persecution from man, loss of habitat, and disease are the causes. Have 18 pups in one litter. Females have about 26 litters in their lifetime.

## **WILDEBEEST (GNU)**

### **Appearance**

Height: 5 feet tall. Weight: up to 600 pounds. Both sexes have smooth, cowlike horns. All have beards. Short brown coat. Hairy mane. Humped shoulders. Long ears. Long, hairy tail. Long legs. Hoofed feet. Long head. Large nostrils.

### **Habitat**

Grasslands of Kenya and Tanzania in eastern Africa.

### **Habits**

Live in huge herds of a million animals. Prefer short grasses. Drink water twice a day. Preyed upon by lions, hyenas, and wild dogs.

### **Fascinating Facts**

Wildebeest means “wild beast” in the language Afrikaans. Calves stand and run within 3-7 minutes after birth.