

Cry of the kalahari



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Cry of the Kalahari Mark and Delia Owens were two students that studied biology at the University of Georgia. They both shared a dream of saving part of Africa's wilderness that is endangered or going extinct. They researched and made conservation projects based on the endangered wildlife in Africa for twenty-three years. They got married then shortly after they sold everything they owned and used the money to buy tickets and supplies and headed to Africa. They lived in tents for seven years in "Deception Valley," in the Kalahari Desert of Botswana studying black-maned lions and hyenas.

In their book "Cry of the Kalahari," published in 1984, the Owens said they had bad living conditions. A quote from them says: "We rationed ourselves to seven gallons of water per week, for bathing, cooking, and drinking. The water from the drums tasted like hot metallic tea, and to cool it for drinking, we filled tin dinner plates and set them in the shade of the acacia. But if we didn't watch it too closely, the water would quickly evaporate or collect bees, twigs, or soil. After washing the dishes, we took sponge baths in the dishwater, and then strained the coffee-colored liquid through a cloth into the truck's radiator. They built a research station and over several years they gained the trust of the different lions and brown hyenas. Mark Owens later went to South Africa to learn how to pilot small airplanes. The Frankfurt Zoological Society became the Owens' main sponsor granted him with the money to get a single-engine plane called a Cessna. He used the plane to take surveys of the wildlife. Him and his wife did very close observations of the social life and behaviors of the brown hyenas. People were attracted to their work, which funded for their observations.

In 1997, they returned the United States to work in the North-West of the United States and to record their data from their years in Africa. Mark and Delia Owens stayed in a country named Bostwana. Bostwana is located in the lower-center portion of Africa (22 00 S, 24 00 E) . The capital is Gaborone and Bostwana is about 600, 370 square kilometers. The national language in Bostwana is Setswana but the official language is English. The currency is the Pula (P) which is made of one hundred Thebe. Bostwana is in the Central Africa Time.

The climate there in the summer is from November to the end of March and usually very high temperatures, also very rainy and cloudy. In 1974, many parts of the country flooded. It was the heaviest ever recorded in Bostwana. Thewinter seasonbegins in May and ends in August. This is the dry season when there is none to very little rainfall. It is very sunny, however, evening and night temperatures can drop below freezing point. In between April and May, and September and October it is still dry and the days are cooler and nights are warmer. The African lions are the largest of Africa's cats and are active at night.

The Lion has excellent binocular vision and is able to see very well in low light. The lions can usually be found lying under shade trees. Lions are very social animals and they team up to hunt their prey. They form in groups called prides. The pride is two groups, one of four to twelve females and cubs, and one of one to six males who mate with the females. The prides are few in places like the Kalahari because of the small abundance of prey, but are larger where there is more prey. Lions are capable of catching a wide variety of prey. They will attempt to catch any animal.

They have been known to kill anything from small rodents to elephants but they do usually kill large to medium size ungulates. They may split up into smaller groups to roam free for a few days to weeks. The female lions are much faster than the males because the females hunt more than the males. After the females kill an animal for food the males get their share first because they defend the pride and their territory. A female lion has a pregnancy period of around one hundred and ten days and shortly before she is due to give birth she will leave the pride and find a safe place where she can give birth and raise the young cubs.

Lions usually give birth to between one and six cubs, but usually they give birth to only two or three. The female remains away from the pride to protect the cubs from danger until they are four to eight weeks old and until the larger cubs in the pride have been weaned so they are eating meat and won't be in competition against her baby cubs. The Brown Hyenas are a main predator in the Kalahari. They are nocturnal hunters, and will stay active for about eighty percent of the night. They are often killed by lions and spotted hyenas. The Brown Hyenas are less aggressive than the spotted ones.

Brown Hyenas has very strong and powerful front legs and smaller back legs. Brown Hyenas have very good senses, they are able to smell a carcass from long distances, and are able to run at high speeds for long distances to get to the carcass before other predators. As well as eating off carcasses, they will also eat fruit, insects, eggs, and will prey on small animals such as rodents, lizards and poultry. They mark out territories as large as four hundred and eighty square kilometers. They are also a lot more rare than spotted hyenas.

Unlike the Spotted Hyenas, Brown Hyenas will usually not try to take other predators kill. Brown Hyenas usually hunt for food by themselves and cover large distances. Brown Hyenas are sexually mature by three years. Brown Hyenas have pregnancy periods of about ninety-seven days. They give birth to between 1 and 4 babies and it is normally the dominant female that breeds, other females can give birth and use the same den. The young are kept in a den with a narrow entrance to try and prevent predators killing the cubs while the adults are away searching for food.

All of the pack help out of the diet of the cubs by carrying food back to the den for them. The members of the pack spend a lot of time at the den playing with the cubs, which helps them learn social behavior. Ungulates are animals that have four legs and that use the tips of their toes, usually hoofed, to hold their whole body weight while moving. There are two types of ungulate animals, odd-toed ungulate and even-numbered ungulate. The odd-toed ungulate is an animal with hooves that have an odd number of toes. Some examples of a odd-toed ungulate include: zebra, wild donkeys, rhinoceros.

A even-numbered ungulate is an animal with hooves that have an even number of toes, which include: aadvarks, hippopotamus, pigs, warthogs, giraffe, nyala, kudu, eland, antelopes, sheep, and goats. These animals feed on different types of plants and grasses for food. A predator is an animal that kills and eats another animal. The animal which is eaten is called the prey. Predator and prey evolve together because most of them live in the same habitat. The prey is part of the predator's environment, and the predator dies

if it does not get food, so it adapts to whatever is necessary in order to hunt down and kill the prey.

The predator needs speed, stealth, camouflage, a good sense of smell, sight, and hearing. Predators may hunt actively for prey, or sit and wait for prey to approach within striking distance. The two main predators in the Kalahari would be the lions and the brown Hyenas. The introduction of fences and drilling of bore-holes to make ground-water available, has made possible farming in the Kalahari, but this also holds the key to destruction. Extensive fencing began in Botswana in the fifties. Beef had become an important industry and the outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease arose.

European countries refused to accept meat products from Botswana because of fear of contamination. Today, Botswana has more than eight hundred miles of cordon fences through the wilderness and construction of another seven hundred is under way. The fences were made to separate the country's population of livestock so it could be closed if a bad outbreak occurred. The fences have become a debate because veterinarians do not think it's very effective. Veterinarians have said through different experiments foot-and-mouth disease had not been spread to domesticated livestock. Also, they said no one really knows how it is spread.