

Brookfield Zoo Rare Friends



TO THE TEACHER AFRICAN DESERT ANIMALS

Brookfield, Illinois 60513
708.485.0263

The *Rare Friends* series uses Brookfield Zoo's animals and exhibits to communicate the importance and value of ecosystems to Illinois fourth-grade students. *Rare Friends* meets state legislation.

Each unit encompasses three animal study. Depending on how your state legislation may vary, you may wish to study one study per month, or you may study all three at once.

How to Use *Rare Friends*

- Make copies of a *Rare Friends* story they follow along, let them read it out loud, and discuss the words or phrases and so on.
- Discuss the story using the following questions.
- Use the following study terms to do so.
- Discuss the activity with the students.
- After reading all three stories, discuss the unit as a springboard for research.

RARE FRIENDS: STORY 1 AARDWOLF

Questions

1. Why does an aardwolf's name start with 'a'?
2. What else will an aardwolf do if it is hungry?
3. What if the intruder is another aardwolf?
4. If an aardwolf can't chase an intruder, how does an aardwolf blend into its environment?
5. How does an aardwolf blend into its environment?
6. Who guards an aardwolf den, and how?
7. What do aardwolves eat, and how?
8. When do cubs start foraging for food?
9. At what age do cubs start leaving the den?

Study Terms

1. Mole: Long hair growing
2. Semi-arid: Partly dry soil and
3. Mating: Male and female
4. Solitary: Living or being alone
5. Elusive: Hard to find or see
6. Muzzle: The front part of a
7. Territory: An area defended
8. Secretive: Hidden or
9. Foraging: Creating holes in

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RARE FRIENDS: STORY 1

AARDWOLF AFRICAN DESERT ANIMALS

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The ground begins to vibrate, then breaks into an explosive hole. The aardwolf's dark nose is on the ground, sniffing the soil. The aardwolf is wandering through his territory.

The aardwolf's keen hearing is important to his parents as two four-week-old cubs—holes covered by dense grass looking after the den while the female forages for food. The cubs depend on their parents for food and protection.

The aardwolf's ears pivot, following a sound in the dark. If the cub on his back, position himself sideways to the air. An intruding aardwolf, he may chase it some 400 meters, or take place during mating season.

The aardwolf—whose name means "earth wolf" in the past meaning young, are usually solitary and always elusive.

Similar in size to a small or medium dog, the aardwolf is longer than the back ones, and large eyes and ears. Aardwolves are a solid, pale gray-white color. His muzzle is black.

The male aardwolf grows again into the dark, but the female

Looking for Termites

The cubs' mother trots slowly, searching the territory. She walks quietly with her head to the ground. She listens for small the strong defense secretions that soldier termites give to 200,000 in a night. The female zeroes in on a column.

Aheadward, she trots off to her den, marking the territory. She springs quickly mark their territory throughout the night. Usually close to a termite mound. Aardwolves occur near

Despite this strict territorial system, many cubs wander from their den, and intruders usually get chased away. The territoriality is to three different territories to forage in the same area with

The aardwolf mother returns to her den, finding the male

Every aardwolf litter produces two to four cubs. When the cubs are three months old, they begin foraging for termites, with a parent along for protection. At nine months they reach adult size, but young aardwolves still sleep in their mother's den until the next breeding season. The male may sleep in the same den or another one. There may be 10 dens in a territory, but the aardwolf uses only one or two at a time. Changing to new dens every month or so often protects from predators.

At one year, the cubs are able to reproduce. When breeding season begins, they often wander far beyond their parents' territory. By the time the next generation of cubs starts foraging away from their dens, most of the adults are living far away from "home."

Aardwolves in the Wild

Aardwolves are not wolves at all. They are actually more closely related to hyenas.

Although they are found in our African countries—Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania—and southern Africa, aardwolves are not common. Their habitat includes dry sandy plains, grasslands, and bush country. They may live to be 15 years old in the wild. Unfortunately, as the number of humans increases, people take up more and more of the aardwolves' habitat. Besides competing with aardwolves for food, people hunt them for meat, for fur, or in the mistaken belief that these rare animals threaten farm animals.

What people may not realize is that aardwolves do a lot of good by eating up to 200,000 termites in one night. Termites are serious pests to livestock farmers because the insects eat grass that farmers need for their animals.

Aardwolves at Brookfield Zoo

Aardwolves live in The Fingert Desert with other African desert animals. They can live up to 15 years in captivity.

AARDWOLF ACTIVITY

Unscramble the words to the left below, then match each unscrambled word with its proper definition by writing the corresponding letter in the parentheses. Use the story above and a dictionary to help you.

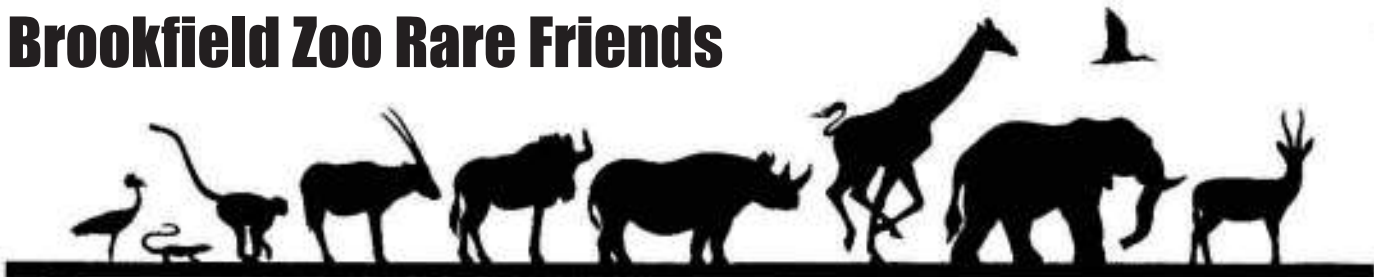
- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. mrltstee _____ () | A. A larger relative of aardwolf |
| 2. Tsdarflw _____ () | B. Social insects that live in mounds |
| 3. wulgr _____ () | C. Defending an area |
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| 5. tucianarow _____ () | E. What a fly is |
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| 7. shaxp _____ () | G. Has three side stripes |
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Brookfield Zoo Rare Friends

by Pat Terry

Brookfield Zoo Rare Friends



To The Teacher

African Desert Animals

The Rare Friends series uses Brookfield Zoo's animals and exhibits to communicate the importance and value of ecosystems to Illinois fourth-grade students. Rare Friends is produced by Brookfield Zoo Education Department staff and distributed by your state legislator.

Each unit encompasses three animal stories and this "To the Teacher" page, which includes instructions and suggestions for further study. Depending on how your state legislator distributes the units, you may receive them at the beginning of the school year. You can teach one story per month, or you may decide to teach all three at once.

How to Use Rare Friends

- Make copies of a Rare Friends story and hand them out to your class. You may read the story aloud to your students while they follow along, let them read it on their own, or have them take turns reading the story aloud. Have the students write down unfamiliar words or phrases and complete the activity.
- Discuss the story using the following questions as a guide.
- Use the following study terms to define unfamiliar words, then have the students look up additional words in a dictionary.
- Discuss the activity with the students and give them the correct answer(s).

After reading all three stories, discuss the issue presented in Ecosystem Corner. Use the activity as a summary for the unit. Use the unit as a springboard for environmental action by following up with one or more of the Conservation for Kids activities.

Rare Friends: Story 1

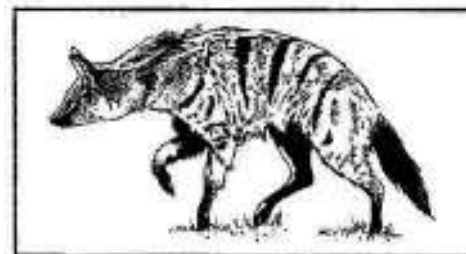
Aardwolf

Questions

1. Why does an aardwolf's mane stand on end when danger is near?
2. What else will an aardwolf do if a predator is around?
3. What if the intruder is another aardwolf?
4. If an aardwolf can chase an intruder 400 meters, how far would that be in feet or yards?
5. How does an aardwolf blend into its habitat?
6. Who guards an aardwolf den, and what does the other aardwolf do when there are new cubs?
7. What do aardwolves eat, and how much of this food can one eat in a night?
8. When do cubs start foraging for termites for themselves?
9. At what age can cubs start having their own families?

Study Terms

1. Mane: Long hair growing from the top or sides of an animal's neck
2. Semi-arid: Partly dry and barren, making it hard for things to grow
3. Mating: Male and female animals pairing up to give birth (reproduce)
4. Solitary: Living or being alone
5. Elusive: Hard to find or see
6. Muzzle: The front part of an animal's head, including its mouth, nose, jaws, and snout
7. Territory: An area defended by individuals or groups against members of the same species
8. Secretions: Chemicals or other substances released for a special purpose
9. Breeding: Creating babies (offspring); reproducing



Rare Friends: Story 1

Aardwolf

African Desert Animals

The growl begins softly, then breaks into an explosive bark. The aardwolf senses an enemy out there, under cover of darkness. The hair on his dark mane stands on end, making the small, slender animal appear larger and more frightening to an enemy or another aardwolf wandering through his territory.

The aardwolf's keen hearing is important as he patrols eastern Africa's semi-arid grasslands. Nearby, a small cave—a den housing two four-week-old cubs—is hidden by dense vegetation. For the first few months, the male spends up to six hours a night looking after the den while the female forages for food. The young are born with open eyes, but the first few months are dangerous as the cubs depend on their parents for food and protection.

The aardwolf's ears pivot, following a sound in the dark. If the enemy is a predator—python, leopard, or lion—the aardwolf will raise the crest on his back, position himself sideways to the attacker, and give off a strong, unpleasant odor from his anal glands. If it's an intruding aardwolf, he may chase it some 400 meters, with the chase ending in a serious fight if the intruder is caught. (Most fights take place during mating season.)

The aardwolf—whose name means “earth wolf” in the language Afrikaans—is a rare, nocturnal animal. Males and females, when not rearing young, are usually solitary and always elusive. Similar in size to a small or medium dog, the aardwolf weighs about 25 pounds. His yellow-white coat blends well with his habitat. However, he is easy to identify by his shape and markings: a large head and upper body with a rather weak rear end, front legs that are longer than the back ones, and large eyes and ears. Three black vertical stripes mark the sides of his body. His throat and undersides are a solid, pale gray-white color. His muzzle has no fur.

The male aardwolf growls again into the dark, but the enemy has moved on.

Looking for Termites

The cubs' mother trots nearby, searching the territory for termites and insect larvae. Her sensitive hearing comes in handy as she walks quietly with her head to the ground. She listens for termites, which make noise as they munch the grasses. She also may smell the strong defense secretions that soldier termites produce. Termites forage in dense columns, so an aardwolf may capture up to 200,000 in a night. The female zeroes in on a column and laps them up with her long, sticky tongue.

Afterward, she trots off to her den, marking the territory to warn other aardwolves to stay away. A pair of adults with newborn offspring usually mark their territory throughout the night. They use scent glands to leave a small, black smear on grass stalks usually close to a termite mound. Aardwolves scent mark often, up to 120 times in two hours.

Despite this strict territorial system, many males wander through nearby territories, especially during breeding times. When discovered, invaders usually get chased away. The territorial system may be loosened when food is scarce, allowing aardwolves from up to three different territories to forage in the same area without serious conflict.

The aardwolf mother returns to her den, freeing the male from guard duty. He moves off into the night for his turn to hunt. Every aardwolf litter produces two to four cubs. When the cubs are three months old, they begin foraging for termites, with a parent along for protection. At nine months they reach adult size, but young aardwolves still sleep in their mother's den until the next breeding season. The male may sleep in the same den or another one. There may be 10 dens in a territory, but the aardwolf uses only one or two at a time. Changing to new shelters every month or so offers protection from predators.

At one year, the cubs are able to reproduce. When breeding season begins, they often wander far beyond their parents' territory. By the time the next generation of cubs starts foraging away from their dens, most of the subadults are living far away from “home.”

Aardwolves in the Wild

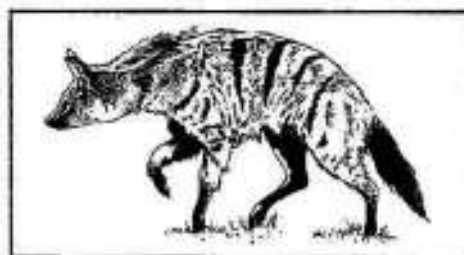
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Aardwolves live in The Fragile Desert with other African desert animals. They can live up to 13 years in captivity.



Aardwolf Activity

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