

*What*

*Is A*

*Zebra?*

By Debbie Nicholson

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# What Is A Zebra?

**By Debbie Nicholson**

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There are three different types of Zebra that live on our earth at the present time.



# They are the Mountain Zebra,





# the Plains Zebra



and the Grevy's  
Zebra.



All of them can be  
found in parts of  
Africa.





The one that we see  
the most of is the  
Plains Zebra





and their habitat is among the woodlands and grasslands of south and east Africa.



Kenya and Ethiopia are renowned for their areas of dry, semi-desert spaces, and the Grevy's Zebra likes this type of environment,



While the Mountain Zebra likes the hills and mountains of South Africa, Angola and Namibia.





The Zebra is very  
much like their  
cousin the horse.



Their bodies are very  
alike, in that they  
have long heads and  
necks with a mane  
that runs down from  
the top,

although their tails  
are tufted,





which they use to  
flick away the flies  
far more quickly  
than a horse does.



They have quite thin legs and are single-hoofed, and are part of the odd-toed ungulate family, .



while their bodies are quite thickly set making them look more like a mule with stripes.





Size-wise, the Grevy's Zebra is by far the largest – weighing up to 990lbs or 450 kilograms and can measure around 5 feet or 1.5 metres from the ground to their shoulder.

The Mountain  
Zebras only weigh  
around 820 lbs or  
372 kilograms with  
their height from  
ground to shoulder  
being just under the  
five feet  
measurement at 4.9  
feet.

The Plains Zebras  
are the smallest of  
their species  
measuring just  
slightly less than the  
Mountain Zebras at  
4.8 feet or 1.5 m and  
weighing up to 770  
lbs or 350 kilograms.



Of course, Zebras stand out because they have that black and white stripe that they are so well-known for.



I often wonder why  
they were made with  
stripes.

Is this a question  
that you ask  
yourself?

No one is really sure  
why they have been  
blessed with stripes,

although just as we as humans have our own unique fingerprints, then each Zebra has their own unique stripe pattern.



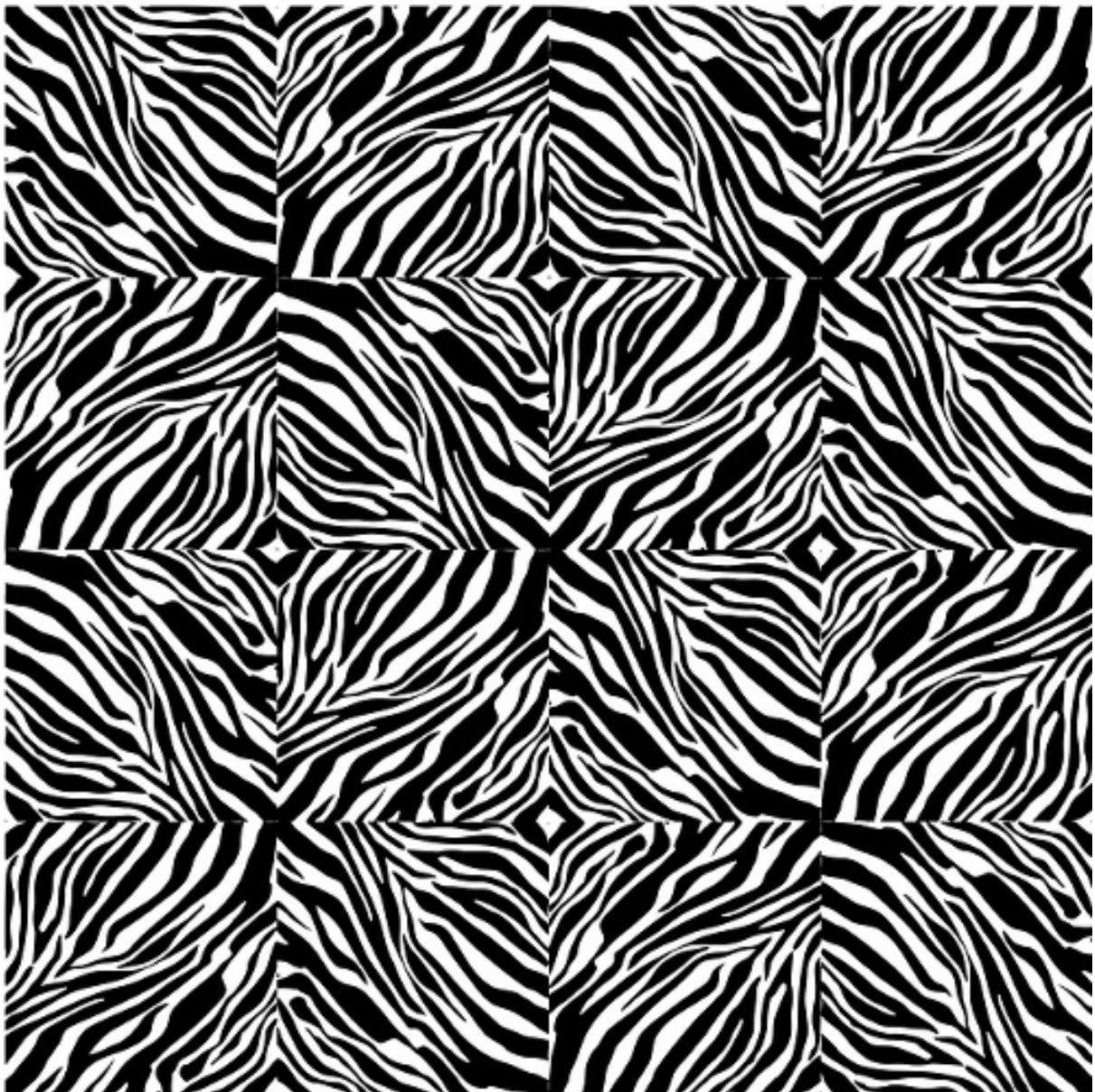


There are a few  
reasons that the  
scientists think that  
they have stripes.

Perhaps it is a way  
to control their body  
heat.

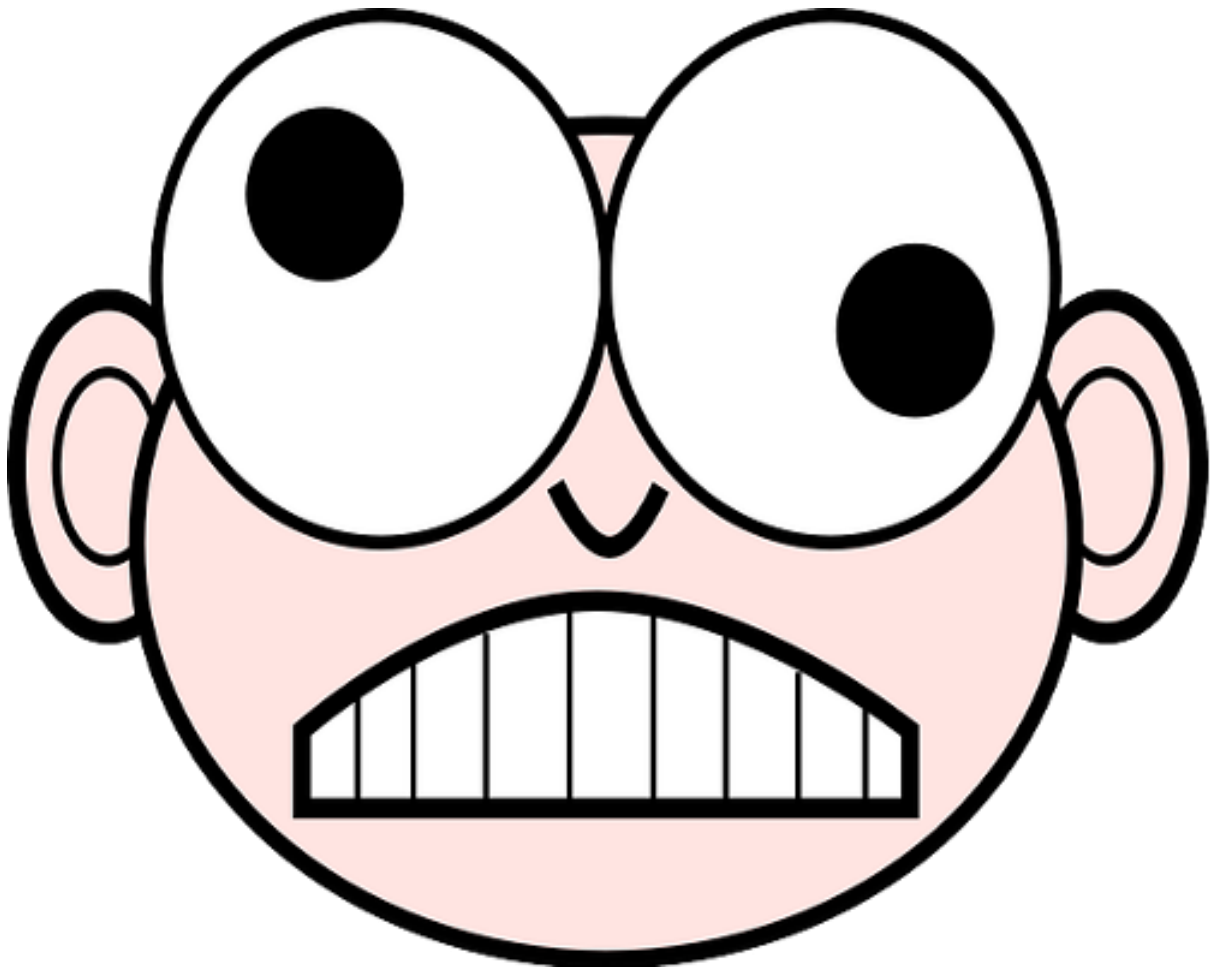


Perhaps the biting insects might get confused when travelling over their bodies looking to pierce their skin in order to feed on their blood.



Perhaps their stripes  
serve to confuse  
those animals that  
are their enemies,  
like a camouflage  
effect. Their ability  
to hide in the grasses  
is not surprising.

When they all stand together, your eyes can get confused and perhaps the predators see this same effect with their eyes as well.

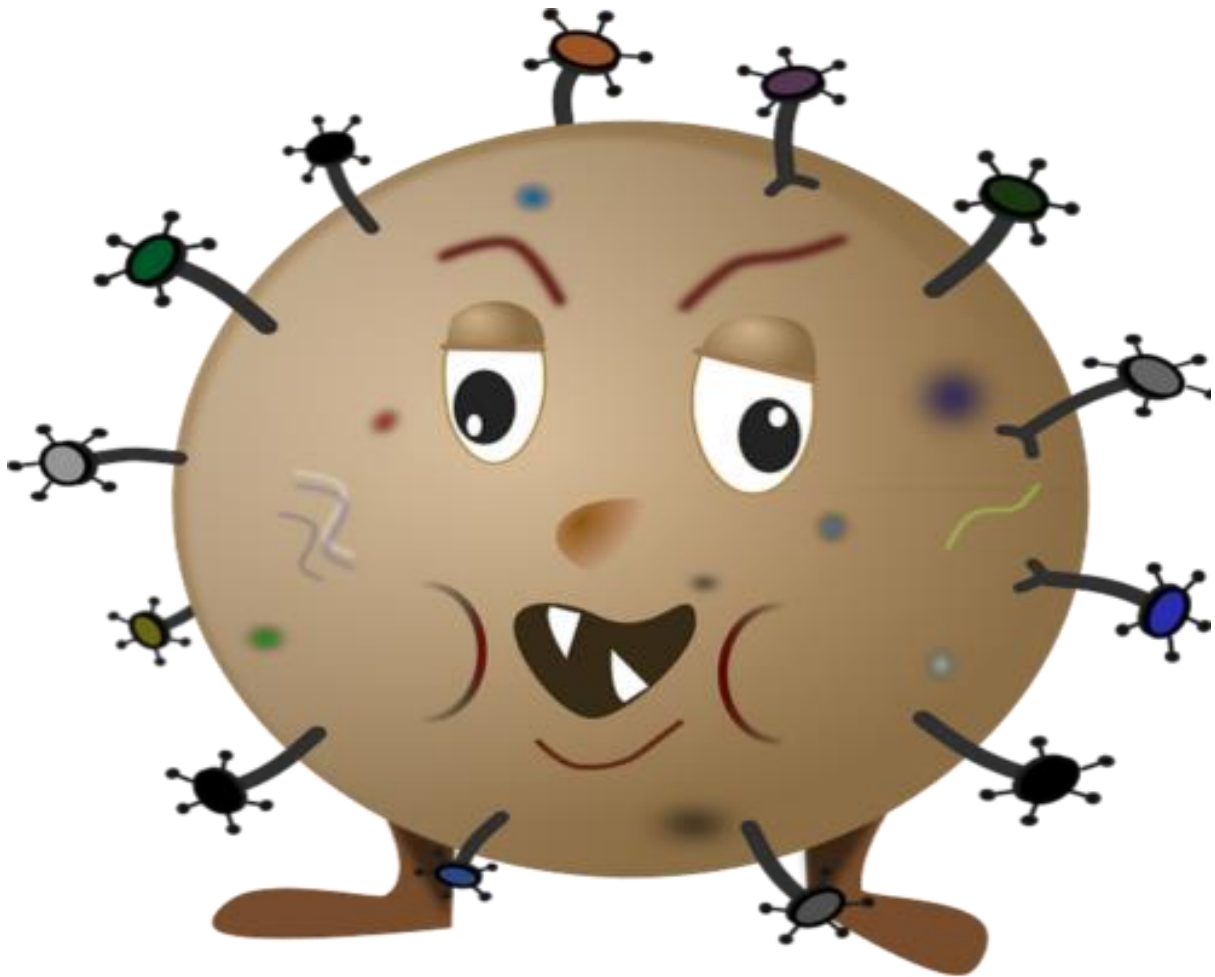




I should imagine that when they are all huddled together like they do a lot of the time, it would be very difficult to count them.



One of their hated enemies is the bloodsucking horsefly. When carrying out their fatal sucking, they are also capable of spreading disease between breeds of animals.



There have been  
studies done on the  
fly and the  
interactions with the  
Zebra and its'  
cousin, the horse.

The fly actually lands on a horse after hovering for a while, whereas the fly will merely hover around a Zebra and bump into it eventually, rather than actually land.

Scientists think that the stripes make the Zebra an eye-orienting experience for the fly.

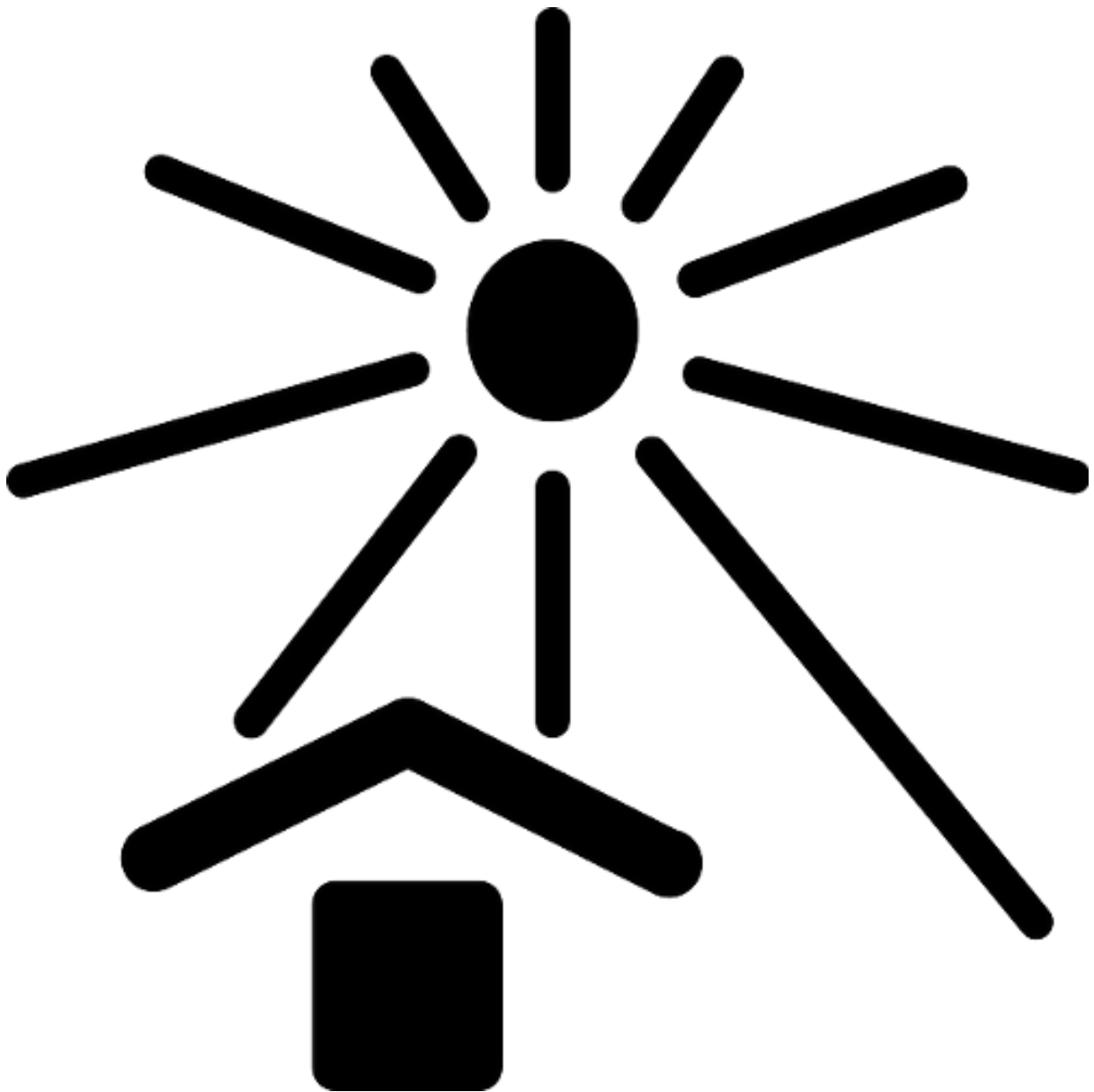




Smaller predators might also be tempted to avoid them, because so many stripes in so many different angles could appear to them as making the Zebra an ugly target.



Do you think that those same stripes could also act as a natural sunscreen?



And did you know  
that the further  
south you go in  
Africa, the stripes on  
a Zebra are set  
further apart?

That's a lot of stripes to be so different when you think of how many Zebras there are in the world.





Perhaps their stripes  
help them to know  
each other.

Their stripes are  
either black and  
white or brown and  
white.



Their stripes are so designed that they end at their bellies and the inside of their legs giving them the white colour in those areas,



while the skin  
underneath this  
white coat is actually  
black.



The stripes are very thin on the  
Grevy's Zebra,



while the stripes on the Mountain Zebra lie in horizontal fashion on their haunches, their stripes are definitely vertical around their torsos and necks.





The stripes on the Plains Zebra have been discovered as having a brown colour shadow type of stripe between their usual black ones.



They are very social animals, therefore there has to be a way they can recognise their friends and family.

They spend their  
days eating:

- Bark
- small twigs off  
shrubs
- grass
- and leaves



They have very sharp teeth in the front of their mouths so that they can bite the grass easily,



while their large  
molars at the back  
are excellent for  
grinding their food  
and crushing it for  
ease of digestion.

These animals are always moving,  
always looking for fresh grass and  
water.



Zebras are very  
cautious and sneaky.

They are capable of travelling thousands of kilometres just to get fresh grass and water because they are always hungry and thirsty.





Many Zebras are called a herd or even a dazzle. The dazzle comes from the effect they have on your vision when you see them in fast motion.



They also like to live together which makes for their constant contact with each other. Something they really enjoy.

One Zebra by  
himself is not much  
fun.



First of all, he would  
be easily spotted by  
a predator and  
thereby be easy prey.

Secondly, they  
would have no one  
to talk to and  
therefore would  
suffer much  
loneliness.



Because they are always on the move in great numbers, they often join up with other herds of Zebra doing the same thing, therefore one might spot several thousands of them in one place at one time.



These are called  
Super Herds.

They also like to  
travel with friends  
like the Wildebeest





and the Antelope.



This adds protection  
for all animals  
concerned.



If one was to go  
inside a herd of  
Zebra, you would  
always find that the  
Plains and the  
Mountain Zebras  
stick together in  
families known as  
Harems.

The Grevy's Zebra stallions, however, do their own thing, and instinctively set up their own habitat areas.

The mares just  
wander in from  
other areas, breed,  
and give birth to  
their little one.

As soon as it is old  
enough to travel, the  
mama Zebra takes  
her foal and together  
they go back to  
where mama came  
from.

Their families consist of the father of the herd, up to six mothers and of course are accompanied by their young.





Zebra mothers are  
called mares and  
they each have their  
place in the family as  
a whole.

Zebra fathers are  
called stallions.



Zebra children are  
called foals.



The offspring of the  
mama Zebra weigh  
between 50 and 90  
pounds or 25 to 40  
kg when born. They  
carry them from one  
year to fourteen  
months before this  
great moment  
arrives.

As with most four-legged animals, it only takes them a few minutes before they are standing and walking competently.



They live off their mama's milk for the first year of their lives and are considered an adult between the ages of three and six years old.



Zebra babies are introduced into the world wearing their brown and white striped pyjamas, which change to black and white as they mature.

The mama is very protective of her new foal, keeping all other Zebra away for up to three days until she is sure that her foal knows that she is definitely the mama.

Zebra are known to have a lifespan of up to thirty years in the wild and up to forty years in a protective enclosure such as a ZOO.

Once they reach the ages of between one and three, each of the young foals are big enough to leave the family and form their own bachelor group with others of the same age.



They will stay with  
these friends until  
they are much older  
when they will start  
looking for their  
own female friends  
to form their own  
families.

There is always  
competition between  
the young male  
stallions at this time.

They can be very  
fierce at this time  
too!



In order to get the  
best female  
companion, they are  
willing to fight very  
hard. They have  
been known to maim  
and/or kill the  
brothers in their  
group in order to  
win.

This instinctive need  
to fight keeps their  
skills honed in order  
to protect  
themselves and  
those over whom  
they have  
responsibility  
against their  
enemies.



Their enemies being

- Cheetahs
- Hyenas
- Leopards
- And lions



Even though they  
fight amongst  
themselves to get the  
best mate, if a  
predator is near,  
they all become one  
and face the attacker  
by forming a half  
circle around the  
offending animal,

getting ready to  
strike out if they  
have to.

And if one of them is  
wounded in the  
attack, all of the  
Zebra will circle  
around to make sure  
the hungry beast is  
driven off.

As far as communication goes, there is definitely a pattern of Zebra talk.





They have been  
observed using their  
eyes, teeth, voice and  
ears.

When you are watching videos of Zebra interacting, when you see them really open up their eyes wide or bare their teeth, you can be sure that they are talking to their neighbour.



Incredibly enough,  
they also do have  
voices, in that they  
huff, snort, bray or  
bark in order to  
further add to their  
opinions on the  
topics of the day.

Watch their ears next time you are observing their habits. They are very clever at using their ears to throw out other signals of communication.



I have a friend who  
wiggles his ears at  
the children  
whenever he is in  
front of them.

I have a giggle about  
that and when I  
learned about the  
Zebra using their  
ears, I could just  
imagine them doing  
the same thing –  
something that made  
me really laugh.

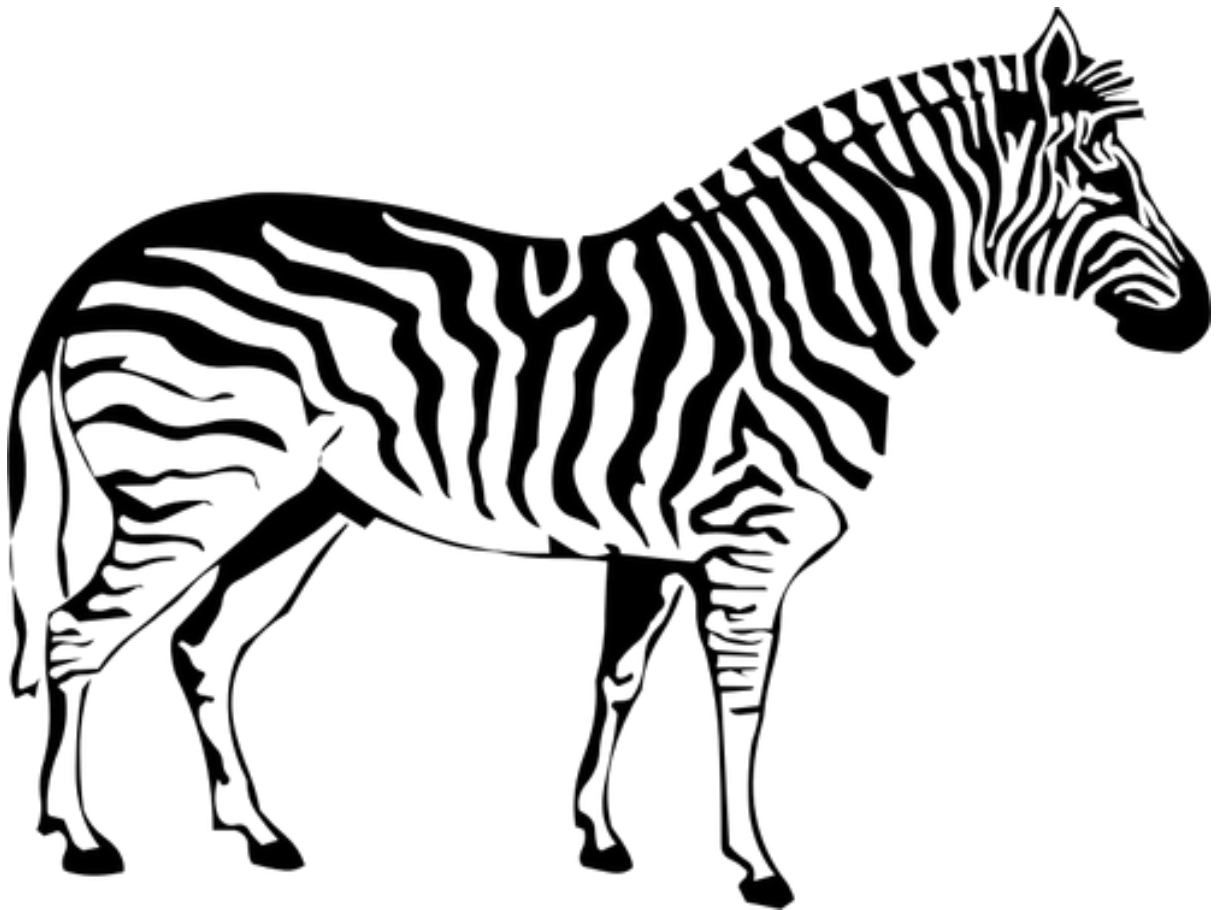


Have you noticed that they are always close to one another – like their heads are on another's shoulders and those types of stances.



They are actually grooming each other when you see them in these positions. This action serves to keep them in each other's good books.

Zebras assume the position of standing when they want to sleep but of course will only do so when they are together in among their herd.



That way, there are sufficient numbers surrounding them who will warn the sleeping Zebras if danger is nearby.

The herd as a whole is constantly on the watch for any of its' enemies. You know the old saying, many eyes make's for greater visibility.





Once there is danger, then be alert  
for a very high-pitched snorting  
sound from the stallion.





This is the warning sign to the rest of his family to move away quickly in a zigzag pattern, while he stands his ground to defend them all from the predator he has sensed.

In order to get  
himself into a  
fighting position,  
you will see him  
lower his head,  
stretch out his neck  
and bare his teeth in  
preparation to bite,

although the more  
popular alternative  
is to run with his  
family,



while using his powerful legs in a kicking action - something that would cause great injury to anyone let alone another animal out to eat one of them.

At the very least, a  
Zebra has been  
known to break the  
jaw of a lion, thus  
causing it to  
eventually die of  
starvation.

The grown-up human poacher is also a threat to the Grevy's Zebra, the latest numbers being recorded at a very low fifteen hundred animals still alive.



Whereas the  
Mountain Zebra are  
only showing six or  
seven hundred at the  
current time – a very  
dangerously low  
number of them.

There are still  
sufficient quantities  
of the Plains Zebra  
to not show any  
concern at the  
current time,  
numbers being  
recorded at around  
seven hundred and  
fifty thousand.

Their skins are very popular.



Another threat is the constant enforced change in their habitat by the local new farmers whose farm animals compete for the water supplies in the district.





This is after their natural playgrounds have been destroyed by heavy machinery and new housing developments.



Over the years,  
people have tried to  
domesticate the  
Zebra, however,  
because of their  
aggressive natures,  
that hasn't worked.



I doubt that you  
would want a house  
pet that can kill a  
lion with just a kick  
or a bite if provoked  
enough.

In trying to domesticate them, they have been successful in interbreeding them, however, the resulting animal has a variety of names ranging from zonkey, zedonk, zebrule, and zorse.



The transmission of serious diseases are on the increase, since the lack of rain to maintain their natural water holes resulting in severe drought conditions, tends to see the wild animals gather together in great droves as close to the existing water reservoirs as they can.



Zebra don't like to  
live in desert  
conditions, which of  
course has made  
them quite  
vulnerable to severe  
changes in the  
climate.

Zebra facts  
for kids.

Zebras are  
quick  
learners.



Do you know  
the Scientific  
name for a  
Zebra?

The Scientific

name is

Equus

quagga

Is it possible  
to ride a  
zebra?

Maybe you could,  
but it would not be  
very comfortable for  
the Zebra as that is  
not what it's  
intended use is for.

He is not a horse  
although they are  
closely related. They  
are far too small to  
take the weight of an  
adult human being  
and would most  
likely end up injured  
quite seriously.

Besides, they have a vicious bite and are known for their very unwelcome kick.



They are capable of  
killing a lion  
through biting  
and/or kicking them  
to death. Therefore,  
trying to ride one of  
them would be very  
dangerous indeed.

It would also be  
considered animal  
cruelty in today's  
world.

Can a Zebra  
run very fast?

They have been known to reach a top speed of 65 mph as they gallop across the plains to escape predators such as the lion.

It is a well-known fact that even the tiny foals are capable of running with the herd at such a great pace if need be when they are but a few hours old.

Have you ever  
thought about how  
Zebras keep their  
body temperature  
safe even in the hot  
sun?



It is fascinating to study the stripes in this situation. The black stripes absorb light, while the white stripes reflect the light.

And the air moves over the two sets of stripes at different speeds. So, in effect, a Zebra has its' own heat pump and cooling system already built in.

Zebra migrate along  
with their friends.



Every year, the great migration takes place which consists of an 1800 mile trek across country in search of fresh water and food.

During this time, it is the responsibility of the oldest male in the family group to make sure that their group never strays too far away from water.

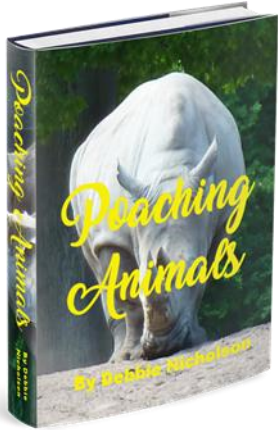
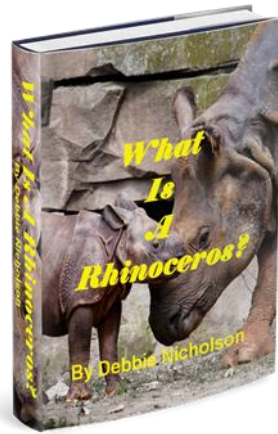
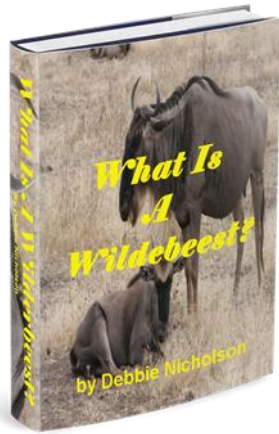
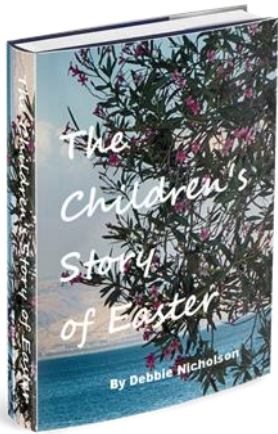
There will be more books on animals coming in the future.





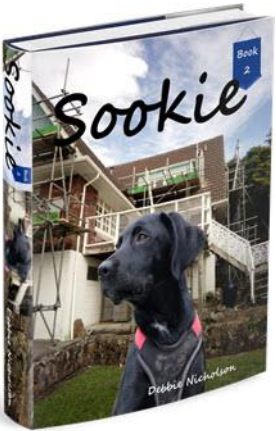
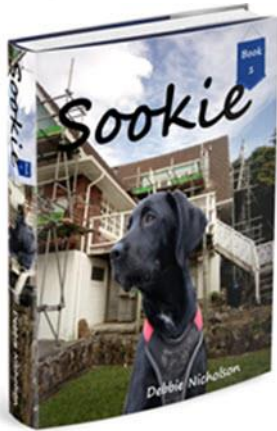
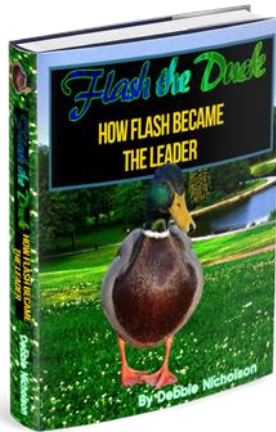
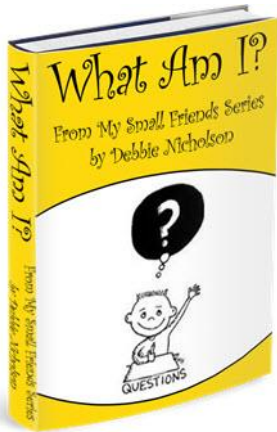
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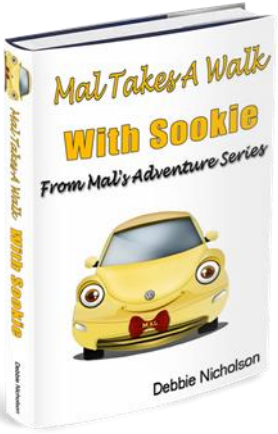
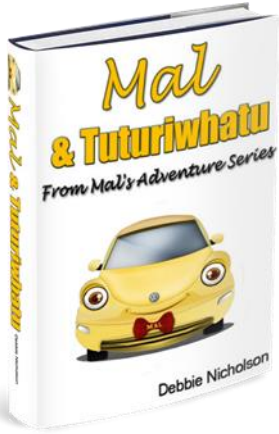
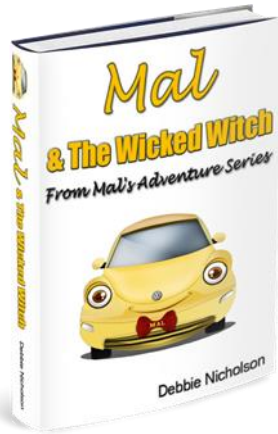
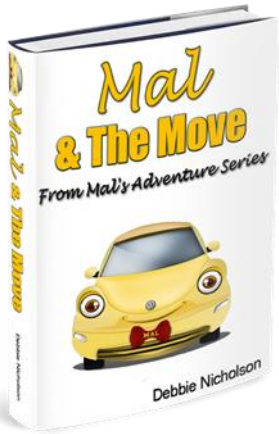
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# My Small Friends Series



\* \* \* \* \*

# Mal's Adventure Series



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Also, Very Special Thanks

**For Artwork**

pixabay



Credits – Close up of zebra: Medford Taylor.

Zebra herd: Chris Johns. Zebra mother and foal: Beverly Joubert. Close up of zebra tail: Joel Sartore.

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# Keywords

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Angola  
animal cruelty  
Antelope  
ass  
Bloodsucking horsefly  
body temperature  
Cheetahs  
climate change  
cooling system  
communication  
cooling system  
dazzle  
disease  
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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

*Debbie Nicholson* is an author with several books already published in the Amazon Kindle Store, several of them best sellers beginning that journey with humour, then progressing into motivation, animals, health and children's poetry. She lives in a motor home in New Zealand with her husband, enjoying a retired lifestyle with touring their country as their

projected main focus. Family is important in Debbie's life as are her spiritual interests. She also gives back and in so doing, pursues a career in helping budding entrepreneurs to bring themselves up through the ranks so they can create lifestyles whereby they can live the life of their dreams and on their own terms.

