



# Crocuta crocuta

Common name: **Spotted Hyena**Latin name: **Crocuta crocuta**Local name: **المرفعين**

## ECOLOGY

### Type:

**Wild**

### Role in Ecosystem:

As scavengers, hyenas clean their habitat by eating carcasses, which helps to reduce the spread of disease, such as anthrax, and recycle the calcium from bones back into the environment through digestion.

## HABITAT

Spotted hyenas are found in all habitats, including savannas, grasslands, woodlands, forest edges, subdeserts, and even mountains up to 4,000 meters.



### Food

**Carnivore**

Hyenas are one of Africa's top predators. While they are known scavengers, about 70 percent of their diet is composed of animals directly hunted and killed by them. Hyenas hunt alone or in packs, preying on animals of various species. They will also steal other animals' kills, in addition to feeding on carrion, bones, vegetable matter, and sometimes other animal droppings.

The hyena's jaws are among the strongest in relation to the size of any other mammal. The only parts of prey they cannot fully digest are hair, horns, and hooves, which are regurgitated in the form of pellets.



### Movement and Communication

#### Communication:

Hyenas make a variety of vocalizations, including wailing calls, howling screams, and the characteristic "laughter," which can be heard up to five kilometers away and is used to alert other clan members of a food source.

#### Movement:

Hyenas can walk at a relatively fast pace (10 km per hour) for long distances without getting tired. They are able to chase down prey over long distances while running at up to 60 kilometers per hour.

The hyena's longer front legs and shorter hind legs give them a distinctive limping gait, but does not interfere with their movement.

### Social Habits

**Social**

Spotted hyenas are organized into clans of related and unrelated individuals. These can range from a few individuals to hundreds. These are formed of mostly females, their cubs, and a few males, and are a strict matriarchal hierarchy.

Hyenas are very territorial. They mark and patrol their territories by depositing a strong-smelling substance produced by the anal glands along the boundaries.

### Reproduction

**Viviparous**

Spotted hyenas are non-seasonal breeders, but the birth rates are highest during the rainy season. The gestation period is around 110 days. Females give birth to two cubs on average.

The cubs will stay with their mothers for two years. They reach sexual maturity at three years of age.

### Attributes

#### Appearance:

The spotted hyena has a large head, a thick neck and powerful jaws. Its front legs are longer than its hind legs. Female hyenas are larger than males. Their coat is short, with colors ranging from sandy to greyish brown with black or dark brown spots.

#### Size:

95 to 150 centimeters in length (37 to 60 inches); 75 to 85 centimeters at the shoulder (30 to 33 inches)

#### Weight:

About 35 to 80 kilograms (77 to 176 pounds)

#### Lifespan:

Up to 20 years in the wild and up to 40 years in captivity

## INTRODUCTION

The hyena is Africa's most common large carnivore. There are three hyena species — spotted, brown, and striped. Spotted hyenas are the largest of the three. They have relatively short torsos with lower hindquarters, and sloping backs. They have excellent night-time vision and hearing.

As a predator, hyenas have been a threat to human settlements close to their range.

In Sudan, this animal is described almost as a phantom since it only attacks its victims in the darkest hours of the night.

## LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

### Human interaction

Like many carnivores, hyenas come into conflict with humans when they prey on livestock. They are often seen as a pest species, which often results in retaliatory killings by farmers — especially by poisoning.

### Cultural value

Hyenas have been the bane of many villages, especially in western and central Sudan, because they attack children. Some villages resort to putting all their children in an elevated lodging at night and guarding them. The threat of hyenas is sometimes used as a means of frightening naughty children into being obedient.

Many myths have been woven around hyenas, since they are rarely actually seen and they only attack victims in the darkest hours of nights. The signs of their attacks, however, cannot be mistaken. It is known as *hajjam al dahaleek* meaning the dark night striker.

### Cultural expression

المرفعين يعرف جعري رقيقو

(Lit.: The hyena recognizes the call of its brother)

.“A proverb similar to “birds of a feather flock together

مرفعينين كتلوا الأسد

(Lit.: Two hyenas killed the lion)

A proverb meaning teamwork can achieve more than .what one individual can

## THREATS

Spotted hyenas are currently classified as least concern. However, as human populations expand and growth of agriculture, settlements, and roads results, wildlife is losing space in which it was previously able to roam freely.

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