

Speed demons

Their range spreads from South Africa up through Eastern Africa all the way to southern Ethiopia.

With their iconic striped coats and playful disposition, they're our favourites on safari.

One of the oldest questions in the bush is 'Why do zebras have their famous stripes?' Scientists are not entirely sure, but most research points to camouflage. When zebras congregate in herds, the complex pattern makes it difficult for a predator to isolate one zebra from the rest of the group.



It's also speculated that the stripes help zebras identify each other. Just like our fingerprints, the stripes are unique; no coat is exactly the same as another. It is thought that a mother zebra will position herself between her newborn foal and the rest of the herd so that the foal can imprint on her pattern.

Zebras are very fast-moving animals, and can reach speeds of up to 65kmph when galloping across the plains. This is just fast enough to outpace predators such as lions. Foals can run with the herd within a few hours of birth.





Zebras are extremely social animals, and travel in large herds in which they do anything from look out for predators and alert one another to groom one another and look after the foals.

As opposed to animals like kudu, springbok, and bushbuck, who all tend to hide and move stealthily to avoid predators, plains zebra are rather noisy and active animals who do not make any such effort to hide when predators are near. In fact, if a zebra spots a predator (which could be a lion, spotted hyena, leopard, cheetah, or wild dog), it will begin grunting and snorting to alert the rest of the herd that danger is near. When a zebra is finally confronted with the predator and chooses to fight, its powerful backwards kick can be used to fight off its attacker (this kick is strong enough to break a lion's jaw).