

Name: _____

Zebras

By Guy Belleranti

Did you know a zebra's stripes are as unique as a person's fingerprints? While each of the three zebra species has its own general stripe pattern, no individual's stripes are exactly the same.

What are the zebra species? They are plains zebra, the Grévy's zebra and the mountain zebra. All are wild relatives of horses and donkeys, and all live in Africa.

The plains zebra is the most common. The Grévy's and mountain zebra are much more rare. The numbers of all three are shrinking because of habitat loss, hunting, and competition with livestock for water and the



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Zebras are social animals that can live together in large herds or smaller family groups. They stay close together when grazing, they run together when they try to escape from predators, and they even groom one another. Plains and mountain zebras form small family groups called harems. Each harem group consists of one or two males (called

stallions), a few females (called mares), and their young (called foals). Grévy's zebras do not live in harems. Instead, they live in large herds of 30 or more members.

Grévy zebra stallions are more territorial than other zebra stallions. They patrol individual territories to keep other stallions out. Sometimes they do mix in with larger herds, even herds containing another zebra species.



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notice. Even newborn foals are standing within 20 minutes and running within an hour. When a zebra spots danger it makes barking and braying sounds to warn others. While running is their best defense, zebras can also bite. They can also break an attacker's bones with powerful kicks.



About the Author

Guy Belleranti works as a docent at Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences working with wild animals and teaching others.

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1. List four ways a zebra can defend itself from predators.

2. Which fact about zebras is not true.

- a. Wild zebras live in Africa.
- b. A male zebra is called a stallion.
- c. Zebras usually sleep standing up.
- d. A female zebra is called a foal.

3. What type of sounds can zebras make?

4.



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The words below are vocabulary words from the article. Some letters are missing. Write the missing letters and then write the full word on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. ___ a r ___

hint: female horse or zebra

2. ___ f ___ s e

3.



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4. ___ h e ___ t ___

hint: spotted cat

5. ___ r ___ e

hint: to eat grass or plants

6. ___ i ___ t o ___

hint: cows, pigs, and other farm animals

7. ___ o m

hint: to clean one's body

ANSWER KEY

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1. List four ways a zebra can defend itself from predators.



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hint: to clean one's body