Bush Telegraph
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BIG 5 and little 5

The Big 5 is a term which originally comes from professional hunting. It refers to the five big animals which are very dangerous to hunt. Do you know what they are?

They are the lion, buffalo, rhinoceros, leopard and elephant. Professional hunters often want to hunt these animals because it is a challenge.

Almost all tourists are interested to see the Big 5. Therefore, they have a huge economic value for Namibia. But, for an ecosystem to have animals like the Big 5, it must be in good health to support them. We must thus not forget the "Little 5". Small animals are helping to keep the food chain working. So who are the "Little 5"?

The "Little 5" is a relatively new term that is often used by tourism companies for marketing purposes. It refers to five little animals that have similar names as the Big 5. They are antlion, redbilled buffalo weaver, rhino beetle, leopard tortoise and the elephant shrew.

For the conservation of wildlife both the Big 5 and the Little 5 animals are very important. Every living thing in the environment plays its part in maintaining balance in the ecosystem.

Lets find out more about Africa's Big and Little 5!

LION *Panthera leo*

The lion is the largest African predator. It is respected and feared by most people and other animals for its great power and presence. The lion is an extremely social animal. Although males are bigger, female lions will usually lead the hunt.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 120-250 kg
Height: 110-120 cm
Special features:
- Males have a large mane of hair
- Speed: 45-60 km/hr

FOOD
Lions hunt for most of their food. They eat small to large antelope, like springbok and zebra.

FAMILY & SHELTER
Lions live in large groups called prides. Lions will rest and sleep for most of the day. They mostly hunt at night.

PREDATORS
Humans, other lions and sometimes spotted hyaenas.

POPULATION
It is estimated that there are 400-900 lions in Namibia. Lions are found mainly in and around Etosha National Park and the Caprivi Region. As the human population increases, there is less land available for lions. For lions to survive, humans need to provide space for them. There are some organisations in Namibia trying to protect the lion.

ANTLION

Antlions are usually not seen. Instead people see the round pits that many antlions make in the sand. The antlion is very small and brown in colour. It always moves backwards.

BASIC FACTS
Life cycle: The antlion has four life stages (egg, larva, pupa, adult). It is mostly seen as a larva or adult.
Length
Larva: 5-12 mm
Adult: 13-80 mm
Special features:
- The larva has no mouth.
- It has very sharp curved jaws.

LARVA
FOOD: The antlion larva makes a pitfall trap in the sand to catch insects. It then sucks out the insect's juices.
FAMILY & SHELTER: The antlion larva lives alone in its pitfall trap for up to 3 years.
PREDATORS: Insectivores like Bat-eared Fox and Aardwolf.

ADULT
FOOD: The antlion adult eats other insects or pollen.
FAMILY & SHELTER: The antlion adult lives alone. During the day it rests in a protected area, like bushes. It is active at night.
PREDATORS: Geckos and other reptiles.

POPULATION
There are approximately 130 species of antlions in southern Africa. Not all of them make pitfall traps. The antlions all belong to the family *Myrmeleontidae*.

BUFFALO *Syncerus caffer*

The African buffalo is the only species of wild cattle in Africa. It is a very large, heavy animal. It has horns on its head in the shape of a "W". The African buffalo can be very dangerous especially in small groups or alone.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 550-850 kg
Height: 150- 170 cm
Special features:
- Good swimmers
- Average horn length is 100 cm from centre to tip.

FOOD
It eats mostly grass and some leaves.

FAMILY & SHELTER
The African Buffalo lives in large groups called herds. The herds can be mixed and/or with only male buffalo. When a herd is threatened they form a circle facing outwards as defence. They also mostly stay in places close to water and thick vegetation.

PREDATORS
Lions and spotted hyaenas.

POPULATION
Mostly found in protected areas in southern Africa. In Namibia buffalo is only found in the Caprivi Region, Bushmanland and on the Waterberg Plateau. The population size is currently unknown. Buffalo migrate across country borders regularly.

REDBILLED BUFFALO WEAVER

The Redbilled Buffalo Weaver *(Bubalornis niger)* is a medium sized bird. The males have a red chunky bill, black feathers and a white wing patch. The females are brown. For a weaver bird it is large and it is similar to a starling.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 80 g
Height: 24 cm
Special features:
- Song is 'chip-chip-doodley-doodley-dooo'
- Eggs are greenish-white with grey and olive spots
- Their nests can last up to eight years
- 1 of only 2 songbirds that have an external organ that looks like a penis but is not.

FOOD
It eats insects, seeds, fruits by walking or hopping on the ground.

FAMILY & SHELTER
It lives in small flocks in bushveld areas especially with large trees. It builds a large nest using mostly sticks. The nests are on the outer branches of large trees. The nests have several chambers (sections) with separate openings.

PREDATORS
Other birds and snakes.

POPULATION
It can be found in the north of Namibia down to the Rehoboth area. There are 15 different kinds of weaver birds in southern Africa. The birds have their name because they weave their nests.

RHINOCEROS *Diceros bicornis*

There are two kinds of rhinoceros: black rhino and white rhino. Both are actually grey in colour. In Namibia, the black rhino is more common. It is smaller and more aggressive than the white rhino.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 800- 1200 kg
Height: 140-160 cm
Special features:
- It has a hooked lip
- It will defecate in the same place to mark its territory. This is called a midden pile.
- A better name might be hooked-lip rhino.

FOOD
It is a browser. It eats twigs, leaves, shoots and thick plants.

FAMILY & SHELTER
It is usually solitary (lives alone). It lives in bushy areas with thick, thorny shrubs. It can also live in rocky areas.

PREDATORS
Humans for the rhino horn. Sometimes lions will hunt small calves.

POPULATION
There are about 1 100 black rhinos in Namibia today. Most black rhinos are in Etosha National Park and the Kunene Region. The huge increase in the number of black rhinos is due to successful conservation work by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and nongovernmental organisations.

RHINOCEROS BEETLE *Oryctes sp*

By looking at the rhino beetle it is easy to see where its name comes from. It is harmless and does not bite or sting. It is important for the ecosystem as it recycles materials back into the soil. It is unbelievably strong. An elephant can only carry up to 25% of its weight. A rhino beetle can carry up to 850 times its own weight!

BASIC FACTS
Life cycle: The rhino beetle has four life stages (egg, larva, pupa, adult). It's pupa stage is underground without a cocoon.
Length: 10-45 mm
Special features:
- Horn is only on the males
- Males use the horns to fight each other to protect their territory.

FOOD
The adults usually do not eat. The larva eats dung and rotting materials.

FAMILY & SHELTER
It is nocturnal (only active at night) and is attracted to light. The larvae are large white grubs (worm-like) found in manure piles.

PREDATORS
Birds and insectivores like a chameleon.

POPULATION
In southern Africa there are about 60 different species (kinds) of rhino beetles. They are part of the *Scarabaeid* family which also includes dung beetles. They can be found in many different habitats.

LEOPARD *Panthera pardus*

Leopards are very adaptable predators. They can live in different environments and eat a variety of food. Many people believe that leopards are extremely dangerous. This is not always true as leopards usually stay away from conflict and are very secretive animals.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 30-70 kg
Height: 57-70 cm
Special features:
- Flower-like spots called rosettes
- Makes a call that sounds like a saw.
- Good climber

FOOD
It is a carnivore. It eats animals as small as insects and rodents to medium-sized antelope.

FAMILY & SHELTER
Solitary (lives alone). They find protection in trees and rocks. Leopards have a territory, which they defend.

PREDATORS
Competition with other large carnivores and humans.

POPULATION
The estimated population for leopard in Namibia is about 3 000 to 9 000. They are found almost everywhere because they are so adaptable (can fit into their surroundings).

LEOPARD TORTOISE *Geochelone pardalis*

The leopard tortoise only lives on land. It can be a very large tortoise with a thick, leopard-patterned shell. It has thick, scaled legs with clawed feet and web-less toes. The head, limbs, and tail are yellowish and can almost be completely drawn into the shell. The leopard pattern on the shell lightens as the tortoise becomes older.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 8-12 kg
Length: 300-450 cm
Special features:
- Good eyesight, smell and taste
- No external ear openings.
- Hard shell with a leopard pattern
- The shell's pattern becomes less visible with age.

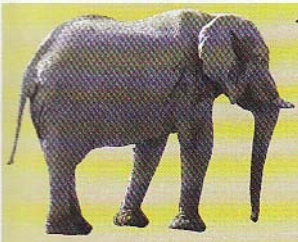
FOOD
Herbs, grasses, trees and shrubs. It also eats bones, faeces and stones for calcium.

FAMILY & SHELTER
It is usually solitary (lives alone). In cold weather it stays in thick bushes. It grows very slowly and can live up to 75 years.

PREDATORS
Rock monitors, storks, crows and small carnivores eat the eggs and young tortoises. Humans also eat the adults.

POPULATION
There are 7 different species (kinds) of tortoises in Namibia. The leopard tortoise is found throughout sub-Saharan Africa. In Namibia it occurs in small numbers almost everywhere except in extreme arid areas. It is threatened due to competition with domestic stock, loss of habitat, roads and electric fences.

ELEPHANT *Loxodonta africana*



The African elephant is the largest animal on land in the world. Through tourism, elephants can be one of the most valuable wildlife species in Namibia . They also however, can cause damage to rural water points and crops.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 3 000 – 6 000 kg
Height: 2.5 - 3.5 m
Special features:
- It uses its long trunk (nose) to suck up water to pour into its mouth.
- Very thick skin.
- Two long teeth called tusks. They are made of ivory.

FOOD
It eats about 170 kg of grass, leaves and other plants every day

FAMILY & SHELTER
Females and young live in a matriarchal clan society (female led groups). Males live alone or in small herds.

PREDATORS
Humans

POPULATION
There are about 15 000 elephants in Namibia today. More than half live in the Caprivi Region. Twenty years ago, there were only approximately 5 000 elephants in Namibia because they were poached (illegally hunted) for their ivory. Conservation work locally and internationally is helping the elephant to recover.

ELEPHANT-SHREW

Western Rock sengi
Elephantulus rupestris

The elephant-shrew is a small mammal. It moves very quickly and can easily be mistaken for a mouse if one does not look carefully. The elephant-shrew is very different from rodents due to what it eats and how it lives. If it is to be compared to other animals, it eats like an anteater and acts like an antelope.

BASIC FACTS
Weight: 35- 540g
Length: 15-60 cm (including tail)
Special features:
- Long hind-legs
- Large eyes, ears and nose
- Long, trunk-like nose

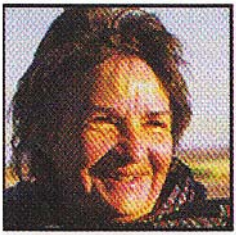
FOOD
Mostly ants and termites

FAMILY & SHELTER
It is usually solitary (lives alone). It lives and feeds in open areas. If chased, it will hide in a small hole in the ground, in the rocks or under a bush.

PREDATORS
Snakes, raptors and carnivores.

POPULATION
There are three main species of the elephant-shrew in Namibia. It is common throughout the country. Some scientists have changed the elephant-shrew's name to Sengi. This name is from coastal Kenya and is thought to be more appropriate. In the past, scientists believed that the sengis were like shrews from the Northern Hemisphere. Today they have learned that this is not true. See page 9.

PERSONALITIES IN CONSERVATION



A TRIBUTE TO BLYTHE LOUTIT

Name: Blythe Loutit
Organisation: Save the Rhino Trust (SRT)
Job Title: Founder and Director
No of years on the job: 21 years

14 November 1940 - 14 June 2005

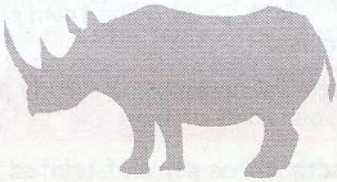
Blythe and her many varied contributions will be here for people in Namibia and across the globe to appreciate and enjoy long after most of us have left this desert of ours. - Dr. Mary Seely

Personal history
Blythe Loutit grew up on a farm in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. After school she studied drawing at the South African National Botanical Institute and attended the Wilderness Leadership School. In 1980 she moved with her husband to Namibia. They lived in several places in the northern part of the country.

Professional history
Loutit was an active naturalist, botanical artist, landscape painter and magazine journalist. She illustrated six books on Namibian flora as well as her children's book, The Magic Elephant of the Namib. She received several awards for her conservation work including the Peter Scott Merit Award (1988), the Operation Survival Award (1991) and the BBC's Animal Award for Conservation of a Species (2001).

SAVE THE RHINO TRUST

Save the Rhino Trust (SRT)
Loutit founded Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) in 1984. SRT aims to conserve the desert-adapted black rhino in the dry Kunene and Erongo Regions. It employs game guards and trackers to monitor and protect black rhinos from poachers. SRT is also involved in awareness, research and community self-help projects for locals to earn benefits from Rhino conservation and tourism. It works together with the local traditional leaders, the community and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.



Black rhinos
In the early 1980s there were only 30- 60 rhinos in the Kunene Region. Rhinos were poached for their horn, for trophies and as sport. Loutit and SRT have worked hard to increase the black rhino population. Today there are about 200 rhinos in the Kunene and Erongo Region. Namibia is the only place where black rhino live unrestricted by fences or armed guards.

For the Beginner Reader: ANIMAL CLASSIFICATION

What makes an animal an animal? What kinds of animals are there? Why do we have different groups of animals?

Scientists have put all living things on Earth into different groups. This is done to make it easier to study and understand them. In general, animals are things that can feel and move voluntarily. There are about 1 million different animals on Earth!

The Animal Kingdom is divided into smaller groups. Let us look at some examples from the first two groupings: the phylum and the class.

PHYLUM

Arthropoda
(3 or more pairs of jointed legs)

Chordata
(has some kind of backbone)

CLASS

Arachnids | Insects | Amphibians | Birds | Mammals | Fish | Reptiles

GAME Match the Big 5 and Little 5 animals to the correct animal class!
DIRECTIONS: Read the description of the animal classes on the left. Draw a line from each picture on the right to the correct animal class.

Arachnids: no wings, two body parts and four pairs of legs

Insects: three pairs of jointed legs and 3 body parts

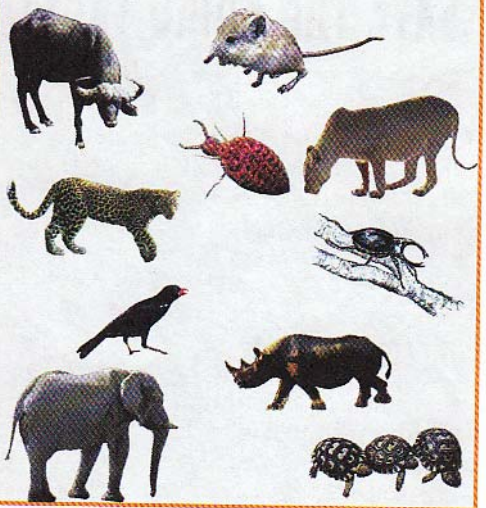
Mammals: nurse young with mother's milk and have hair

Birds: feathers

Reptiles: scales and born on land

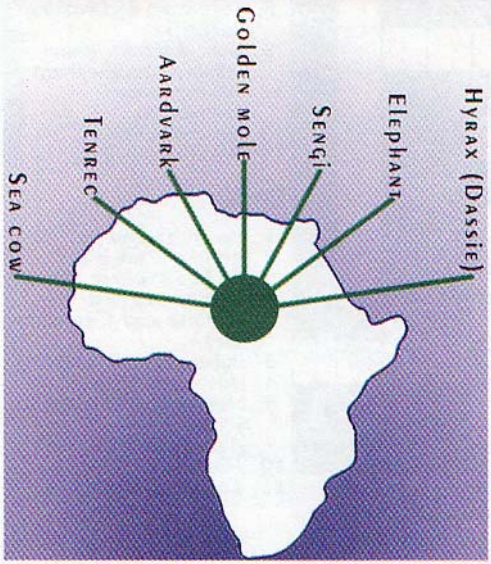
Amphibians: smooth, wet skin. Young have gills to breathe in water. Adults have lungs to breathe air.

Fish: cold blooded, only living in water



For the Advanced Reader: AFROTHERIA

More than 200 years ago, scientists started to classify (group) living things. Our modern way of grouping and naming living things was started by a man from Sweden named Carolus Linnaeus. He classified living things by shapes and structures (the way it looks). Over the last 200 years as scientists have learned more, changes have been made to improve and correct classifications. For example, Linnaeus grouped whales in the class: fish. Today we know that a whale belongs in the class: mammal. Taxonomists (scientists who classify living things) are now using new methods to group living things. They are trying to group things by their evolutionary history (its ancestors and relatives). Taxonomists can now do this more easily, because scientific research has advanced. Scientists are therefore using molecular biology to find out the relationship between living things. For example, DNA.



AFROTHERIA – A NEW SUPERORDER

Some scientists have created a new superorder (between class and order) called Afrotheria. There are 7 groups of African mammals that are in this superorder because they all have a common African ancestor. Read the diagram to find out the groups of mammals. Although they may look like other mammals from Europe or in the rest of the world, their genetics are very different. They also behave quite differently. All of the Afrotherian mammals are still truly African except the biggest ones. The elephant, sea cow and hyrax are now found naturally outside of Africa.

AFROTHERIAN GROUPS OF MAMMALS

WHEN DID THIS HAPPEN?

About 120 million years ago, it is believed that the continents in the Southern Hemisphere, like Africa and South America were all connected. This is called Gondwanaland. About 105 million years ago, the continents separated. It is believed that Africa was isolated from all other continents until about 30 million years ago when it collided with Europe and Asia. So for about 75 million years Africa was separated and followed its own evolutionary path.

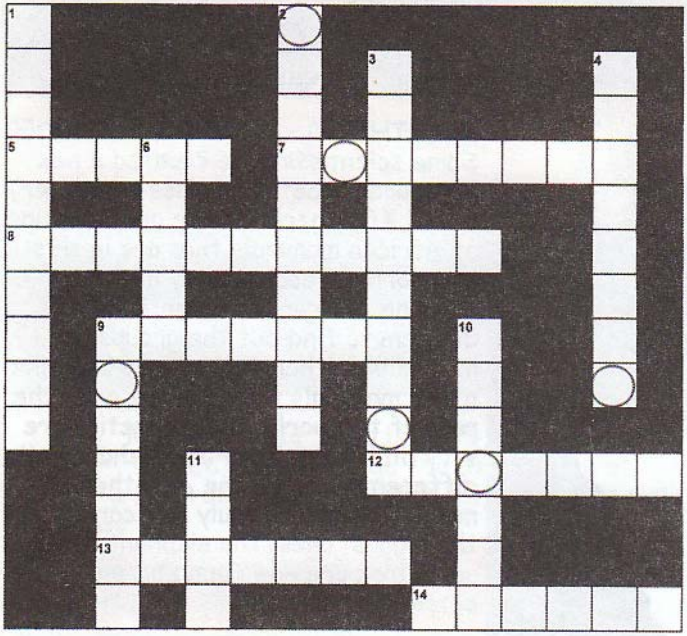
So who is a close relative of the Little 5 elephant-shrew?

Is it this short-tailed gerbil? No! It does not have one, but it does share a common ancestor with sea cows, elephants, aardvarks, golden-moles, tenrecs and dassies!

ACTIVITY PAGE: CROSSWORD CONTEST

DIRECTIONS: Read the clues below and fill in the crossword puzzle. When you are finished, cut out the puzzle and entry form to enter the Crossword Contest! Post your completed puzzle to: NaDEET, PO Box 31017, Pioniers Park, Windhoek
Entries must arrive by: 5. September 2005
The winner will receive a **Namibia Calendar 2006 from Dirk Heinrich Photo Library**! The winner will be chosen at random from all correct entries.

BIG FIVE



Across

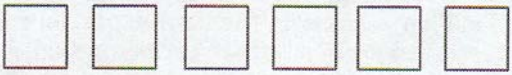
5. Grouping of animals
7. Can become 75 years old
8. Eats dung and rotting material
9. Lion, Buffalo, Rhino, Leopard and Elephant
12. Always moves backwards
13. Good climber
14. Weaves its nest

Down

1. Has a hooked lip
2. Antlion, Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, Rhino Beetle, Leopard Tortoise and Elephant Shrew
3. Superorder of animals
4. Has ivory tusks
6. New name for Elephant Shrew
9. Has "W" horns
10. Has scales
11. Can run between 45 - 60 km/hr

Hidden Clue:

Start at the top left of the puzzle. Going in order, fill in the circled letters in the spaces below.
Who was the founder of Save the Rhino Trust?



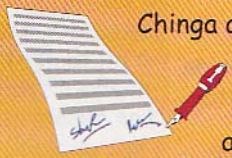
CROSSWORD CONTEST ENTRY FORM

NAME: ..... AGE: .....

SCHOOL (if applicable): .....

POSTAL ADDRESS: .....

Chinga's & Nzovu's Corner



Chinga and Nzovu's postal box is EMPTY! With all this free time on their hands they went out and had new photos taken! Chinga and Nzovu want to answer your questions and help you figure out more about the natural world around you. So, if you have any questions for Chinga and Nzovu, please write to:

Chinga & Nzovu, NaDEET, P.O. Box 31017, Pioniers Park, Windhoek

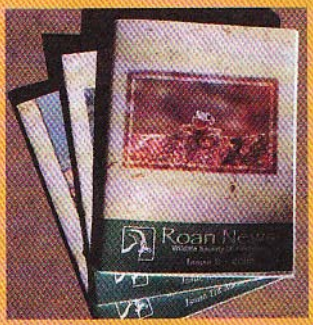
Dear Readers,
The Wildlife Society of Namibia has helped to sponsor this issue of the Bush Telegraph. Keep on reading to find out what they do!
Cheers,
Chinga and Nzovu

WILDLIFE SOCIETY OF NAMIBIA

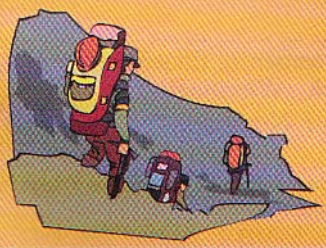
The mission: To conserve the natural environment of Namibia and promote appropriate protection, wise and sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development.

Activities of the Wildlife Society

- Newsletter (monthly)
- Roan News magazine (biannually)
- Environmental Talks (monthly)
- Outings (occasionally)



The Society functions as a "watchdog" organisation regarding environmental issues in Namibia.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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UPDATES FROM LAST ISSUE

Contest results from Volume 4, No. 3- "World Ozone Day"

ANSWERS:

1) The three ozone depleting substances (ODS) are Chlorofluorocarbons (CFC's), Halon and Carbon Tetrachloride.
2) People can use sunscreen, wear a hat and sunglasses, stay in the shade and wear protective clothing.
3) All living things are affected by UVB rays. As we are all dependent on each other for survival, we must take care to also protect other animals and plants.

WINNERS: There were 10 correct answers. The winners were:

1st place: Eva Julie from Windhoek
2nd place: Philemon Ndongo from Eenhana
3rd place: Steven Maseka from Rundu and Hilma Ndengu from Grootfontein

SORRY!
In the last issue, there was a picture of a market brand for sunscreen. We apologise for this mistake. Many different sunscreens can be used to protect yourself from the sun.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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Please send all subscriptions to: **Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET), P.O. Box 31017, Pioniers Park, Windhoek**

Thank you to the **Wildlife Society of Namibia** for helping to sponsor this issue!

The Bush Telegraph is written by Viktoria Keding. Graphics by Marilyn Bridgeford.

Photos & drawings courtesy of:
M. Bridgeford, P. Cunningham, M. Dürr, A. & V. Keding, G. & L. Rathbun and Wilderness Safaris Photo File.