Amazing Stories From God’s World of Nature
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Amazing Stories From God's World of Nature

WILD 'n' WACKY

Ray Montgomery

REVIEW AND HERALD® PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION
HAGERSTOWN, MD 21740
Wild 'n' wacky: amazing stories from God's wonderful world of nature.

1. Natural history—Miscellanea.  I. Title.

508

ISBN 0-8280-1507-4
This book is dedicated to

Irene Carney Montgomery,

Virginia Shockley Montgomery,
Thornton W. Burgess,

and

Promise Kloss Sherman Moffett.
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DON'T BE AFRAID—IT'S JUST A LION

People usually picture the African lion as “lord of the jungle” or “king of the beasts.” But according to professionals who have studied the lion closely, his “crown” has slipped a bit. The lion isn’t as brave and fierce as we’ve been led to believe. A single hyena has been known to defeat him, and a shout from a human being can turn his fierceness into retreat. (It can be a different story if the lion is really hungry, however!)

There have been instances when the combined yells of several people have caused man-eaters, such as lions and tigers, to slink away. Africans sometimes resort to shouting to keep hippos, elephants, and wild pigs out of their crops at night, and a sudden loud yell has been known to stop a charging rhino. The words of God, recorded in Genesis 9:2, are truer than you may have realized: “The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea.”
THE BEAST WITH A 17-POUND BRAIN

Facts prove that it is actually the elephant who should be crowned king of beasts. Ten times larger than the lion, he is wiser, useful, and usually peaceful. The African pachyderm (a Greek word meaning thick-skinned), or elephant, is the mightiest of all land animals, with an average height of 10 feet 6 inches, and a weight of from 12,000 to 16,000 pounds. He has a 17-pound brain and can crush a lion with one foot. The tusks, that are actually teeth, are often 10 feet long. The African elephant has the largest ears of any animal on earth. Since it is a ruminant, that is, it eats and chews grass, its teeth wear out quickly. To remedy this, a wise Creator has given the elephant the ability to grow new teeth. During its lifetime of from 60 to 130 years, six sets of teeth are possible. Beside the elephant’s stomach is a water reservoir that holds 10 gallons of refreshment.

DANGER IN THE JUNGLE

Elephants have been known to become man killers, or rogues. A rogue elephant in northern Zululand killed 12 people, laid a village in ruins, terrorized users of a busy road, and charged a railroad train. He became known as the Dabi killer. The beast’s bad ways ended when a hunter, John Taylor, found him raiding a millet field.

W. Robert Foran, a famous big-game hunter, was
Elephants have many human-like characteristics, including extreme concern with the welfare of their young. One elephant mother saw her baby, who was well able to walk, wandering dangerously near the overhanging bank of a river. She trumpeted her anxiety, but the baby paid no attention. Suddenly the bank gave way, plunging the youngster into deep water. Immediately, several elephants hurried to the rescue. When the baby was back on solid ground, the mother felt him carefully with her trunk, assuring herself that he was not injured. Then she gave him a mighty whack with her trunk and sent him bawling on his way.

Another time an elephant calf died three days after birth, and for two days the grieving mother carried the still form on her tusks, showing signs of anger when approached. On the third day she dug a shallow grave at the foot of a baobab tree and gently buried the body.

Elephants are a lot like who?...
wounded, the elephant ran away.

What turns a normally passive animal into a rogue? One cause is nonfatal wounds inflicted by people trying to protect their crops or homes. Another cause is eating overripe, fermented marula fruit (the elephant, not you, silly). A drunken elephant is a terrifying engine of destruction. A third cause is infection at the root of a tusk that has been injured; the pain drives the elephant berserk.

The smallest men in Africa kill elephants by a

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**THE “BAD” SIDE OF NATURE**

Have you ever wondered this: Did God create such creatures as rogue elephants, meat-eating animals, venomous snakes, and birds known as raptors?

Consider this first: Would a good and loving God create anything that would hurt or destroy any of His creatures? If not, who is responsible for meat-eating animals, raptors, poisonous plants, death-dealing insects, germs, and viruses? Here’s one explanation that may help: “The same God who guides the planets works in the fruit orchard and in the vegetable garden. He never made a thorn, a thistle, or a tare. These are Satan’s work, the result of degeneration [sin’s effects], introduced by him among the precious things; but it is through God’s immediate agency [presence and power], that every bud bursts into blossom” (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 186).

Nature’s occasional harshness is a complex matter, but the bottom line is that it’s not God’s ideal for His creation.
simple method. The Bushmen, or Pygmies, shoot them with arrows dipped in a poison known as curare, then follow patiently until the elephant collapses.

**PACK YOUR TRUNK, SOLDIER**

The first war elephants were trained in India thousands of years ago. They were mounts for spear throwers and carried wooden towers from which soldiers climbed walls. The Chinese began using war elephants around 2000 B.C. Some were actually trained to wield long swords with their trunks. Some were protected with metal armor. Just the sight of these giant animals charging foot soldiers, who had never seen an elephant, was enough to spread terror through the troops. In the Middle Ages, the king of Rangoon kept 500 war elephants. More recently, cannons were fired from their backs.

A Carthaginian army at Tunetum was led by a Macedonian general, Xanthippus. His army was larger than that of Attilius, having 4,000 horsemen, plus a surprise unit. As the two armies marched to meet in mortal combat, the Carthaginians began a surprising formation. Their ranks divided into three groups, leaving two open spaces between. Down these passages thundered war elephants in single file. The Roman soldiers had never seen anything like it. The mighty gray animals, wearing armor on their heads, shuffled rapidly forward. As they advanced,
their trunks groping, the Romans fell back. Traveling at 15 miles an hour, the elephants were soon upon them, flailing, trumpeting, hurling soldiers into the air, trampling others under foot. The Carthaginian foot soldiers closed in behind them and cut down the demoralized survivors. Of the 15,000 Romans, a pitiful 500 men escaped.

COLD WAR CASUALTIES

After the Tunetum disaster, the Roman military recruited elephants for war. They were trained in either groups of 64, or phalanxes and "elephantarchies" of 16. Each warrior elephant was cared for by the handler and six soldiers.

Hannibal Barca (247-183 B.C.), a Carthaginian whose father, Hamilcar Barca, was ruler of Spain, was a bitter enemy of Rome. Upon the death of the older man, Hannibal set out to attack. With an army of 40,000 men and 38 elephants he determined to cross the Alps from France into Italy, but he was faced with a weighty problem: how to get the elephants over the Rhone River. Apparently, he either did not know elephants could swim or feared that the swollen waters would sweep them downstream. At any rate, his engineers constructed huge rafts to ferry the animals.

As the army approached the Alps, Hannibal employed several northern Italians who knew the Alpine passes and shared his hate for Rome. They guided him
up through Col de Cabre, a passage requiring two weeks travel time. It was a disaster of sorts for elephants, men, and horses. Unfriendly Frenchmen rolled great stones down on them, and though it was early October, there was ice and snow in the higher passes. Elephants, horses, wagons, and men fell off the icy road to their deaths. Midway, a landslide stopped the advance. Hannibal had not considered the effect of cold on tropical animals, and the elephants that survived the icy road died of pneumonia. When the nightmare ended, Hannibal marched 26,000 soldiers and one lone elephant into northern Italy.

Hannibal’s epic crossing of the Alps was recorded in detail by the Greek historian Polybius, who was a stickler for facts. To ensure the accuracy of his account, he traveled over the same route 60 years later. At that time the disjointed skeletons of Hannibal’s elephants were still visible in ravines below the road.

Guide
FACTORY
Facts about... ELEPHANTS

- Elephants require only one half the amount of sleep needed by humans. They are excellent swimmers and love water.
- An elephant requires 600 to 800 pounds of grass, leaves, twigs, or bark per day. In captivity they are fed 15 to 18 pounds of grain daily, along with 12 to 14 gallons of water.
The elephant’s trunk is a nose combined with the upper lip. It ends in a finger-like projection that contains the organs of smell, and is constructed of 40,000 muscles covered with a tough hide. This remarkable organ is so sensitive that it can pick up a pin, select a single blade of grass, uncork a bottle, untie a slip knot, unbolt a gate, throw—and catch—a baseball, ring a bell, sweep with a broom, or pick up a full-grown lion and throw it as far as 20 feet. (Can you do all that, never mind with your nose?)

Elephants are often the prime attraction in circuses. The first circus elephant in the United States was brought to Boston in 1796 by a Yankee ship owner. In 1805 another elephant, named Old Bet, was imported by Mr. Hackaliath Bailey, of Somers, New York. Bet became the first circus elephant to go on tour. This event led to the founding of the original circus museum in that town.

The first baby elephant to be born in the United States made her appearance in the Philadelphia zoo on March 10, 1880. She was promptly named Columbia and lived to be 25 years old. Newborn elephants weigh about 200 pounds. They are weaned in their fourth year.

Asiatic elephants are smaller and more easily tamed and trained than African elephants. In India alone the population of work elephants numbers about 7,000.

HAVE YOU SEEN A SHREW?

The three-inch-long pigmy shrew, native to Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, is the tiniest mammalian vertebrate in North America. The two-inch, fat-tailed shrew, found in Europe, is the smallest mammalian vertebrate on earth.

The shrew has few enemies, and those that do catch it soon learn to avoid it, for it has a pouch that gives off a nauseating musk odor. This tornado of
minuscule muscle is active 24 hours a day with time out for a brief catnap now and then. Its voracious appetite allows for no distinction between night and day.

The shrew is absolutely unafraid. The little critter is so savage that several leading naturalists have called it the fiercest animal for its size on earth. The expression, “runs like crazy,” fits perfectly, for the animal’s erratic racing seems without rhyme or reason as it darts here and there, burrowing in the earth or under leaves or grass in search of any kind of food. Its keen appetite is a result of its digestive system’s rapid metabolism. A shrew needs at least its own weight in food daily. If it cannot obtain enough nourishment, it will starve to death in 24 hours. The animal is so high-strung that it often dies quickly when captured. The shrew is cursed with weak eyesight but blessed with a keen sense of smell. In order to survive, it must follow every clue its nose brings.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY (NOW GET OUT OF HERE)**

The tiny shrew is born in a grass-lined nest. An average litter consists of four to 10 bee-size young that are weaned in three weeks and are then fed mostly earthworms. Within four weeks they are out of the nest and, disowned by the fierce little mother, begin a fast-moving life that may last from 16 to 18 months.
to it, animal or vegetable, dead or alive.

When facing an animal larger than itself, a shrew rears up on its hind feet, bares its teeth, and emits a high-pitched, chittering squeak. Then it hurries to the battle, where its fierceness enables it to kill rats, small snakes, moles, or another shrew.

**Guide FACTORY**

Facts about... **SHREWS**

- Native Americans called the shrew “kin-skee-sha-wash-bee-gah-note-see,” which means “short-tailed, sharp-nosed field mouse.”
One squirrel-like variety lives in trees and acts much as squirrels do.

Relatively few people have ever seen a shrew, though they are plentiful worldwide. They are often mistaken for the common mole.

The shrew’s value to humankind is the enormous number of insects it eats.

JUST HANGIN’ AROUND

Monkeys, apes, chimpanzees, baboons, gibbons, gorillas, and orangutans are all known as primates, or simians.

The great apes are often depicted as maniacal killers, and the smaller apes as clowns. The picture of the gorilla as a huge mass of death-dealing muscle, beating its chest in a rage, is almost entirely false. Actually, it is a shy, human-avoiding creature whose furious display of ferociousness is 99 percent bluff.

HOW TO GET FRIENDS (THE HARD WAY)

Grooming is a social function among all simians. This often takes the form of searching through each other’s hair for insects and dandruff-like flakes with a salty taste. In a zoo environment a close friendship may develop between a chimp and its keeper, and as evidence of this, the animal will roll up the keeper’s shirt sleeve, carefully part nonexistent hair, and pick up and eat imaginary insects. This is simply to show friendship.
However, under certain conditions the gorilla can—and will—kill. On the other hand, the long-lived primates establish a family relationship that endures for life. They protect one another, share food, hold hands, embrace, kiss, shake hands, and give each other approving pats on the back. As for domestication, South African baboons have been trained to herd sheep. In Borneo they regularly assist in harvesting coconuts.

GORILLA GENIUS

Just how intelligent are gorillas? Francine Patterson, an animal psychologist, performed studies on Koko, an 8-year-old female gorilla. Miss Patterson, aware that previous investigators had determined that primates could not communicate verbally, taught Koko the American sign language, used by thousands of deaf persons. The gorilla learned this method and used it efficiently. It took one year to teach Koko 14 signs, but she eventually knew and used 375 signs. Miss Patterson believed Koko’s IQ was between 84 and 95, human scale.

Unfortunately, Koko knew how to argue, deceive, and lie, among other things. She also knew when she was misbehaving. Once, when she saw that her instructor was disturbed by her attitude, Koko signed, “I’m a stubborn devil.” When she had accidentally broken a kitchen fixture and was asked whether she had
done it, Koko shifted the blame to an assistant trainer and signed, “Kate did it.” When asked whether she was an animal or a person, she signed, “Fine animal gorilla.”

**I’m outta here!**

Gorillas appear to be ferocious, but most of this is bluff. A game warden in West Africa, who is in almost daily contact with gorillas, states that in 20 years he has had only three troublesome incidents. He started one himself by following the blood-stained trail of a male gorilla who had been injured in a tribal fight. Suddenly he came upon the animal, an old silver-back. The ground rules in such cases are (1) Don’t run, (2) Stand and face the gorilla, and he will back down. The ranger felt that as a result of the injury the gorilla might not perform according to his normal behavior pattern. So as the animal charged, the ranger began to jump up and down and shout loudly as if he too were in a rage. The gorilla stopped, stared at the man, then turned and ran away.
Here's an insightful statement that brings Koko to mind: “The intelligence displayed by many dumb animals approaches so closely to human intelligence that it is a mystery. The animals see and hear and love and fear and suffer. They use their organs far more faithfully than many human beings use theirs. They manifest sympathy and tenderness toward their companions in suffering. Many animals show an affection for those who have charge of them, far superior to the affection shown by some of the human race. They form attachments for man which are not broken without great suffering to them” (The Ministry of Healing, pp. 315, 316).

BABOON GUARDS

Baboons live mostly on the ground. Since they
have no claws, they band together to repel enemies. Single baboons will sacrifice life for the protection of the family or troop, however. In one instance a troop slept in a cave on a cliff to which the only approach was a six-inch-wide path. One evening as the troop marched single file to the den, a leopard followed them. Two baboons moved out of line and went back

**NO MICROPHONE NEEDED**

In America there is a strange monkey called the alouatte, or howler monkey. It is the largest monkey in the New World. This native of Central and South America has red or black hair and an enlarged hyoid bone, located at the base of the tongue and at the opening into the windpipe, that gives a peculiar resonance to the voice. The call of this monkey can be heard as far as eight miles away. The sound is similar to a donkey's bray, combined with the bark of a dog. The alouattes spend considerable time howling in concert and, like the coyote, will serenade the moon.

In the Malay Peninsula the siamang gibbon has a different voice amplifier—an inflatable sac under the chin. These are the largest of all gibbons, and the inflated pouch gives their voice the resonance of a drum. The sound is a mixture of barks and whoops and can be heard a mile away.

Of all the monkeys, the most unusual are the lorisiform femurs of Africa. Their actions are completely opposite those of all other monkeys, which are alert, quick, and active. They move slowly and deliberately, as if fearful of motion. Since they move by night, their eyes are quite large and keen of sight.
along the rocky ledge toward the leopard. Watching the troop, the leopard did not notice the defenders, who dropped on him from above. One bit his spine, the other his throat. The surprised leopard seized the baboon on his back, and with one stroke of his paw tore away the belly of the baboon hanging to his throat. But it was too late, for the baboon’s canine teeth had severed the jugular vein. Both defenders died, but so did the invader. On the human side, this incident graphically illustrates John 15:13: “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” That’s what Jesus did for each of us.

The largest primates are the lowland gorillas of Africa, which are nearly six feet tall. They may have a 60-inch chest and weigh as much as 360 pounds.

The smallest monkey is the pygmy marmoset of South America, which weighs only two and one-half ounces. They are squirrel-like, with high-pitched voices. Insects, spiders, and fruit are their main fare. Some pygmy marmosets have ringed tails, similar to the larger ring-tailed femurs.