

Nature's Greatest Moments Animal Antics - Birds & Habitats

20 x 5 MINUTES

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Vulture culture - Vultures

The history of the interaction between humankind and vultures has been a long one. Once revered by ancient civilizations, they have been toppled from this position of prominence in recent times to a point where most of the vulture species are either rare, threatened or endangered. Vultures are carrion eating raptors that are largely responsible for alerting other scavengers to a carcass as well as being equipped with a strong beak to break open tough skin.

2. Penguins Plight - Penguins

Penguins are not usually associated with other birds for no other reason than they are more comfortable in water than out. These non-flying seabirds are monogamous and are sometimes together with one partner for up to 15 years. Penguins have been on the red list for some time and are directly affected by sea pollution.

3. Weaving About - Weavers

One of the largest bird families in Africa, Weavers are prolific in numbers and usually live in large colonies competing for nest building material and ideal locations. Weavers are gregarious, nesting in colonies and with allies weave domed structures with a side, top or bottom entrance. The male weaver is well known for perseveringly building his nest and having the female destroy it until she is happy and moves in. In large colonies males compete for building materials, often stealing from one another.

4. Lord of the Skies - Eagles

This bird of prey is surely the lord of the skies and uses its uncanny eyesight to spot its victim from a great distance. These flying assassins have long captivated the imaginations, respect and admiration of human observers.

5. Fast and Furious - Raptors

A bird of prey is characterized by the powerful grip of its taloned feet, which puncture organs and shatter bones, the hooked beak which tears skin and shreds flesh, the immense wingspan which buoys them along on the thermals and the piercing stare of front focusing eyes. The word Raptor means to hunt or kill with its claws.

6. In the Pink - Flamingos

The Flamingos are a group of long-necked birds, which occur, in large flocks on brackish lakes. Their bills are characteristic, flattened above with the tip bent down at an angle. Made up of both the Greater and Lesser Flamingo these elegant birds are found in many African lakes in great numbers and spend hours filter feeding in the shallows. Found in areas as diverse as the Ngorongoro crater to the beaches of the East Coast Islands these graceful birds degree of color, usually pink, is a direct result of their diet.

7. Birds of a Feather - Ostriches

The ostrich is the largest living bird on earth and its success as a species can be largely attributed to the alliance forged between man and these great flightless birds. Ostriches are devoted parents and have some interesting physical adaptations to cope with dust synonymous with the arid regions, which they inhabit.

8. No Mans Land - Inter-tidal zone

All life, including our own, has its origins in the sea. It is a world we left long ago, and it has become strangely forgotten. Between the sea and dry land we discover a lost world of life, that belongs neither in the sea nor on the land - this is the inter tidal zone, where sea meets land, where ocean meets continent, and there is bound to be an extraordinary intercourse.

Within these confines survive the graceful bulia, busy sea spiders and a host of varying crustacea all competing for their piece of this "No Mans Land".

9. Beneath the trees - Rain forests

Man is more intimately acquainted with certain sectors of the moon than he is with the heart of a rainforest, and yet rainforests are the oldest ecosystems on this planet, containing by far a majority of life forms when compared to any other habitat. Rich in moisture and natural life sustaining flora, forests are home to a magnitude of reptiles such as the Gaboon Viper, rare primates such as lemurs and even large mammals like the relatively small forest elephant.

10. Flower Power - Fynbos

A small area of fynbos in the Western Cape can own a diversity of plant species equaled to an entire tropical rainforest. It's a floral kingdom of extraordinary richness, a wonder of the world

inhabited by a host of life that survives within. These fields of beauty owe their existence to fire and need this destructive energy to germinate and reproduce. Making this plant kingdom their home are a plethora of birds and insects as well as an endemic selection of baboon which survive within these inimitable plants

11. Water Worlds - Ponds

Wherever water rests on its journey to the sea, life erupts in systems and cycles and a parade of organisms. Even a little old puddle here today and gone tomorrow bursts with a universe of creatures. From microscopic larva, strange looking amphibians and mud hopping fish these ponds offer more than one can ever imagine.

12. On the Plains - Savannah landscapes

Savannah areas play a huge role in Africa and one would include the huge migrations of the wildebeest and zebra in the Serengeti and Masai Mara as well as the plethora of predators and scavengers that make these plains of predation their hunting grounds.

13. A Handful of Dust - Desert Life

Towering dunes, sandstorms, searing days and freezing nights characterize many of the deserts of the world. Although apparently inhospitable they provide habitat for many species of plant and animal, which have adapted to survive the harsh climate. From small desert insects - the welwitchia beetle living in the oldest plant fossil known to man, to dangerous snakes –horned adders lying beneath the hot desert sands surface waiting in ambush, and the exceptional desert Elephant on its endless quest for life giving water, the desert habitat is home to countless species, which have adapted their lifestyle to this challenging environment.

14. Call of the Running Tide - Estuaries

At the juncture between river and sea is found a mysterious and diverse wilderness called an estuary. Here the tidal action of the ocean produces a dynamic clash between salt and freshwater. It is this rhythmic encounter, which massages a unique profile of habitats and life forms into existence. Estuaries are the breeding grounds for the oceans and while many sea species use these sheltered areas to reproduce others like the knysna sea horse survive without ever leaving these waters. Species here must adapt to continual salinity variance and harsh environmental changes brought about by the continual push of the ocean from one side and the natural flow of the river from the other.

15. Water - Source of Life

Water is the source of all life on this planet. All living creatures can trace their origins to the oceans, and all living things depend on this precious liquid for their continued existence. In this insert we

will discover the influence water has on animal behavior and the many ingenious ways life on earth manipulates and utilizes this water to survive.

16. The Height of Life - Mountains

As part of the African environment, mountains play a huge part with a diverse and different ecology all of their own. Many species of animal have sought refuge in these African slopes from mountain baboons to the elephant's closet relative the rock hyrax. Species here must survive harsh winter winds and climatic diversity as well as have adapted to maneuver themselves around these rocky climes.

17. Island Rhythms - Tropical Islands

Off mainland Africa there are many islands with a variety of different animals and cultures still surviving. From Bird and Dassen Island on the West coast boasting among others seals penguins and gannets to east coast islands like Basarutu and even Madagascar with an enormous variety of species and people. Island life includes those species that have been excluded from evolutionary change and annihilation due to their isolation.

18. The Night Shift - Nocturnal

Under cover of darkness a whole new set of actors flood the stage of the African wilderness. In fact nocturnal animals together with those who live in caves or underground constitute half of all invertebrates on the planet, but it is that half that we rarely get to observe. The night shift looks at these species that inhabit this subterranean space. From mole rats who spend their entire existence underground to bats who live in large and endless cave formations this insert gives an insight to the dark mysteries areas beneath the surface.

19. Urban Terror - Urban Animals

Uncontrolled urbanization is a problem which besets most developing countries and mankind has always tried to conquer and tame wild animals which has inevitably caused problems. This insert highlights the topic.

20. Water Looms - Rivers

Rivers constitute the framework around which terrestrial life is woven. Born in mountain highlands, they rush youthfully downwards, mellowing in the foothills and finally merging once again with the source at the coast. This insert journeys with a river from birth to re-absorption. And we show how these watery looms are no longer able to hold together the fabric of existence.