

Animal Groups: Strength in Numbers

*A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book
Word Count: 1,043*

Connections

Writing

Create a Venn diagram comparing animal societies with herds. Then describe in writing what the groups have in common and how they are different.

Science

Research to learn more about an animal featured in the book. Create a poster and a report about the animal to present to your class.

Reading A-Z

Visit www.readinga-z.com
for thousands of books and materials.

LEVELED BOOK • S

Animal Groups: Strength in Numbers



Written by Katherine Follett

www.readinga-z.com

Animal Groups: Strength in Numbers

Words to Know

competitive
cooperate
fungus
groom
matriarch

predators
solitary
sophisticated
young

Photo Credits:

Front cover, back cover: © Stock Connection/SuperStock; title page: © Stefan Meyers/ardea.com; page 3: © Jean Michel Labat/ardea.com; page 4 (top left): © iStock.com/lamiel; page 4 (bottom left): © iStock.com/JohnCarnemolla; page 4 (top right): © Matthias Breiter/Minden Pictures; page 4 (bottom right): © Reinhard Mink/Moment/Getty Images; page 5 (top): © iStock.com/elmvilla; page 5 (bottom): © John E Marriott/All Canada Photos/Getty Images; page 6 (top): © Otto Plantema/Buiten-beeld/Minden Pictures; page 6 (bottom): © iStock.com/Jan-Schneckenhaus; page 7 (top): © iStock.com/Nataba; page 7 (bottom): © Tjkphotography/Dreamstime.com; page 8: © iStock.com/104kelly; page 9: © Znm/Dreamstime.com; page 10: © actionsports/123RF; page 11 (top): © iStock.com/longtaildog; page 11 (bottom): © iStock.com/burroblando; page 12: © iStock.com/samjbasch; page 13 (top): © iStock.com/Mateusz Atroszko; page 13 (bottom): © Raymond Mendez/Animals Animals/age footstock; page 14: © Konrad Wothe/Minden Pictures; page 15: © iStock.com/paulafrench

Written by Katherine Follett

www.readinga-z.com

Focus Question

What are the benefits of animals working and living in a group?

Animal Groups: Strength in Numbers
Level S Leveled Book
© Learning A-Z
Written by Katherine Follett

All rights reserved.

www.readinga-z.com

Correlation

LEVEL S

Fountas & Pinnell	○
Reading Recovery	34
DRA	34



Fun names for animal groups include an army of caterpillars, a bask of crocodiles, a mob of emus, and a crash of rhinos.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Small Families	5
Bands	8
Herds	11
Societies	13
Conclusion	15
Glossary	16

Introduction

Did you know that a group of giraffes is a tower? Or that a group of crows is a murder? There are also pods of whales, swarms of bees, and schools of fish.

All these unique names point out something important: many animals live in groups. Yet other animals, such as tigers, moles, and sloths, live just fine all alone. So why do some animals team up, and how does each animal fit into its group?

Small Families

A small family is made up of parents and their **young**. For some animals, such as skunks, cheetahs, orangutans, and grizzly bears, a family is a mother that raises her babies. For others, including penguins, parrots, foxes, and finches, both mothers and fathers bring up their young.



Small families often have close bonds. Mother cheetahs **groom** their babies by licking them. Baby bears play with each other and their parents. Crane parents dance together, seabirds call, and fox families pounce and play. These bonds encourage members of the family to care for and protect each other.



An albatross pair take turns caring for their egg.

The main job of small families is caring for the young. Some families only stay together until the young can live on their own. A mother moose and her calf stay side by side for about a year. When the calf is grown, it leaves. After that, moose live **solitary** lives. Other families last for the long term. Pairs of albatrosses, which are large seabirds, stick together for life. That's saying a lot since albatrosses can live more than fifty years!

Solitary Animals

Some animals, such as bears, moose, and certain wildcats, do not benefit from group living. Solitary animals live alone—except when they are raising young—to avoid competing with their own kind for mates or territory.



Animals that form small families often have helpless young. Most are birds or mammals. Bird parents must feed babies until they can fly. Baby mammals nurse from their mothers. A few other kinds of animals form small families as well. For example, mother crocodiles guard their babies from hungry fish or birds. Clown fish fathers fan fresh water over their eggs to care for them. Small families make sure the young grow big, healthy, and skilled enough to survive on their own.



Bands

Animal families can be small or large. Some animals live in bands, or extended families. Bands include mothers, fathers, young, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other relatives. Some bands include unrelated animals. They are usually mates of the family members. Rarely, a band will adopt another animal that has no band.

Lions, wolves, whales, dolphins, monkeys, chimps, and elephants all live in bands. Bands work together to raise young. Some adult animals watch the young while others find food. Siblings, cousins, and other youngsters all play together.



Some babies are born ready to live on their own. Others, such as this crocodile, need the care of a family.



A band of elephants often consists of only females, but sometimes male elephants join a family group.



Lions live in groups called *prides*, which often have far fewer males than females.

Bands also work together to find food. Wolves, lions, and dolphins are famous for using **sophisticated** teamwork to hunt prey. An elephant **matriarch**, often the oldest female, leads her family to remote food and water sources as they follow behind in single file. Many bands also work together to defend a territory.

Life in a band can be complex. Often, one or two animals act as leaders. In some groups, such as elephant bands, leadership passes peacefully from parent to young. Chimps and monkeys, on the other hand, can be **competitive** over mates or territory. Followers try to take control and may flash their teeth to challenge others. They team up with other followers or even fight the leader.

Do You Know?

Some of the smartest animals on Earth—dolphins, chimps, and elephants—live in bands. Some scientists think that high intelligence helps these animals keep track of complex relationships within their groups.

Bands work best when members get along. Band leaders have more power when they have more support. Members of bands strengthen their bonds by grooming, playing, or relaxing together. They also communicate with sound, scent, and movement. Elephants rumble and trumpet to express themselves. Wolves and wild dogs leave scent marks as a way to claim territory and recognize each other. Groups as large as bands use behaviors like these to **cooperate**.



Members of wolf packs lick each other to communicate and bond.



A herd of caribou migrate together.

Herds

Groups even bigger than bands have learned to work together. Imagine the African savanna. Grazing animals move across the land as far as the eye can see. Herds of mammals, flocks of birds, and schools of fish are some of the largest animal groups. All of these groups, generally known as herds, take advantage of their large numbers to stay safe from **predators**. Lions can easily attack a single zebra. However, they have trouble picking one out of a crowd, especially when that crowd is on the run.

Family Herds

Some herds and flocks are made up of small families. One example is penguin colonies, in which thousands of parents raise their chicks.



More animals also means more eyes. If one gazelle spots a cheetah, it sounds the alarm by making a honking sound. Then the whole herd has a chance to get away. For these reasons, many animals live in herds to raise young. The large group helps protect the babies.

Members of herds often communicate. In addition to using alarm calls to warn of predators, they use calls to help everyone stick together. However, unlike families and bands, herds do not form bonds. Above all else, each member of a herd looks out for itself.



Individual herd members, such as this springbok, watch out for predators while the others graze.



Every member of a society works for the group rather than for itself.

Societies

It is amazing enough that groups as large as herds have figured out how to cooperate. Another kind of group, called a *society*, has thousands or even hundreds of thousands of individuals. Unlike herds, societies are organized. The members work together for the good of the group. Very few animals form societies, and nearly all of those that do are insects, including ants, termites, bees, and some wasps.

Do You Know?

The naked mole rat is one of the few noninsects to form a society. Naked mole rats have queens and workers. Some scientists also classify humans as an animal society. Unlike other societies, humans can work with others who are not related.



A soldier ant (left) has big jaws and a big body to defend the nest. A worker ant (right) is much smaller.

In a society, every member has a job. Workers gather food, nurses care for the young, and soldiers protect the group. Some insect workers even have different kinds of bodies to help them do their jobs! Usually, one queen lays all the eggs. This means that every member of a society is related.

Insect societies can do incredible things. Leaf- and grass-cutter ants chop up leaves, bring them into their nests, and use them to fertilize **fungus** farms. Bees build wax cells for their own special food—honey. Ants create scent trails to help each other find food and bring it back to the nest. Termites build mounds over 5 meters (17 ft.) tall. Considering the size of a termite, these mounds are like giant skyscrapers. Societies can do all this because everyone works together.



Although each animal group is different, every group helps its members survive.

Conclusion

Many kinds of animals live in groups, from tiny termites to enormous elephants. Groups help animals raise and protect young. They help members find food. They can even build structures together. Though groups come in different sizes and different styles, they all help animals survive.

Glossary

competitive (<i>adj.</i>)	of or relating to a rivalry between individuals or teams (p. 9)
cooperate (<i>v.</i>)	to work together to get something done (p. 10)
fungus (<i>n.</i>)	a living thing that grows on organic material and produces spores (p. 14)
groom (<i>v.</i>)	to clean or brush the coat of an animal (p. 5)
matriarch (<i>n.</i>)	the female in charge of a family group (p. 9)
predators (<i>n.</i>)	animals that hunt and eat other animals to survive (p. 11)
solitary (<i>adj.</i>)	tending to live or spend time alone (p. 6)
sophisticated (<i>adj.</i>)	well designed, complicated, or highly developed (p. 9)
young (<i>n.</i>)	one or more immature animals (p. 5)