

## **Video Narration**

### **Just the Land:**

The African Savanna. A hot, dry expanse of grassland sandwiched between tropical rainforests and the Sahara Desert. With only two seasons, a long, hot dry spell and a cooler, rainier spell, the Savanna does not get enough rain to support forests and thus has only a sparse covering of trees and shrubs. Despite this, over 45 mammal species and almost 500 bird species consider this region their home. Most of the animals living on the Savanna have long legs or wings to travel extensive migratory routes, and they all depend on each other to keep the environment in balance.

One of these great creatures is the black rhino, which is one of the most endangered species in the world. Every year rhinos are killed because of the mistake assumption that their horns can be used for medicine. And unbeknownst to many people the rhino plays a vital role in the ecosystem by reseeding the Savanna. Since the rhino's digestive track can take up to 3 days to process a meal, the African rhino has plenty of time to wander around depositing seeds through its droppings.

Unfortunately, the black rhino is not the only endangered species on the African Savanna. Across many parts of the country, the African people have started using the Savanna to raise cattle and goats. But, since these animals are fenced in and don't roam, the grasses are completely eaten away and with no vegetation, the Savanna turns to desert. Every year, more and more of the Savanna is claimed by Sahara desert thanks to farming and overgrazing.

### **Wild Horses of the Savannah:**

Zebras are the horses of the African Savanna. There are only three varieties of zebras, one of which is the grevy's zebra. The grevy's zebra is the largest of all wild equines. These zebras are set apart from the other two types by their narrow, close-together stripes, and that these stripes run across their bellies and the bases of their tails.

Zebras live in close-knit communities called families or harems, which are led by a single male and may consist of up to 17 members. Even when traveling in herds of up to 10,000 or more, a zebra family will stay close together, often slowing their pace for weak or young members.

While zebras can live to 28 years old, their primary predators are lions and hyenas. In this case, the zebras rely on their stripes and movement as a herd to confuse the predator. However, predators are not their only problem. Human beings are limiting the land zebras normally inhabit, with farming practices that drain the drinking-water from the zebra's home and allow cows to graze on the grasses the zebras need. Farming is one of the reasons that there are fewer than 6,000 of the endangered grevy's zebras, left in the wild.

### **A Pride of Hunters**

Lions are one of the well known predators of the African Savanna. They weigh between 265 and 420 pounds and can take down gazelles, water buffalo, and zebras, along with other smaller prey. Lions live in communities known as prides that are made up of 4 to 40 individuals. Lions are the only kind of cats that live in groups – leopards, tigers, and cheetahs tend to go at it alone. Female lions will stay in their mother's pride for their entire life, unless there is a scarcity of food. However, young males are driven from the pride when they grow large enough to compete with the dominant male. Then out in the Savanna they will join in coalitions of brothers and cousins as they roam around for a pride to take over. Males entering a new pride will kill all of the cubs that cannot run from them to ensure no rebellions later.

Sadly, lions too suffer from a loss of habitat from farming, as well as getting diseases from local domestic dogs. Thus, many lions are being relocated to natural reserves.

### **Dwindling Giants:**

African elephants live wherever they can find enough food and water and be away from people. Most elephants live on the Savanna and in dry woodlands, but they have been known to inhabit desert regions as well.

Elephants live in herds consisting of females and their offspring. Herds, which number about 10 elephants, are lead by a matriarch who determines when the heard will travel, eat, and rest. Males leave the herd at 13 years old or around puberty and then travel alone or in bachelor groups around the Savanna until winning the acceptance of a female in heat. Gestation lasts for 22 months and usually only one calf is born. Female African elephants can usually start to breed at 10 years old and they'll give birth to one calf every 4 years.

African elephants once lived throughout Africa, but now they are limited to about 1/3 of the continent and are long gone from the Sahara desert. Initially, the African elephant was on a decline due to ivory hunters; however, now it's from a loss of land caused by ranches, farms, and a shrinking Savannah.