

LINE UP!

ANIMAL RANKINGS

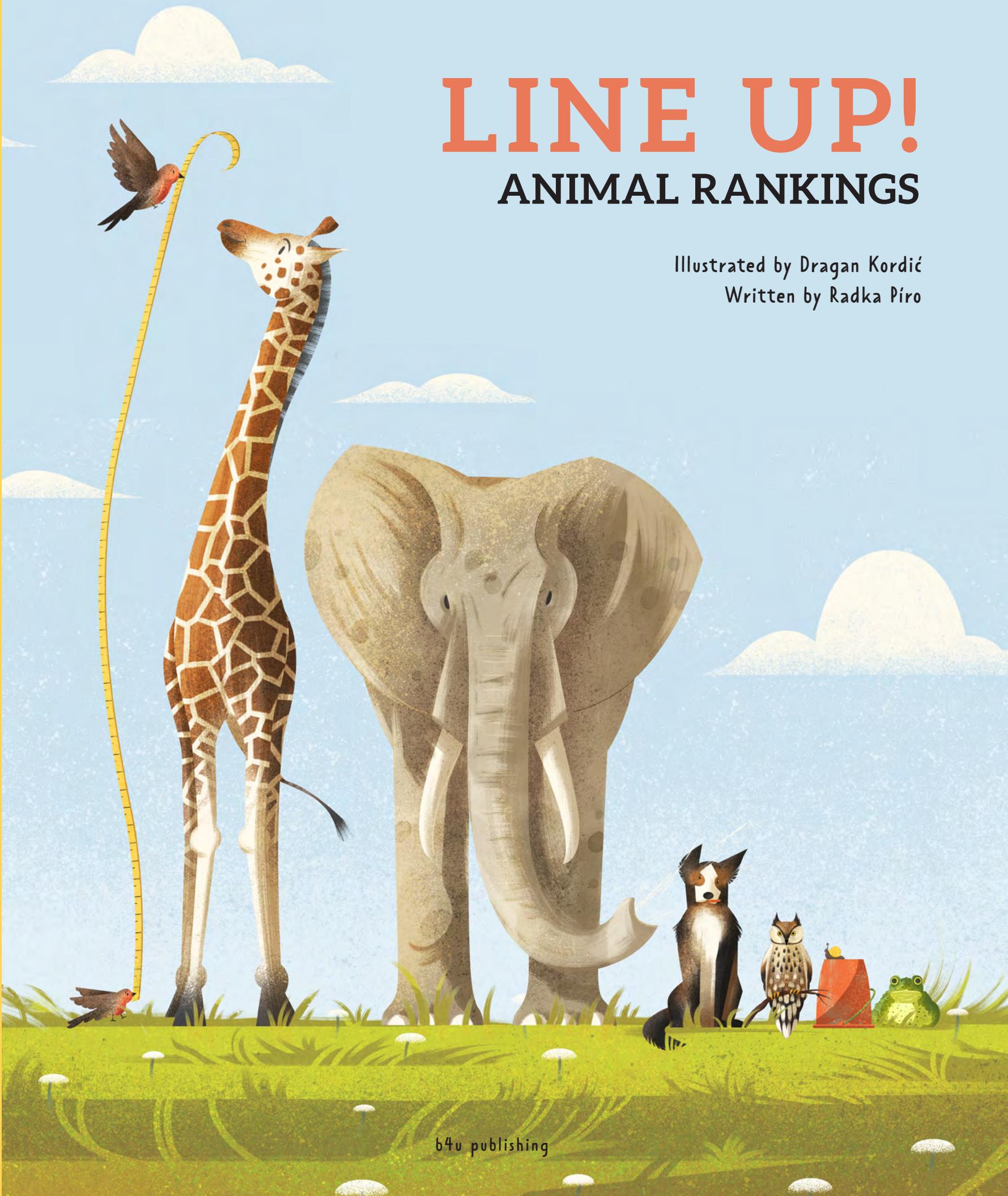
Illustrated by Dragan Kordić
Written by Radka Piro

Dragan Kordić • Radka Piro

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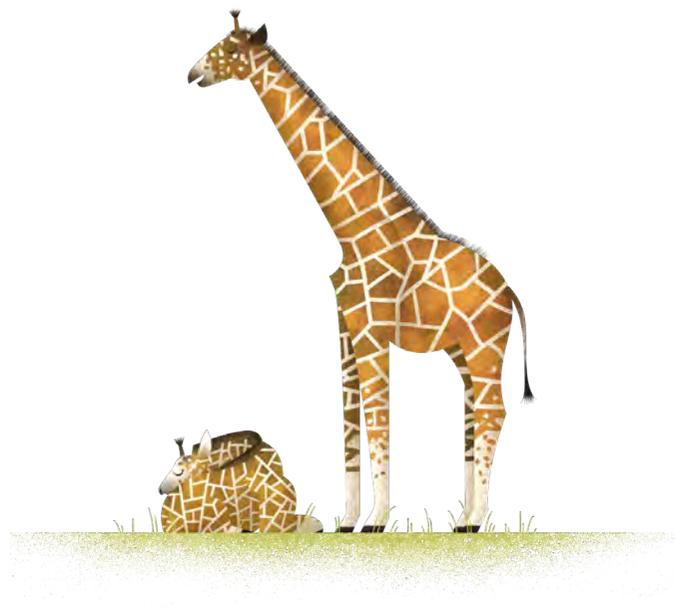




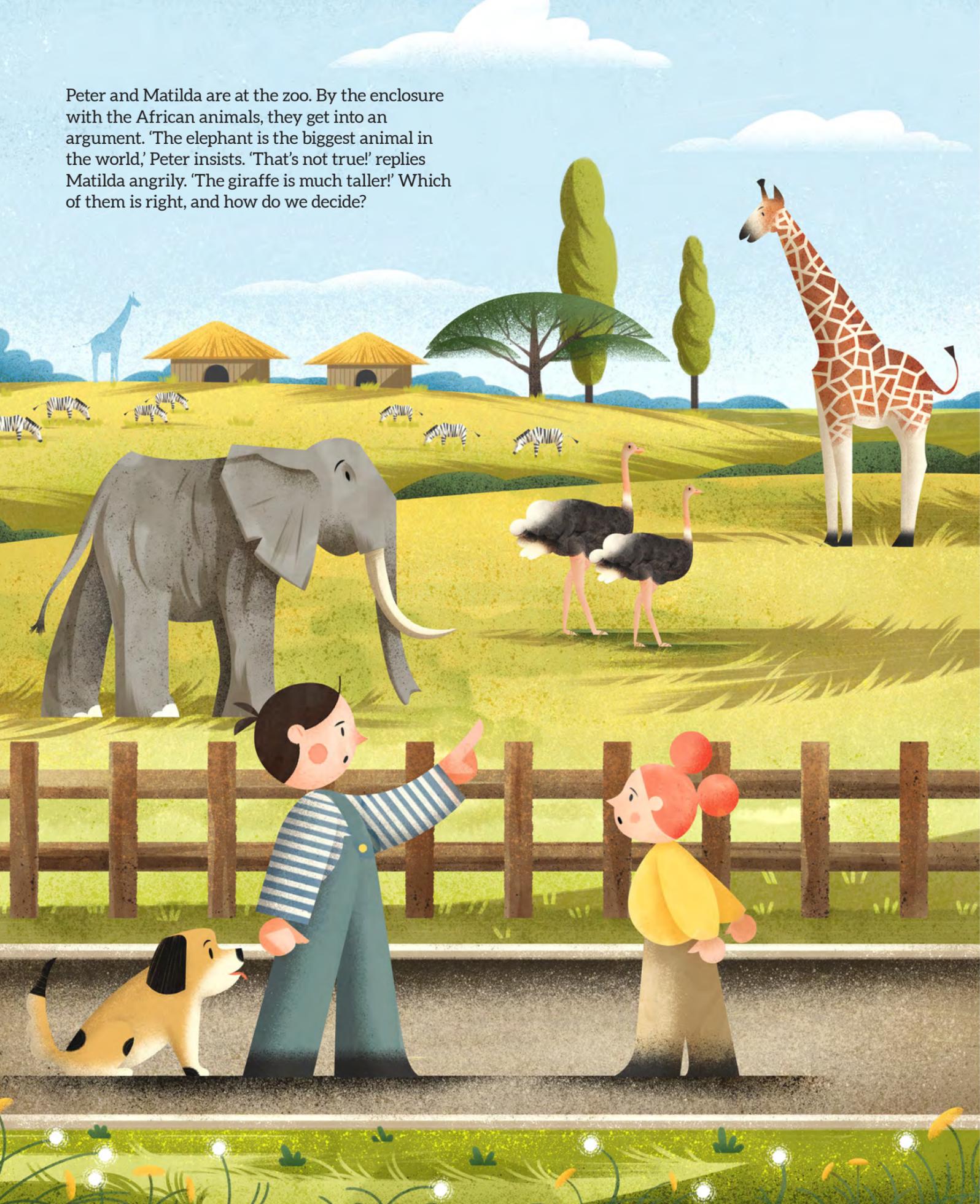
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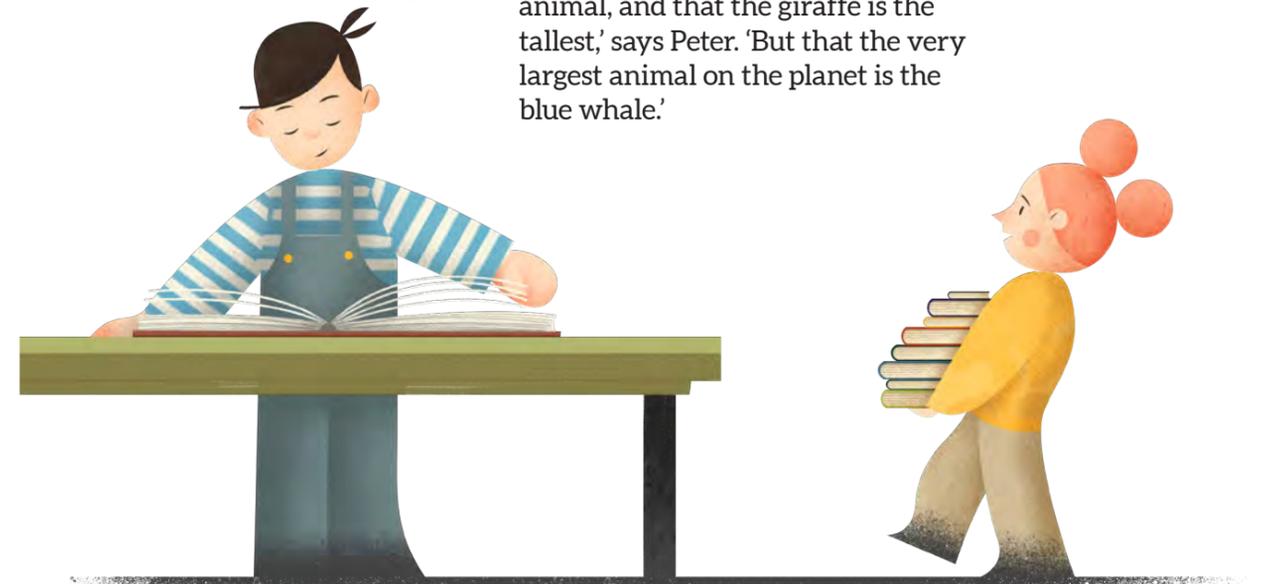
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Peter and Matilda are at the zoo. By the enclosure with the African animals, they get into an argument. 'The elephant is the biggest animal in the world,' Peter insists. 'That's not true!' replies Matilda angrily. 'The giraffe is much taller!' Which of them is right, and how do we decide?



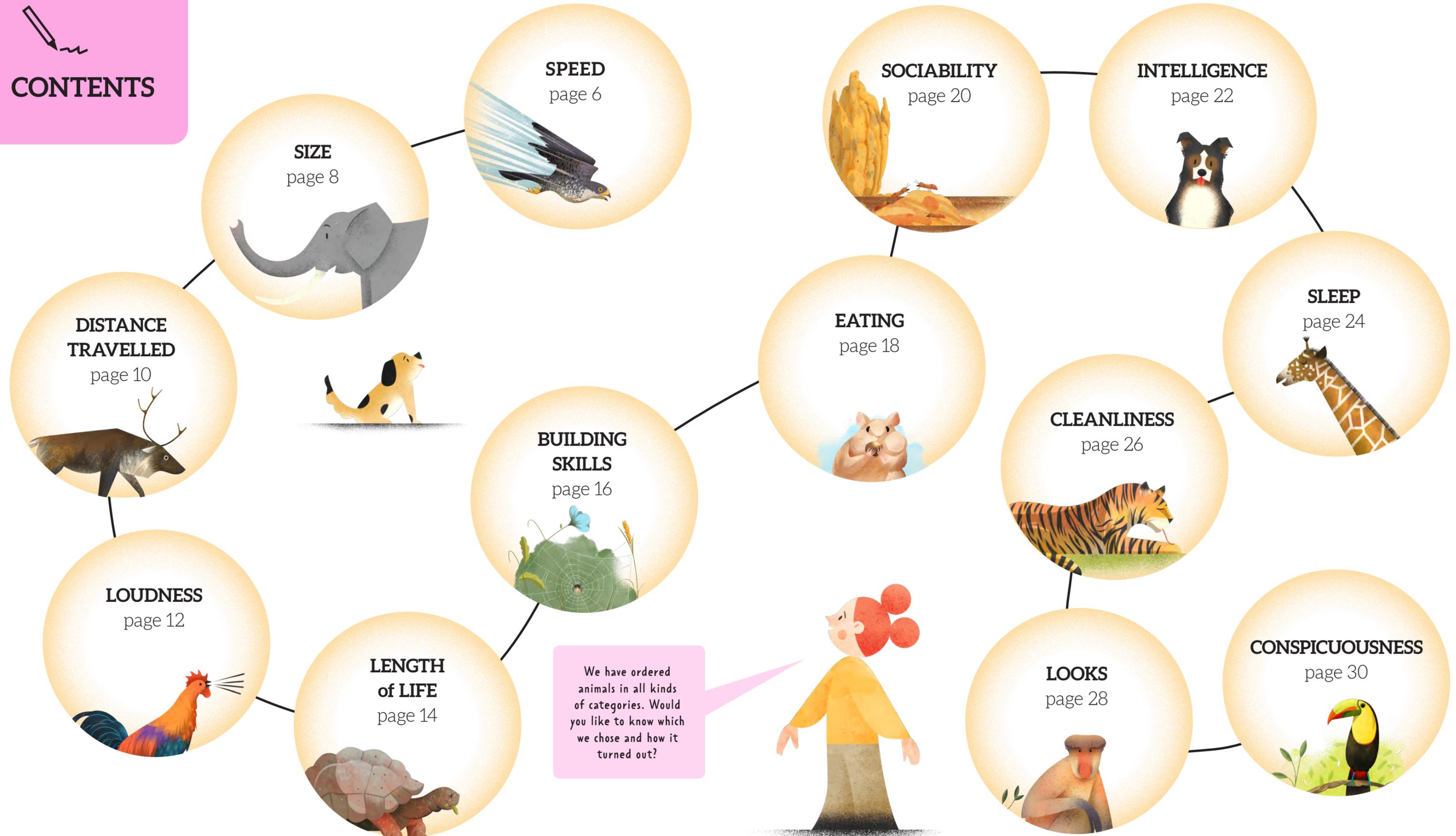
Back home, the children take out a few books about animals. 'It says here that the elephant is the largest terrestrial animal, and that the giraffe is the tallest,' says Peter. 'But that the very largest animal on the planet is the blue whale.'



'Which is the smallest? And which is the loneliest?' Matilda asks. 'Which is the nicest to look at, and which is the ugliest?' 'Why don't we sort the animals into different categories so we can see for ourselves?' Peter suggests. They start to do this straight away.




CONTENTS



SPEED

You have probably heard that the cheetah is the fastest animal. This is true – but only on land. Our world contains speedsters that outpace the cheetah with ease. On the other hand, when an animal moves slowly, you can be sure that it has no need for speed. Who, then, is the champion speedster? And who prefers an altogether slower lifestyle?



An adult human runs at an average speed of between 8.4 and 9.4 km/h.

The human record-holding speedster is Jamaican athlete Usain Bolt. His top speed is 44.72 km/h, achieved when running a 100-metre race.

max. 70 km/h

4. Racehorse

Racehorses are specially bred and trained to reach the highest possible speed. But as you can see from our standings, this is not nearly enough to place them among the fastest animals.

ca. 96 km/h

3. Cheetah

No one runs faster than the cheetah. Just look at him: his light, slender body is built for running at high speed, and his long tail helps with balance.

ca. 297 km/h

1. Peregrine falcon

The falcon hunts in an interesting way. It begins by flying high above its prey. Then it goes into free fall – which is when this incredible speed was measured.



1 m/h

10. Roman snail

The snail moves by contracting the muscles of its body, helped by the mucus it produces. Now you know why a snail always leaves a trail of slime.



10

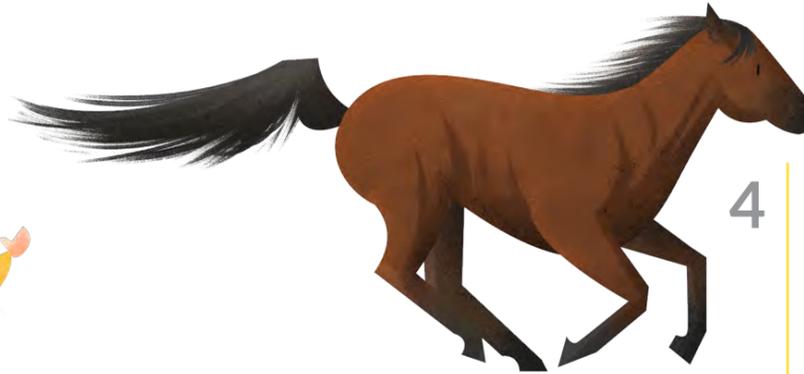
240 m/h

8. Pale-throated sloth

The sloth is the world's slowest mammal. Sloths don't hurry so that they can save energy. Their favourite activities are sleeping and eating. When they do have to move, they do so very slowly.



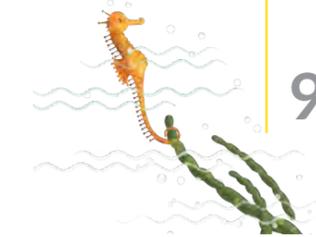
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4



3



9



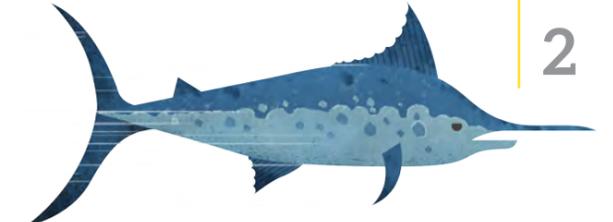
7



6



5



2

1.52 m/h

9. Dwarf seahorse

The body shape of the seahorse doesn't allow for high speed. As its swimming is powered only by small fins, it is powerless against the current. That is why a seahorse spends most of its time attached to coral by its curled tail.

7 km/h

7. Emperor penguin

Penguins may be clumsy on land, but they are anything but in the water. Body shape, webbed feet, wings acting as fins – all these things provide them with speed and elegance they lack on land.

11 km/h

6. Plumed basilisk

The basilisk has a superpower that will surprise you: it is small and light yet moves so fast for one of its size that it can run across water.

55 km/h

5. Dragonflies

Dragonflies are the champion fliers of the insect world. Not only are they super-quick, but they are also very successful hunters who catch their prey in 95% of cases.



ca. 129 km/h

2. Black marlin

The black marlin is known to be one of the world's fastest fish. It may even be the very fastest. Its closest competitor is its relative the sailfish, which is of very similar appearance.

SIZE

Now, let's look at animal size. Our world contains true giants as well as tiny titches. For our scale, we have chosen the most interesting animals. Some of them are very well known. Others may be new to you. Anyway, wait until you find out about the largest butterfly, the whale that didn't actually grow much, and, and...

up to 33 metres long

1. Blue whale

Not only is the blue whale the world's largest animal, but it is the heaviest creature ever to have lived on Earth. And that's saying something!

1

The world's tallest human was an incredible 2.72 metres in height!



up to 8 metres long

2. Giant oarfish

This fish likes to luxuriate in the ocean deep, rarely coming to the surface. Size-wise, as the world's longest bony fish, it knocks most other sea creatures into a cocked hat.

2

up to 7.5 metres long

3. African bush elephant

The elephant is officially the largest terrestrial animal. The Indian elephant, a relative of the African, is pretty enormous too; it is up to 4 metres long.

3

up to 6.5 metres long

4. Pygmy right whale

Most whales can justifiably be referred to as giants. As they live in water, they can grow and grow without having to worry about space to move in. The pygmy right whale is a tidder, however; it is the very smallest of the whales.

4



5



up to 3.7 metres (legspan)

5. Japanese spider crab

What on earth is that leggy creature? The largest of the crabs may not have much of a body, but its legs are really something! On land they probably wouldn't give enough support, but in the ocean they are just the thing.

up to 2.7 metres tall

6. Common ostrich

That many creatures grow to a great size because they live in water practically goes without saying. Even so, some giants live on land. The common ostrich is the largest of the birds. It can't fly, but it's a brilliant runner!

6



up to 28 cm (wingspan)

7. Queen Alexandra's birdwing

This strange name belongs to one of the world's largest butterflies. Its wingspan is truly immense for a butterfly.

7



up to 6.1 cm

8. Bee hummingbird

All hummingbirds are tiny, but the bee hummingbird is so teeny-weeny it is difficult to spot. It is believed to be the world's smallest bird.

8



ca. 3 cm

10. Dwarf gecko

Several gecko species bear this name, but all of them have one thing in common: they are no larger than a phalanx in the finger of an adult human.

10

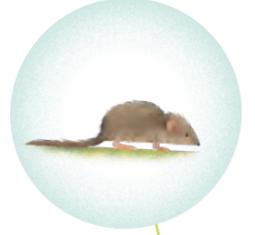


up to 5.2 cm

9. Etruscan shrew

Strictly speaking, it is not the smallest mammal in terms of length. It had to give up that distinction to a tiny species of bat. It was a close-run thing, however: the difference was in the Etruscan shrew's tail.

9



up to 400 km

5. Atlantic salmon

These marathon swimmers travel from the ocean to the river in which they were born, where they raise their offspring. They swim upstream the whole way, often crossing small waterfalls as they go.

up to 1,000 km

4. Reindeer

In terms of distance travelled on land, reindeer are our record-holders. They, too, migrate southwards in winter. For summer, they return to more northerly climes.

up to 4,800 km

3. Monarch butterfly

These butterflies travel in great swarms through North America to the south, where they wait out the winter. Halfway through the journey back, they lay their eggs and die. Their offspring do make it to the north, from where they will later make the same journey as their parents.

up to 16,000 km

2. Leatherback sea turtle

The largest sea turtle also migrates a very long way – between its nesting ground and the place where it finds food easiest. To lay its eggs, a turtle always returns to the place where it was born.

up to 40,000 km

1. Arctic tern

Out-and-out winner in our standings is a modest-looking bird that travels around the globe from one pole to the other. It makes this incredible journey every year.

up to 250 km

6. Brown bear

Bears move about within their territory. They travel most in autumn, when they must find enough food to last them through their hibernation.

up to 80 km

7. Mygalomorphs

Every autumn in the US state of Colorado these spiders set out in a great swarm in search of love. To find their partners, they are prepared to go great distances.

hardly any distance

10. Olm

This fascinating amphibian likes to rest in a cave. It doesn't cover much ground: it may take it several years to move just a few metres.

up to 5 km

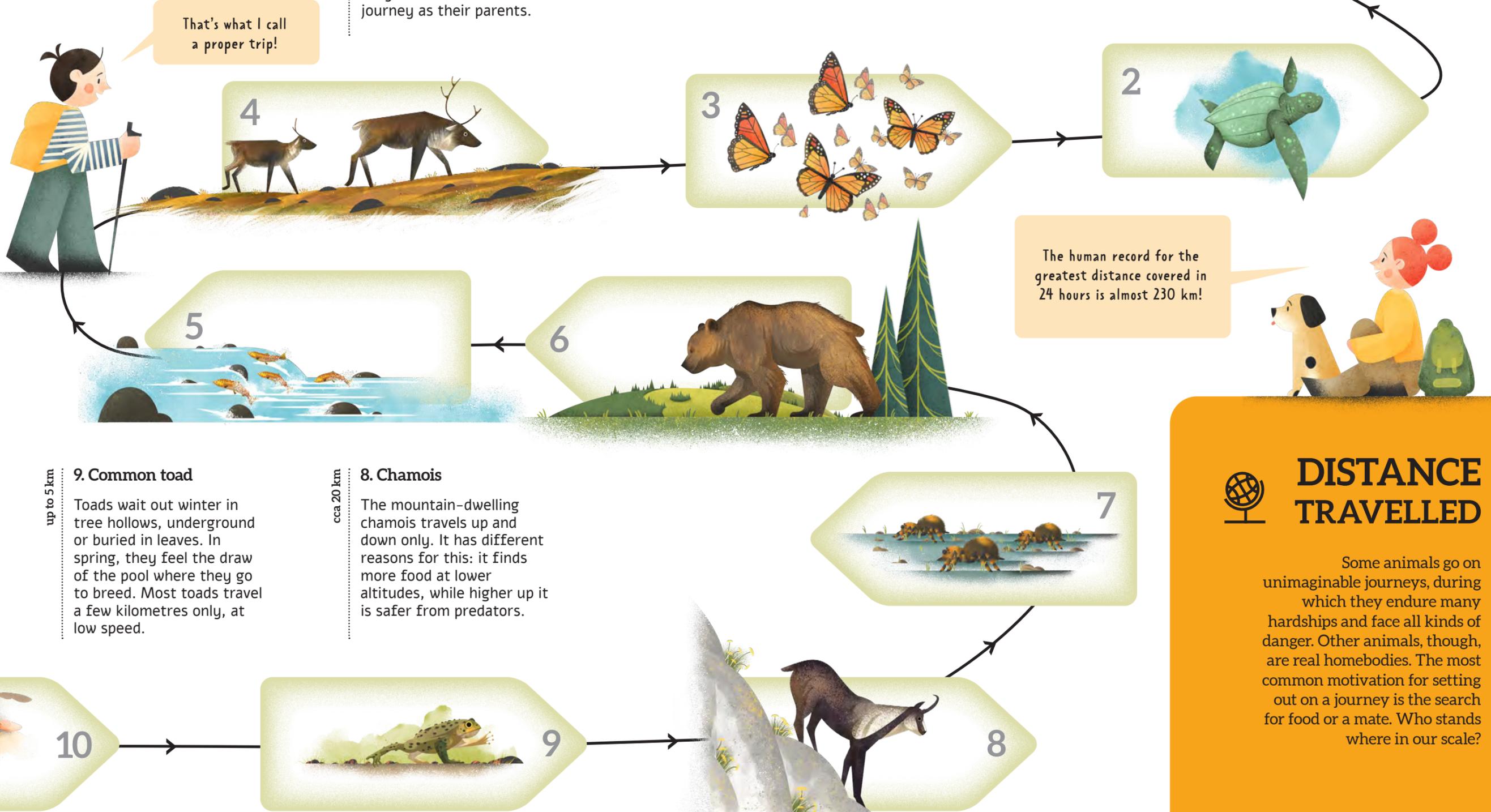
9. Common toad

Toads wait out winter in tree hollows, underground or buried in leaves. In spring, they feel the draw of the pool where they go to breed. Most toads travel a few kilometres only, at low speed.

cca 20 km

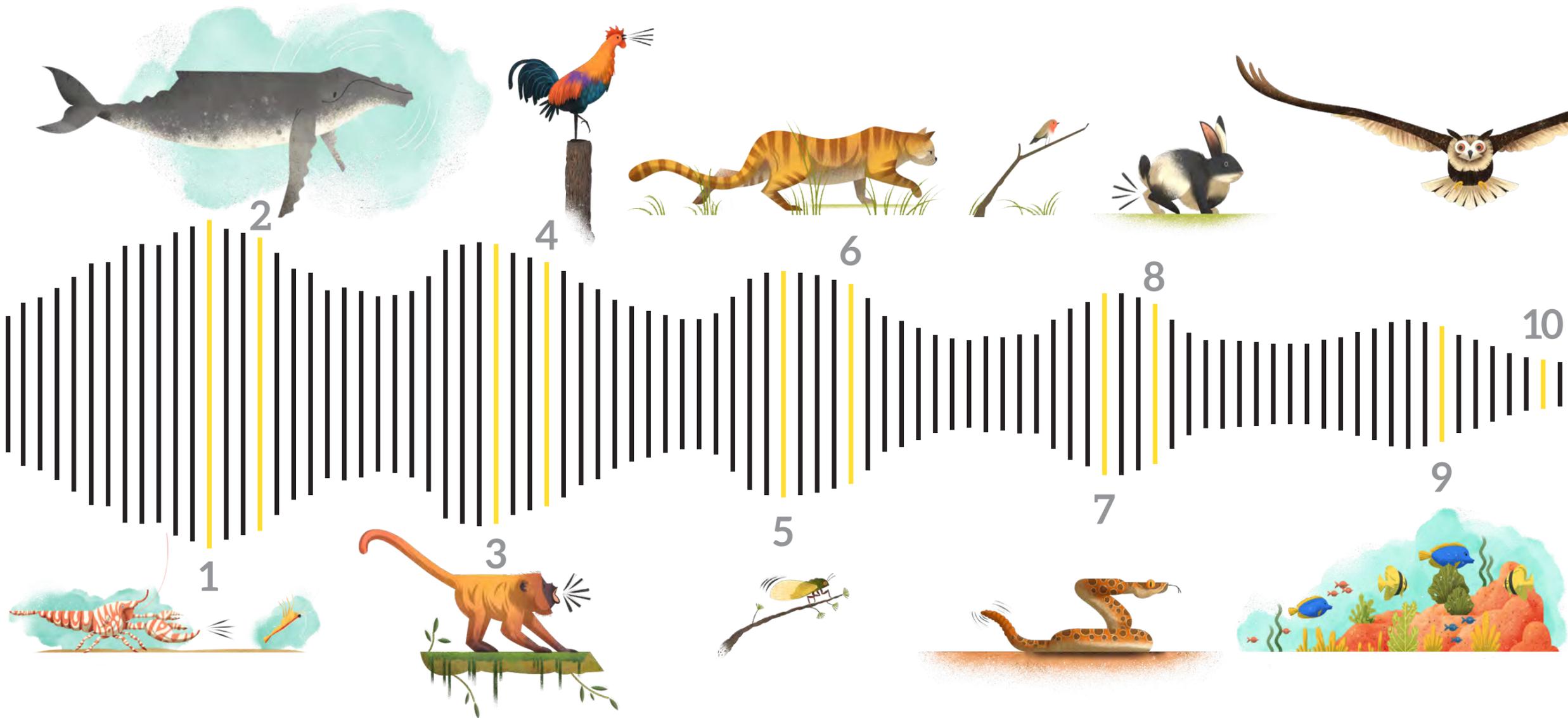
8. Chamois

The mountain-dwelling chamois travels up and down only. It has different reasons for this: it finds more food at lower altitudes, while higher up it is safer from predators.



DISTANCE TRAVELLED

Some animals go on unimaginable journeys, during which they endure many hardships and face all kinds of danger. Other animals, though, are real homebodies. The most common motivation for setting out on a journey is the search for food or a mate. Who stands where in our scale?



1. Tiger pistol shrimp

This little creature uses its outsized pincer to shoot out an air bubble and so stun its prey – mostly another shrimp or a small fish. The accompanying sound wave reminds us of a gunshot; it is indeed louder than a shot from a real pistol.

3. Howler monkey

This monkey is one of the noisiest terrestrial animals. Although only males communicate by hooting at up to 140 decibels, when they go at it together the noise is something else!

5. Cicada

This tiny creature is the loudest insect species. It emits a sound over 100 decibels in intensity, using special organs on the sides of its body. Cicadas like to ‘sing’ in chorus, which results in even higher volume.

7. Prairie rattlesnake

This snake makes a loud sound with the rattle at the end of its tail. This rattle is made of keratinized skin. Its warning signal leaves us in no doubt that it would be a bad idea to mess with the rattlesnake.

9. Fish in a coral reef

If you were thinking that fish are silent, think again! Fish have ears, and they communicate by various squeaking and screeching sounds. But these sounds are too quiet to be picked up by the human ear.

2. Humpback whale

Whale-song can go on for hours. The humpback whale can last longest of all; its song can go on for 23 hours, almost one whole day, reaching an intensity of 175 decibels.

4. Chicken

The crowing of a cock often heralds the start of a new day. He does this to make it clear that he is on his territory and others should stay away, or to warn his flock of approaching danger.

6. Cat

A cat’s miaow is normally around 45 decibels, although some individuals can be twice as loud as that. The cries cats make during courtship are louder still. But when they are sneaking after their prey, they are very quiet indeed.

8. European rabbit

Rabbits aren’t among the noisiest creatures. Their sounds are mostly limited to sputtering, purring and teeth-grinding. And when they wish to warn others of their species, they can stamp pretty loudly.

10. Eurasian eagle-owl

Like all owls, the eagle-owl is incredibly quiet in flight. It is aided in this by the soft feathers of the comb-like edges of its wings, through which the air slips soundlessly.

LOUDNESS

For animals, communication is essential, if only to make themselves heard over all the others. In some cases, most noise is made by males attempting to enchant female partners by their voice. At other times, animals make sounds to warn away enemies. Communication in a group often serves to strengthen relationships.

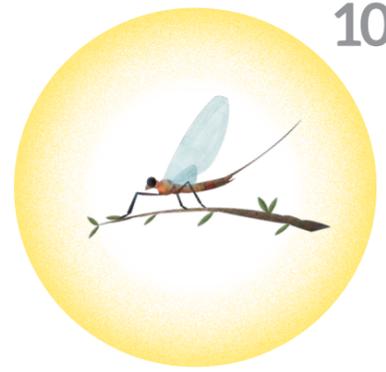


Sound intensity is measured in decibels. Humans normally converse at around 60 decibels.



1. Jellyfish

Immortality is impossible to prove, of course. Still, this jellyfish really does have the potential to live forever. It is able to reverse the course of time and return to an earlier stage of life. Then it starts to age again. In theory, it can keep on doing this.



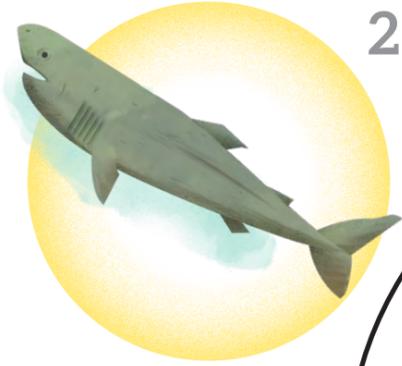
ca. 1 day

10. Green drake mayfly
Mayfly nymphs (pre-adults) stay in water for a year or two, but the life of most adult mayflies is contained in a single day. Adult mayflies are unable to take in food in any way.

ca. 400 years

2. Greenland shark

The Greenland shark spends most of its life in freezing water, which apparently helps it live for so many years. Its very slow metabolism means that it ages very slowly.



ca. 2 years

9. Virginia opossum
The opossum is well known for its defence strategy when in danger. At the approach of a predator, it falls to the ground and feigns death. As soon as the danger has passed, the opossum jumps back to its feet.

ca. 200 years

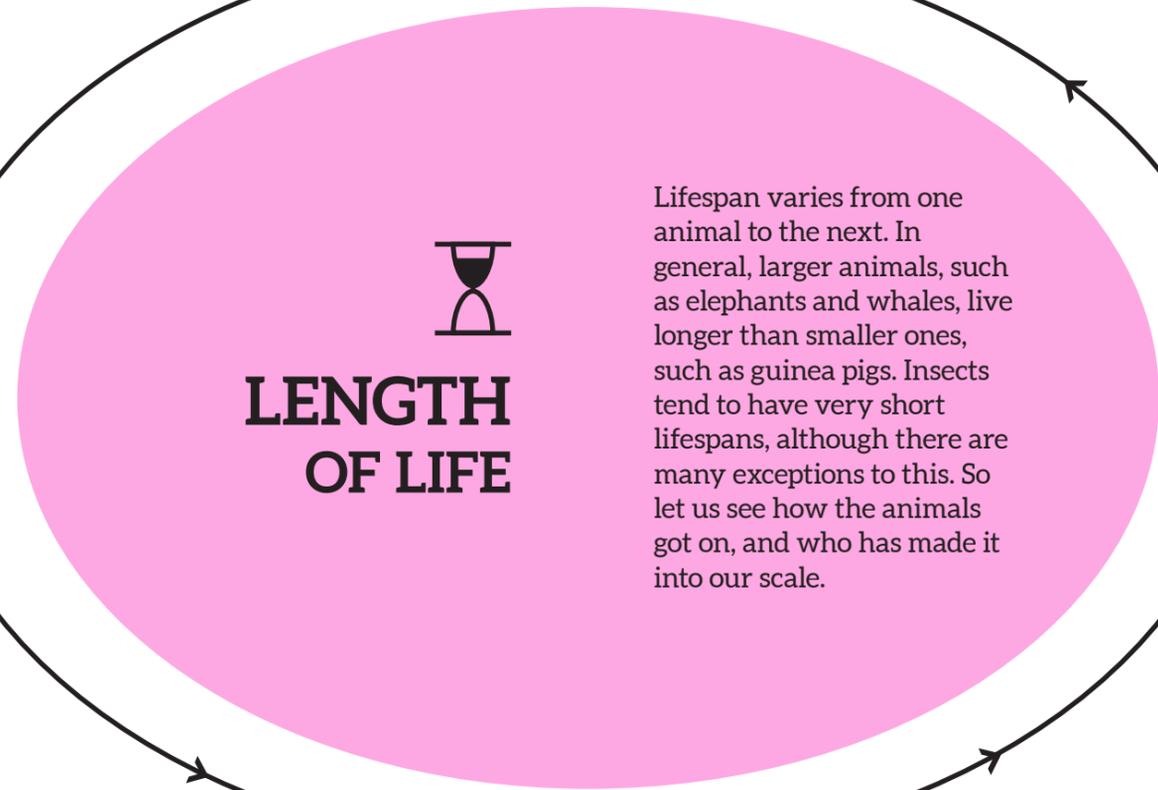
3. Bowhead whale

The bowhead whale is the longest-lived mammal on Earth. That's right – like other whales, and dolphins too, it is a mammal. Like the Greenland shark, it probably owes its longevity to its cold conditions.



ca. 3 years

8. Wood frog
This frog can survive its own death! When winter comes and the frost sets in, it finds a hiding place under the leaves and literally freezes. Its breathing and heartbeat stop. As soon as the weather warms up, the frog thaws out and hops away.



ca. 100 years

4. Aldabra giant tortoise

That the tortoise lives a long live won't be news to you. One reason for this may be the effective protection against attackers provided by its shell. An Aldabra giant tortoise holds the record for age attained – 180 years.



ca. 25 years

7. Black garden ant - queen
Worker ants tend to live only a few months, the males perhaps only a few weeks. An ant queen, however, is an exception to this: her life is much longer than those of her subjects.

ca. 70 years

5. Scarlet macaw

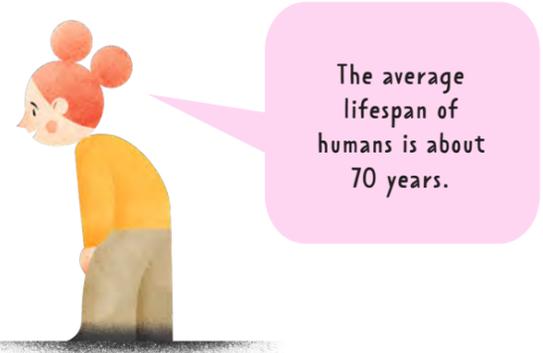
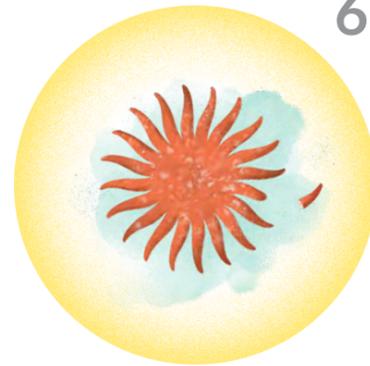
Although its average lifespan is somewhat lower than a human's, this brightly coloured parrot can live for just as long. That's what we call 'a pet for life'!



ca. 35 years

6. Sunflower sea star

The sunflower sea star has an amazing ability to regenerate. If it loses a part of its body, it will simply grow it back.



1. Common cuckoo

Why bother to build a nest when someone else can do it for you? The cuckoo lays its eggs in the nests of other bird species, so saving itself the effort of building a home and finding food for its hungry offspring.



3. Wood pigeon

The nests of some birds are amazingly complex. And then there's this pigeon, which takes little time and trouble over its dwelling. All it does is straighten out a few twigs. It's a wonder that its eggs don't roll out!



5. Field cricket

Although this 'singer' digs a small tunnel only, this is a remarkable place, serving both as shelter and loudspeaker for amplification of the cricket's chirping.



7. Diadem spider

Spiders weave their webs with glutinous fibres released from silk-secreting glands in the abdomen. A spider's strong, flexible thread serves well for immobilization of prey.



9. North American beaver

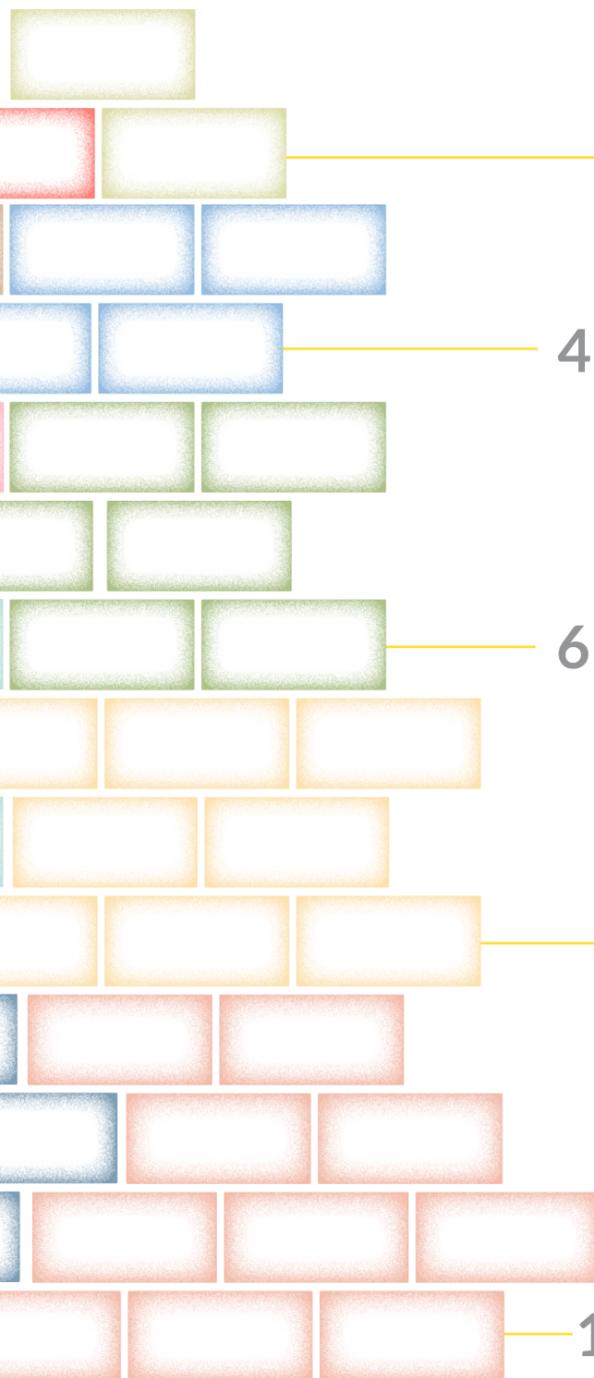
Beavers build dams out of wood, stones and mud. A dam creates a small lake that raises the water level, so concealing the entrance to the beavers' burrow. Whenever the dam breaks, the little builders repair it immediately.



BUILDING SKILLS



Animals must provide themselves with a shelter. It is here that their young are born and will remain until they gain their independence. Some shelters are for an individual only. Others are for a family, or even a whole colony. Some animals are excellent builders. Others are less good.



2. Brown hare

The hare is a close relation of the rabbit. But while rabbits build whole systems of underground passageways, hares put in much less effort with their homes. Hares live in simple grass-lined depressions in the ground, or else they find shelter in the bushes.



4. Loggerhead sea turtle

Turtles, too, build nests, although theirs are very different to birds' nests, as turtles have no beak, and their legs are less dextrous. They dig a hole in the sand with their hind legs, where they lay their eggs. Then they cover the nest carefully.



6. Common mole

These little brown piles are the work of moles. Great builders, moles dig mazes of underground tunnels. They simply crawl beneath the surface, push out the soil, and a new molehill is born!



8. Common wasp

Wasps make their nest with chewed wood fibres and saliva. The resulting paper mass is formed into a spherical structure which will serve as the colony's home. The largest wasps' nest on record was over three and a half metres tall!



10. Sociable weaver

This inconspicuous African bird builds an incredible nest! Several hundred weavers live in the massive structure together. The nest maintains a constant temperature, which comes in handy in the desert.



The greater the number of animal builders, the quicker the shelter gets built!

So that's how our rankings turned out. How did you like them?

Although some standings are based on what we think, we used lots of interesting sources too. If you would like to go into some topics in greater detail, you might want to look at these below.

We wish to thank Jana Albrechtová from the Institute of Vertebrate Biology of the Czech Academy of Sciences for her expert editing, which ensured that all exact information is correct.



Encyclopaedia Britannica <https://www.britannica.com/>
BBC Earth <https://www.bbcearth.com/>
Smithsonian magazine <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/>
National Geographic <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/>
Guinness World Records <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/>

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SLEEP



Which has the greatest wingspan – the biggest butterfly or the smallest bird? Which sleeps more – a bat or a lion? Join Peter and Matilda to compare animals in different ways – by size, but also by how clean, intelligent and noisy they are, and lots more besides! You will surely be surprised by some of the things animals can do!

SIZE



LOUDNESS

INTELLIGENCE



LENGTH OF LIFE

SPEED



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