



# SPOTTED HYAENA

*Crocuta crocuta*



TAXONOMY
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Hyaenidae
Genus: Crocuta
Species: crocuta



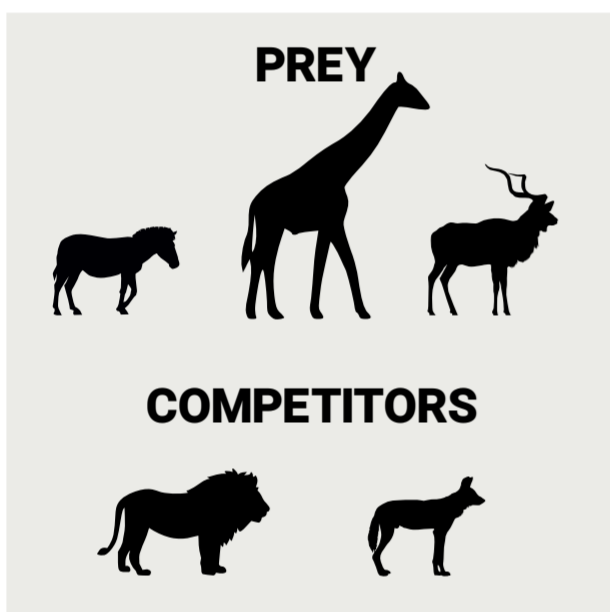
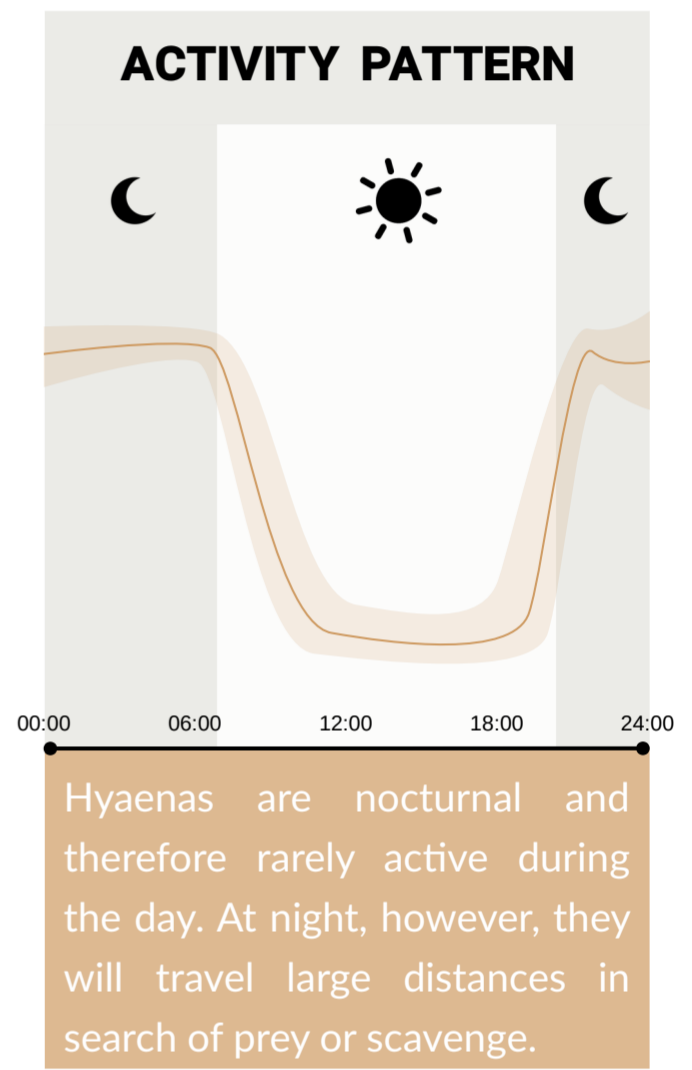
DISTRIBUTION

AT A GLANCE
Body Length: 1.3-1.6 m
Height: 85 cm
Weight: 60-80 kg
Life span: 20 years
Gestation: 120 days
Litter-size: 1-2 cubs



PHIRI YO MORAMAGA

Spotted hyenas (*Crocuta crocuta*) have an incredible powerful built, with muscular forequarters and markedly shorter hindquarters, giving them the iconic downward sloping appearance. Their coat is marked with spot patterns that are unique to each individual. Thanks to specialized attachment for jaw-muscles at their skull, they can crush bones. They are the only mammal that can digest bones to obtain calcium and protein.



Females are slightly larger and heavier than males, yet both sexes exhibit similarly looking genitalia, making distinction of sexes difficult. In fact, females conceive and give birth through a so-called pseudo-penis. Their offspring are usually twins, which immediately start fighting for dominance, sometimes so fiercely that one ends up being killed.

Despite the common misbelief that hyenas are exclusive scavengers, they are formidable endurance hunters and capable of taking down medium to large prey, including zebra and kudu. Hyenas are very vocal and utilize about 14 different calls. Their "whoops" are used for territorial advertisement and gathering clan members and form an iconic part of the African soundscape.

## STATUS & CONSERVATION

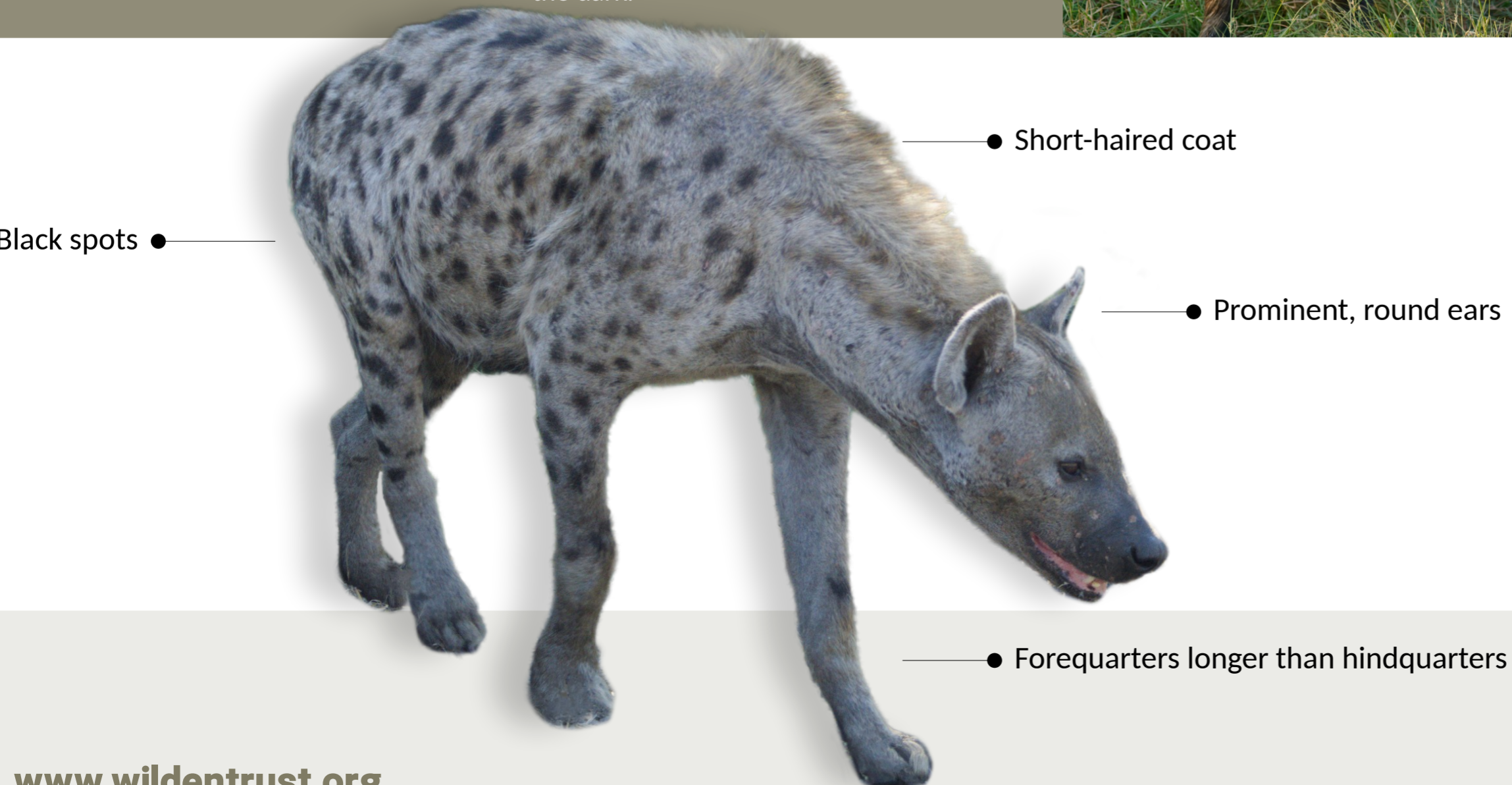
Even though the IUCN red list categorizes spotted hyenas as a species of **least-concern**, their populations are in decline, especially outside protected areas. These declines are mainly traced back to habitat-destruction and human persecution. Sometimes, humans poison and thereby wipe out an entire clan. Similar to other large carnivores, hyenas suffer from a reduction of their main

prey-base through habitat-loss and human activities. As of today, between **27'000 and 47'000 free-ranging individuals** remain, with the largest populations found in the Serengeti ecosystem in Tanzania and Kenya. Since hyenas are active at night, they also frequently become victim to unwanted accidents with vehicles that drive through the dark.



## OUR RESEARCH PROGRAM

Using camera traps deployed near carcasses, latrines, and water sources, BPC collects valuable information on the presence and behavior of spotted hyenas. In addition, we opportunistically conduct follows during which we systematically record behavior and clan composition. This helps to better understand the biology and ecology of this poorly understood carnivore.



### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Hyaenas live in matriarchal clans that are led by a dominant female. Clans may comprise between 5 and 40 individuals and consist of related females, their offspring, and several unrelated males.