

# Kid's KOrner

## Watch out for wild animals

### Wild animal's life spans differ

LANCASTER — A field mouse in the wild is lucky to live to be a year old. Yet, its' cousin, the pocket mouse may live to five years of age. Why do some animals live longer than others? And how do different animal species regard their elders?

According to International Wildlife magazine, scientists are studying senescence, or aging, in wildlife to find out the answers to these questions, and in turn, to better understand the processes involved in human aging.

The answer to the mouse mystery is simple. "Some small mammals may live longer than others of similar size because they spend part of their lives in hibernation or in dormancy, their bodies barely functioning," explains the National Wildlife Federation's bi-monthly publication.

Thus the pocket mouse, which spends the hot desert season in a state of torpor, will live much longer than the on-the-go field mouse.

Until recently, almost everything we knew about animals that live to be old came from zoos.

Longevity records for zoo animals, says International Wildlife, include: a 77-year-old elephant; a 65-year-old vulture; a 49-year-old hippopotamus; a 38-year-old zebra.

Cold-blooded animals last even longer, with tortoises reaching 150 years; sturgeon, 100; carp, 50; and toads, 36.

Unfortunately, zoo records can be misleading since animals tend to live longer in the security of a zoo than they do in the wild. However, such records do give us an appreciation for some species' potential life spans.

"Animals that are most likely to live to be old in the wild are those which, as adults, have no predators except man," says International Wildlife. Most of these are large—elephants, hippos, rhinos, lions, tigers and wolves. But some, such as the Galapagos tortoise, survive not only because of their large size, but also because of their isolated habitat.

Scientists have found that a wild animal's age can be estimated in many ways, such as by inspecting the lens from a rabbit's eye, the lens from a rabbit's eye, the thickness of baleen plates in the mouths of whales, the annual rings in the horns of sheep and antelope, and tooth wear, or in some species, "rings" in a tooth. Teeth are, in fact, one of the most important considerations for life in the wild;

research shows that most wild animals live only as long as their teeth hold out.

After spending years living among some species in the wild, animal behaviorists have observed that in the "social" species—those animals that live and travel in groups—older males and females are treated quite differently.

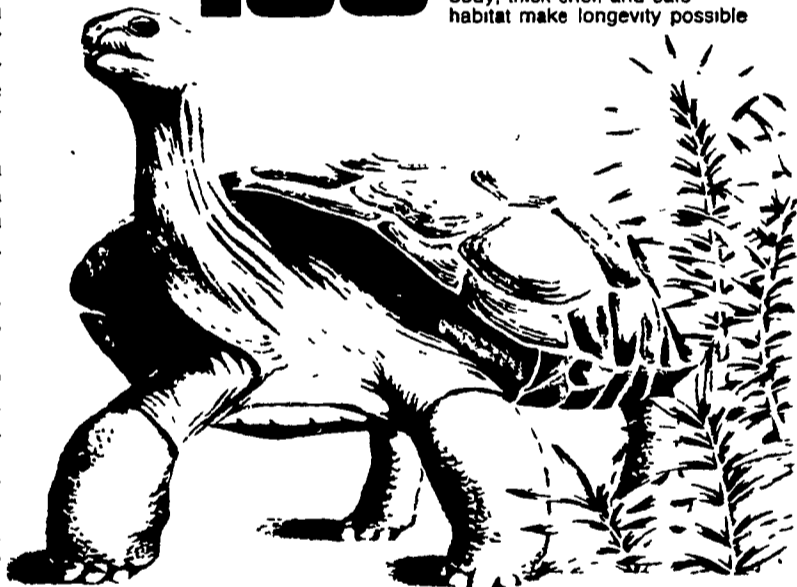
"Males are generally of prime importance to a social group only when they are dominant," says International Wildlife. Eventually, older males are driven from a

group by younger males when their strength has been reduced by age.

Older females, in contrast, do not seem to suffer this loss of social status. Among most species, old females usually continue to reproduce, although they have fewer offspring than the young females. Female elephants up to fifty years of age continue to function as "matriarchs" in their social group, and even the feeblest lionesses are allowed to share the kills of other pride members.

# 150

This is a zoo record, but a wild tortoise, too, may live 150 years. Scientists studying old age in nature say the tortoise's big body, thick shell and safe habitat make longevity possible.

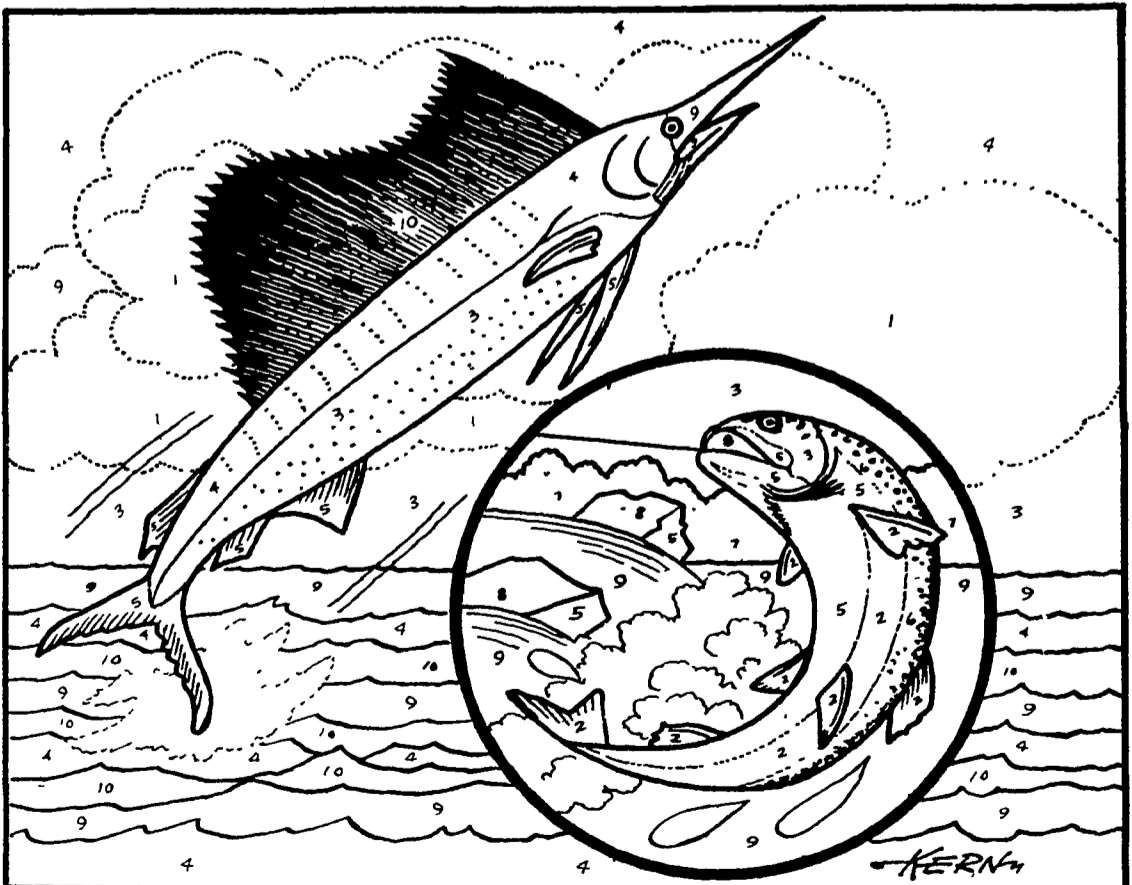


Ah...yawn...stretch...grr and hu-hu...what are these characters saying? Write and tell us what you think these mountain gorillas are thinking. Our editor is going to pick a winner and send him or her a surprise, so get them in the mail now!

## COLOR THIS!

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. PINK     | 6. DK. GREY   |
| 2. RED      | 7. GREEN      |
| 3. YELLOW   | 8. LT. BROWN  |
| 4. BLUE     | 9. LT. BLUE   |
| 5. LT. GREY | 10. LT. GREEN |

**GAME FISHES.** NO FISH IS CALLED A GAME FISH UNLESS IT PUTS UP A GALLANT FIGHT, AFTER TAKING THE FISHERMAN'S HOOK. BIG GAME FISHING IS DONE IN SALT WATER. THE SAILFISH IS FAMOUS FOR ITS JUMPING AND SWIMMING ABILITY. TROUT ARE THE FAVORITE FISH FOR THE FLY FISHERMEN. A TROUT FISHERMAN WILL STAND IN THE WATER FOR HOURS TO CATCH ONE OF THESE SPECKLED BEAUTIES.



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Mom has lots of delicious fish recipes to make this week from Home on the Range, so color these fish and hang them in her kitchen as an incentive.