

# Comprehension 11

## Amazing Animals of Africa

Zambia's Kasanka National Park features picturesque lakes, rivers and lush woodlands. The park serves as an important conservation area, providing sanctuary for endangered species. These include blue monkeys, cheetahs, African wild dogs and the ever-reclusive sitatunga, a swamp-dwelling species of antelope.

- 5 However, Kasanka is most famous for the bewitching spectacle of ten million fruit bats migrating to the park in the last three months of the year. The straw-coloured mammals target the fruits of the forests which have ripened and are at their most abundant. Scientists have recently attached navigation equipment to some of the bats which indicate that they fly from the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country situated 1000km to the north-west. The fruit bats – who, contrary to popular belief, are not  
10 blind, but can in fact see three times as well as humans – can grow to have a wingspan of 85cm and can weigh up to 1.6kg. The mammals spend their days suspended from the branches of the trees of the forest before venturing out at dusk to gorge on bananas, peaches, dates, figs and sometimes mangoes. They are capable of devouring twice their own body weight during a single night's feasting.

- North-west of Zambia lie Kenya and the Mara River, which is the scene for one of nature's most  
15 spectacular sights and events: the annual mass migration of one million wildebeest, along with hundreds of thousands of gazelles and zebras. The ungulates are driven to crossing the treacherous, crocodile-infested waters of the Mara in order to seek fresh water and grazing pasture as their natural habitat in the Serengeti region of Tanzania becomes arid during the summer months. As they make their arduous, perilous journey to fresh pastures, lions, leopards, jackals, cheetahs and hyena lie in wait, hoping for  
20 rich pickings. As they do so, vultures swirl ominously overhead, hoping to dine on the remnants of the carcasses that the predatory carnivores leave behind. When the rains return to the Serengeti, the wildebeest must set out on the hazardous return journey home.

- At the southernmost tip of the continent there is the phenomenon of the Great Sardine Run, which takes place annually from May to July. Sardines – also known as pilchards – are small, silvery fish which live in  
25 huge shoals in the world's oceans. During the Great Sardine Run, millions of sardines migrate in massive shoals to the cooler waters of the Cape. The sardines endure a perilous journey; they have numerous predators, the deadliest of which is man – anglers stalk the progress of the sardines by flying low over the ocean in light aircraft, and when they spot a huge shoal of sardines, they lower huge nets into the sea and encircle the fish. They then trawl their brimming nets ashore and gather up their mammoth catch.  
30 Underwater, the sardines are under attack from sea predators such as huge pods of dolphins who trail the tiny fish all the way up the coast. Sharks, greedy gannets and gulls are also a danger.

- Female green sea turtles lay their eggs on land and regularly lay over a hundred eggs in one nest. At birth, a baby green sea turtle measures a mere 5cm in length, but as adults can grow to 1.5 metres. As soon as it has been born, the baby green sea turtle's first task is a Herculean one; they must navigate their way into  
35 the sea as swiftly as possible. It is an amazing spectacle to witness the sight of thousands of baby turtles clumsily scurrying through the sand on their first perilous journey to the safety of the Atlantic Ocean. They must avoid numerous predators such as crabs and birds. Once they have reached the water, they will thrive, and their diet for the first few weeks of life will mostly consist of small crabs and jellyfish. As they begin to mature, the green sea turtles become vegetarians but can subsist on plankton and seaweed.

Carefully read through the passage on the previous page and circle the correct answers below.

1 Which species of predatory bird are a danger to the wildebeest as they make their arduous journey north-west?

- A. Gannets
  - B. Herons
  - C. Vultures
  - D. Gulls
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2 How much fruit is a fruit bat capable of consuming in a single night?

- A. Over five kilograms
  - B. In excess of three kilograms
  - C. As much as ten kilograms
  - D. Over 15 kilograms
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3 For what reason do sardines migrate north in the summer?

- A. They are searching for cooler water.
  - B. They are migrating in order to breed.
  - C. They are looking for less-polluted waters.
  - D. They are driven by their need for fresh sources of food.
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4 Where is Zambia located in relation to Kenya?

- A. It is north-west of Kenya.
- B. It is south of Kenya.
- C. It is south-east of Kenya.
- D. It is north of Kenya.

- 5** Which one of the following statements is true?
- A.** Sardines are under threat from humans.
  - B.** The sitatunga is a very rare species of rodent.
  - C.** The Mara River is situated in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
  - D.** The collective noun for a group of sardines is a pod.
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- 6** To which family of animals do zebras, gazelles and wildebeest belong?
- A.** Cetaceans
  - B.** Primates
  - C.** Marsupials
  - D.** Ungulates
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- 7** Which one of the following statements is true?
- A.** Sardines are sometimes referred to as herrings.
  - B.** Fruit bats have extremely poor eyesight and rely on echolocation to guide them.
  - C.** Cheetahs are classified as an endangered species.
  - D.** Green sea turtles begin their lives as vegetarians.
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- 8** How many times larger will a green sea turtle grow from birth to an adult turtle?
- A.** 25 times
  - B.** 30 times
  - C.** 20 times
  - D.** 15 times