



Compassion in Nature



Deep in the heart of Africa, a herd of zebra rested under a cluster of trees. The stallion of the herd, an older male, walked among the mares and their foals. Some of the young zebra played a short distance away, but never beyond the watchful eye of the old stallion.

Two mother zebra took their positions nearby. They faced opposite directions, keeping watch for any sign of danger. Everything seemed peaceful, until several blades of grass stirred not far away.

It wasn't the wind, and it wasn't the zebras' imagination. Something was creeping toward the herd. A second zebra spotted more movement, but this time, a long slender tail betrayed the presence of a lion.

The mare turned to warn the herd with a loud snort. The stallion looked up and saw not one, but *three* stalkers hidden in the grass. In a flash, he bolted toward the young zebra playing in the field. The rest of the herd jumped to their feet and followed the old stallion.

The lions jumped from the cover of the grass. They charged toward the herd, hoping to single out a young or injured member. However, the older mares immediately moved all of the young zebra into the middle of the herd for protection.

The zebra also ran in a tight group, leaving no one behind. As long as they stayed together, their black and white stripes worked like camouflage to confuse the chasing lions. The zebra blended together so well that the lions couldn't tell where to strike. One wrong move and a lion might find a zebra's hoof rather than a meal!

The zebra fled around a large lake bed and came to a deep ravine. The old stallion jumped over the ravine with the rest of the herd behind him. One zebra after another jumped across successfully until one of the mares missed her landing. She fell short and slammed into the bank on the other side with a heavy thud. Pain shot through her legs as she scrambled to her feet. She could barely keep up and quickly fell to the

back of the herd. Fortunately for the mare, the lions stopped at the ravine and broke off their chase.

Care for the Injured

As the herd came to a stop, the mare collapsed to the ground. Blood ran down her front knees as she lay there covered with dirt and struggling to catch her breath.

Some animals leave their injured to suffer alone, but not the zebra—
they take care of others.

Without hesitating, the stallion approached the mare and sniffed her legs where they had slid across the hard ground. They looked bad.

Very carefully, the stallion leaned down, licked her wounds, and brushed away the caked dirt that covered her legs. The mare lay motionless as the stallion worked to clean her legs of infection.

That night, the stallion stayed with the mare and protected her while she slept and waited for her wounds to close.



Look for the Lost

When morning came, the herd began to stir, nuzzling each other gently as they grazed on fresh grass. However, two young zebra were missing. Their tracks led through the ravine and toward the old lake bed. While their trail was fresh, there was no way of knowing what might have happened to them during the night.

Some animals leave their lost and don't bother looking for them, but not the zebra—they *take care of others*.

Several zebra immediately started searching for the missing youngsters while the herd grazed and rested together. But as the team searched, their movements didn't go unnoticed. The lions watched from a small hill overlooking the ravine and lake bed. They let the zebra pass, preferring instead to set an ambush for them upon their return.

The zebra found the wanderers drinking from a small water hole in the old lake. Without losing any time, they regrouped and turned back toward the herd—straight toward the lions' trap.

Help for the Helpless

The lions waited for the zebra to come closer. Without warning, the first lion

sprang from its cover and charged toward the unsuspecting prey. The zebra turned to flee, but another lion sprang from the grass to cut off their escape.

The zebra scattered as a third lion jumped in front of them. Their only hope was to rejoin the larger herd. If only they could make it over the ravine, they would be safe.

The zebra bolted forward at breakneck speed. They avoided the first lion and sidestepped to miss the second. The third lion tripped one of the youngsters. It fell head over heels in a heap, then struggled to its feet.

As the small band of zebra tried to outrun the lions to the ravine, the old stallion saw their dust in the distance. The rest of the herd jumped to its feet to flee, but the injured mare was slow to stand. Her open wounds still bled as she struggled.

The band of zebra leaped across the ravine to the other side. This time the lions followed in hot pursuit. However, the injured mare couldn't run. The lead lion locked its eyes on the mare and turned toward her to attack. The lions quickly surrounded the helpless mare and cut her off from the rest of the herd. In her weakened condition she was no match for them.

One of the cats lowered its head, ready to spring. It dug its claws into the hard ground and lunged toward the helpless mare. She swung around just in time to see the lion coming when . . . *WHAM!* The lion's sharp claws hit hard, but the mare felt no pain. She watched as the old stallion, in a whirl of hooves and claws, shook himself free from the lion's grasp. At the last moment, the stallion had jumped in front of the mare and had taken the lion's charge.

Some animals give up on the helpless, but not the zebra—they *take care of others*.

The mare watched in silence as the old stallion stood in her place. *WHAM!* A hard hoof struck the lion squarely in the face. *WHAM!* Another hoof knocked the lion to the ground.

Before the lions could regroup and charge again, the stallion turned to the mare, and they ran together toward the herd. Soon the two zebra were swept into the middle where they were finally safe from the lions' attack.

Within moments, the lions gave up the chase. Many other animals might have fallen prey to the hungry lions, but not these zebra. When injured, lost, or helpless, *zebra take care of others*.

