



The Zebra

English Name: Burchell's or Common Zebra
Scientific Name: *Equus burchelli*
Irish Name: Séabra

Zebra, horses and asses are called "odd-toed" animals, having only one toe (or hoof) on each foot. Looking very similar to its relative the horse, the zebra has a large body, four legs, a tail and a long head. A very obvious difference is that the zebra has black and white stripes. The pattern of these stripes is unique to each zebra - just like fingerprints are unique to humans. The stripes help to protect the animal by breaking up its outline, making it harder for a predator to single one out from a herd. This is particularly important in the morning and evening when predators, such as lions, leopards and hyenas, are most active.

Zebra are herbivores, eating grass mostly and some leaves and shoots. They also need to drink plenty of water to stay healthy.

The 'hippotigris'

Did you know that the Romans called Grevy's zebras 'hippotigris' and trained them to pull two-wheeled carts in their circuses?



Zebra Species

There are three species of zebra, the Burchell's Zebra, Grevy's Zebra and Mountain Zebra. The Burchell's Zebra is the only zebra to have stripes under its tummy. The species is widespread and large herds, made up of many family groups, can be seen on the grassy plains in eastern and southern Africa. The Grevy's Zebra is physically the largest species of zebra. It has large, round ears and a v-shaped marking on its nose. It is less social than the Burchell's Zebra and does not form large herds. It can be found in eastern Africa where it is an endangered species (on the brink of extinction). The Mountain Zebra, as its name suggests, is found in mountainous southern Africa. It is a good climber and its pointed hoofs helps it scramble over rocks. Another feature of this species is a fold of skin on its throat, known as a dewlap. It is a threatened species (likely to be on the brink of extinction in the near future). Conservation efforts are being carried out on both the Mountain Zebra and the Grevy's Zebra, with their populations being monitored and managed.



Facts for Burchell's Zebra:

Height: 1.3 m

Weight: 175 - 385 kg

Colour: Black and white.

Male: Called a stallion, it has a harem of one or more mares and their young, which he protects and herds.

Female: Called a mare, it usually has one foal at a time, which it will nurse for one year.

Young: Called a foal, it can stand after a few hours of birth.

Food: Mostly grass, some shoots and leaves.

Habitat: Grassy savanna plains and woodlands of eastern and southern Africa.

Location: Eastern and southern Africa.