

A Mother's Love



By Kathy Karn

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This book is dedicated to all the wonderful mothers in the world who take such good care of their precious babies.

Note to reader: Each description gives the name of an animal in Swahili and English. Swahili is the common language of the East African Union. It is easy to read, words are pronounced as they are written. Twende (twen-day) Let's go!

Chui (chew-eee) – Leopard

Say hello to Fig the leopard and her daughter Figlet. They are two famous leopards from the Maasai Mara in Kenya. Leopards have one to three cubs at a time. They are loving and brave mothers. The cubs look like cute little balls of fur and are so small when they are born, they could fit into your mother's hand. Their eyes are closed at first and open a week after birth.

A mother leopard will move her young cubs from different hiding spots in caves or trees to keep her babies safe from predators when she goes out to hunt for food. When the cubs are older, they go out with their mothers to learn how to hunt for themselves.

Figlet has grown up to be as beautiful as her mother Fig with cubs of her own.



Kifaru (Kee-fa-roo) – Rhinoceros

Did you know Africa has its own unicorn? This is Weywey (way-way), a well-known black rhino and her calf who live in the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in Kenya. A black rhino is a big animal. Its long horns are made of the same stuff as our fingernails. A mother rhino will use her horn and charge at anyone or anything to protect her calf. Weywey, means Grumpy in Maa, the language of the Maasai who live near her. At 3,000 pounds Weywey weighs more than a car, so you want to stay out of the way of Weywey! Her calf weighed about 80 pounds when it was born which is probably 10 times as much as you when you were born. A rhino calf has a small bump where its horn will grow over its lifetime. Weywey's baby will stay with her for 2 – 3 years before it is ready to live on its own.



Pundamilia (punda-me-lia) – Zebra

Zebra babies are so pretty! They look just like baby horses except they have the beautiful stripes like their mothers. No two zebras are alike, every zebra has its own unique pattern of stripes. A zebra foal can stand up 10-20 minutes after birth. It has long legs so it can blend right in against its mother and fool predators like lions and hyenas. A zebra foal nurses from its mother for almost a year. It can begin to graze on grass when it is only two weeks old. Zebras families live together in large groups called herds and travel many miles a year with their friends the wildebeests searching for fresh grass and water.



Simba (Sim-baa) – Lion

Lions are the only cats that live in family groups. Their cubs behave just like domestic kittens. They love to play chase and ambush their sisters and brothers and even their mothers just like in this picture. A female lion is called a lioness. Mother lions live in a family group called a pride. The mother lions give birth around the same time so there are often several cubs the same age in a pride. The lionesses help each other out babysitting the cubs while the other mothers go out to hunt for food. Lion cubs don't learn to hunt on their own until they are two years old. Lions are very affectionate and show their love by snuggling close and rubbing their faces when they meet up.



Tembo (tem-bo) – Elephant

Elephants are amazing animals. It takes 22 months for a baby elephant to develop before it is born. That's the longest pregnancy of any land mammal. An elephant calf can weigh up to 200 pounds and be 3 feet tall at birth. Even though that's a big baby, an elephant calf's mother is so big the calf can stand under its mama's belly to shade itself from the hot African sun.

Elephant mothers are very smart. They teach their calves everything they need to know to survive in the wild. Family groups are led by a wise, older mama elephant called a matriarch – she can smell water up to 12 miles away! Every member of the elephant family -- sisters, brothers, aunties and nannies -- helps love and care for an elephant baby.



Twiga (twig-a) – Giraffe

Giraffes are the tallest animals in the world. Imagine this, a mother giraffe gives birth standing up. That means the baby giraffe falls about 5 feet when it is born. The babies come out feet first with their neck and head stretched out between their legs like superman. This helps them break their fall to the ground. A giraffe calf is 5.5 – 6 feet tall and weighs about 150 pounds at birth. That's as tall as most grown human moms and dads! Giraffes can run away from danger, but a mother can also defend herself and her baby. If a lion gets too close, mom will give it a powerful kick in the head.



Kiboko (Kee-bow-ko)– Hippopotamus

Baby hippos are kind of cute. They look like fat silver sausages with short stubby legs and a permanent smile on their faces. Hippos spend a lot of time in rivers and natural pools. However, they don't swim so much as float around in the water to protect themselves from the African sun. Baby hippos can close their nostrils and suckle from their mother under water! How cool is that?! Mother hippos are cows. Baby hippos are calves. Mother hippos hang out together in groups known as pods to protect their babies from scary predators like crocodiles.



Nyumbu (N-yum-boo) – Wildebeest

Wildebeests are part of the antelope family. Most wildebeests are constantly on the move.

They migrate 1,000 miles a year across the grasslands of Kenya and Tanzania. They live in

large herds, often as many as several thousand animals. A baby wildebeest is born with long

legs so it can run fast and keep up with its mother if there is a threat by predators like lions

or leopards. Wildebeests are energetic and active. Their sloping back makes them look like

a rocking horse when they run. They make funny grunting noises that sounds a bit like the

“haw” of a donkey’s “hee haw”.

