



Safari Story: Which Vulture Eats Last?

Description

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One vulture is smaller and not trying to feed

We were on a morning game drive when we came upon vultures who had nearly finished a predator's abandoned impala meal. One vulture stood apart from the rest and did not nudge into the crowd. He was a bit smaller than the others, but this is not why he eats last. He can wait because he knows there will be flesh left for him after the others leave.

Vultures have a specific job to do but to do it right takes specialization. Species of vulture have evolved to specialize in the many jobs needed to process down a carcass. Each vulture species has a different set of tools for different jobs.

The Hooded Vulture is the smallest vulture we see on safari. It is the only one that can pick the meat out between the ribs and other small crevices. Other vultures with bigger beaks can not reach this meat so the Hooded Vulture eats last.

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Hooded Vulture

The Cape Vulture is the most common vulture in South Africa. They have a big strong beak and can feed on any carcass that has been chewed on by a predator. If they are lucky enough to find a freshly dead carcass they might be out of luck. Many hides are too tough for the birds to tear. They have no choice but to wait for one of two things: the carcass splits open from natural process or someone else opens it for them be it predator, scavenger, or another species of vulture



Cape Vulture

Cape Vulture

The Lappet Faced Vulture is very large and has the strongest beak that can rip open the tough hides of hippos and similar. Vultures standing around not eating are waiting for the Lappet so they can all enjoy the meal.



Lappet Faced Vulture

Lappet Faced Vulture



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