

STEVE BACKSHALL'S EXTREME ANIMAL FILES



Did you know...?

The African fish eagle is so well known for its distinctive, haunting call, it's nicknamed 'the voice of Africa'.

This month, intrepid adventurer, Steve Backshall, has his eagle eye on a very majestic bird...

4

African fish eagle (Haliaeetus vocifer)

LIFESPAN Up to 30 years in the wild.

HABITAT Unique to Africa, this sea eagle tends to live close to the waterways of sub-Saharan Africa – which isn't surprising when its favourite prey is fish!

SIZE This is a pretty big bird, reaching up to 75cm in length, and the female is even bigger than the male, with a whopping wingspan of 2.4m. Wow!

DIET Although the African fish eagle mostly eats fish, it also preys on waterbirds, small turtles, baby crocodiles, flamingos and, occasionally carrion (dead animals).

SUPER STRENGTHS This sea eagle usually spots its prey while perched from a tree overlooking water. It then swoops down, catching 'lunch' in its super-sharp talons. If a fish is too heavy for the fearless flier to lift, the eagle will drag it along the water's surface until it reaches the shore, or even paddle it to land!

WILD WEAK POINT Numbers of the African fish eagle are falling. Many of its usual hunting grounds are being over-fished by humans, leaving less food for the bird. Pesticides (chemicals used to protect crops) are also a threat to the eagle, as they can make its egg shells thinner and more likely to break before hatching.

EXTREME BEHAVIOUR This sea eagle isn't known for sibling love! The female eagle lays one to three eggs, and the first chick to hatch then bullies the younger ones, refusing to let them near any food. This bullying gets worse as they get older and, sadly, only one of the chicks usually survives to reach adulthood.

STEVE SAYS "I was lucky enough to hold one of these amazing birds. Its talons were as sharp as fishing hooks, and when it looked into my eyes, I have to admit I had a little worried tingle in my tummy!"

EXTREME RATING: 4/5



This bird sets its eagle eye on prey, swoops, then... SNATCH!