

Life of the LEOPARD

Meet the feline that loves living the tree-high life...

 Tjololo the leopard is playing tug-of-war in a tree, and he's in no mood to lose! His opponents are two hyenas that had darted out of the night to swipe the cat's freshly killed impala. Not about to let the hyenas steal his meal, Tjololo (pronounced cha-lo-lo) did what leopards do best – he grasped the impala in his powerful jaws and carried it straight up the tree. But the persistent hyenas leapt after the carcass and locked onto its legs with their teeth.

Now it's a battle of strength fought in the crook of a tree. Can the leopard maintain his grip on nearly twice his weight in dead impala and dangling hyenas long enough for the scavengers to give up?

"He's hanging onto all of this and thinking, 'Please, guys, just eat those feet and give me the rest,'" says wildlife film maker Kim Wolhuter, who witnessed the standoff while filming Tjololo in a South African game preserve.

Power STRUGGLE

Eventually, the hyenas chewed through part of the kill and fell to the ground, leaving Tjololo to clamber higher and enjoy his hard-earned dinner. Up in the tree's thinner branches, Tjololo is untouchable.

No big cat is more at home in a tree than a leopard.

"Lions can climb trees," says Kim, "but they're so big they fall all over the place. Leopards, on the other paw, are amazing up there. Each foot is always on a branch. They just know their way around. They even use their tails to help keep their balance."

It's in the trees that leopards often reveal their incredible strength. These powerful cats have been seen hauling struggling buffalo calves twice their weight up the trunks of trees two storeys high. That would be like you climbing a ladder while carrying your dad or big brother – with your teeth! The leopards scramble skyward not only to hide prey from scavengers or escape from lions, but also to mount attacks from tree limbs, pouncing on unsuspecting prey below.

Hiding up in its tree, a crafty cat waits for dinner to wander along, then... POUNCE!

Did you know...?
Leopards are amazing athletes! They can run up to 50kmph, leap six metres in a single bound, and jump up. They're even the cat's whiskers at swimming!

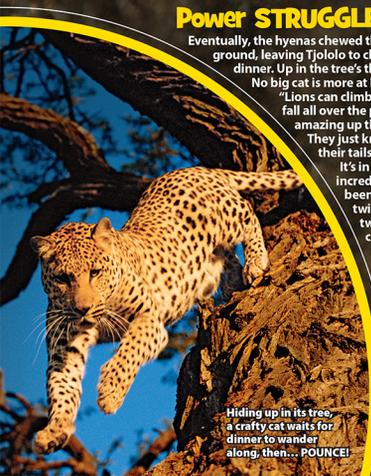


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Leopards like to take their time when eating, so devour their prey up in trees, safe from pesky scavengers like hyenas