

Today's owl post is from a southern African visitor – the Pearlspotted Owlet

Dear children,

Look carefully at her body. Is there anything interesting in the photo that catches your eye?

Did you notice how big her udder is? She's carrying a lot of milk isn't she? What does this tell you about her?



Yes, she is suckling some hyena cubs, like the ones in the photo below, which I found holed up in a den later in the day. But there is something about this mother hyena that you probably don’t know.

The big udder tells me that she is near the bottom of the pecking order in her hyena clan. Did you know that there is a strong pecking order in hyena clans, and only the leaders of the clan can get food close to their dens?

Mothers at the bottom of the clan’s pecking order have to travel – for up to five days – away from their litters of cubs to find food to produce milk for their cubs. Imagine going for five days without food, milk or water, and without your mother to comfort you!



The lives of cubs with mothers leading the clan compared with the lives of cubs with mothers at the bottom of the clan must be very different, mustn’t they?

Where do you think the mother of the hyena pups above fits into her clan? The pups look alert, healthy and well-fed, don’t you think? So they are probably fortunate pups with a dominant mom who is able to bring them food and milk daily.

Sweet dreams children; I hope you enjoyed thinking about hyena moms and pups. I’ll be back soon with more photographs from the African savannas.

Feathery hugs,

Pearlspotted Owlet

