

TORTOISE BEATS MAN IN LIFE SPAN

Cats Do Not Live Long

Turtles and tortoises are man's only serious rivals for length of life span. Discovery of an authentic 129-year-old tortoise on Rhode Island (U.S.A.) confirms this fact.

Next to man's 70 to 100 years or more the elephant has the greatest longevity among mammals—45 to 70 years. A poor third is the rhinoceros, with an average 36 to 50 years of life.

Gorillas and other large apes may live to 35 years. Whales, largest of the many mammals, have been known to live for more than 30 years, but positive figures on their life expectancy are lacking.

The lion, long hailed as the king of beasts, has a comparatively short reign of 20 to 30 years, says the National Geographic Society.

Greatest span of positive record is 152 years for a turtle captured on the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius in 1766. St. Helena Island, in the South Atlantic, claims a 178 year-old land tortoise, reputedly the only living link with Napoleon, who lived there in exile from 1815 to 1821.

Definite proof of its age is lacking, however. Giant tortoises of the Galapagos Islands are known to live for more than a century.

Among domesticated animals, the horse holds age honors. It lives from 20 to 35 years. Cows rarely live beyond 25. Dogs live five to 15 years, occasionally 20. Cats—ones that live well—have a span of only seven to 15 years, despite their mythical nine lives.

Patriarch of the fish family is the carp, some of which have been known to frequent quiet ponds for 60 to 75 years. Trout, bass and perch rarely reach 15 years of age, minnows less than five.

Parrots share with ostriches, eagles and vultures the longevity record among birds—up to 60 years. Canaries rarely exceed 25, robins 12, and starlings eight.

Adult life of many insects is reckoned merely in hours. Most durable are queen ants, which may reach 16, and queen bees, which sometimes live five or more years. Part of the secret of a queen bee's long life seems to be a jelly, rich in special nutrients, which is secreted from the glands of worker bees and fed to the queen.

A mouse can exist for as long as five years if it stays out of feline reach. The maximum age for a fox is about 12; deer and beavers may live 15 years. Span of squirrels and rabbits is eight to 12 years. Pigs and sheep can reach 20.

Other reptiles are babies compared to the tortoise. Record for the alligator is 43. Snakes are even shorter lived; their record is 21 years.

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