



# Links Players

## FAST FORWARD 6: WILD KINGDOM

*So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. (Genesis 1:21, NIV)*

**A**NIMAL ENCOUNTERS ON THE GOLF COURSE AREN'T ALWAYS COMFORTABLE, but they certainly make for some good stories, and even great video.

One of the ways I learned that the Rules of Golf can be used to your aid and advantage came when I was a teenager. Some friends talked of a known beehive on a particular course. Bees and fire ants, whose strength is in numbers, both might present dangerous animal conditions (Rule 16.2). In these cases—as with poisonous snakes, alligators, or bears, for instance—a player can take relief as a form of protection. Now as for retrieving the ball that lies next to that bear...

Animals entered the creation picture of Genesis on what we know as the fifth day. Whether flying or swimming or walking the land, the creatures with which God stocked the earth were varied and fascinating. They still are, all eight million species or so, according to what is an admittedly imprecise estimate. Among mammals alone, several hundred species have been discovered since the turn of the century, while others are in danger of going extinct. It's a moving target.

But some creatures live a very known and tenacious existence. On the golf course, squirrels occupy too many greenskeepers' sleepless nights. At home, you might wake up to find that a parade of ants has strung itself out in your kitchen.

So Scripture doesn't just speak of animals in Genesis 1. It often uses animals to help lock in our understanding of what our own lives might look like. Take those ants. King Solomon brought nobility to these tiny insects when he wrote: "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!" (Proverbs 6:6). That's right, we "dominant creatures" have much to learn from a bug we could squash in a moment. Specifically, ants are resourceful, industrious, and they save for the future. Those may not seem like spiritual traits, but they all require self-discipline (or self-control), which is indeed a fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus taught that those who have faith like children will inherit the kingdom of God. Notably, children are the few among us who will stop and stare enraptured at a line of ants on the sidewalk. So maybe ants are good, too, for teaching us all to pause and contemplate how life should really be lived.

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2021 Links Players International. A video introduction for this study may be found here: <https://youtu.be/DSqvn1HBpYk>.

**Opening questions** Do you have a good animal story to tell from a golf round or outing? In general, what animals fascinate you most?

**READING** Genesis 1:20-25; Proverbs 6:6-8; Matthew 10:16-20

### God's wild kingdom (Genesis 1)

This passage spans the fifth and sixth days of the creation account. Why do you think God introduced such a variety of creatures to the earth? At the end of each day, we read that "God saw that it was good." What interests you about God's satisfaction in his work?

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### A study of ants (Proverbs 6)

What qualities are noted here of the ant? If you were to ascribe these to your own life, are you doing well, or are there changes to be made? What is the proper balance between independence and living in community?

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### Four animal pictures (Matthew 10)

Who are the wolves in our own time, and how do we do well to live among them? Why are both shrewdness and innocence valuable in dealing with those who would oppose us?

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