



Purpose: Who Am I?

By Dean Harrison

How does a tiger know it's a tiger or a deer know it's a deer? Have you ever seen a tiger eat flowers, fruits or grains or a deer attack another animal to eat it? What is it that alerts any species that it is that species? The answer is instinct. An animal's instinct is genetically programmed from its parents to incline its behavior toward a specific goal in a particular way to fulfill its own life and to perpetuate its own kind. To this end each animal has four primal instincts: self-preservation, acquisition of food, maintenance of territory, and marriage and family relations. Primary instincts are in order of importance. They are multifaceted, containing both offensive and defensive behaviors designed to maintain and extend the quality of life.

In order to accomplish the four goals, eight supportive instincts are found in any animal to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the life form. These traits are what we could call "manifested behavior." It is what we see an animal doing. They are as follows: seasonal change (a heightened awareness), possession, protection, play, chase, advantage, holding and biting, exploration and adventure.

There are also assisting, supportive instincts, which are often specific to certain species, such as swimming, flying, digging, scenting, hunting, grazing, and many more. These instincts are not common to all animals and further serve to make each animal what it is programmed to be. Therefore, a tiger cannot become a deer, nor a deer, a tiger.

One of the goals at Out of Africa is to learn from the animals that live here – to see ourselves in them. If we consider that we too are a life form with the same set of primary instincts, it doesn't take long to realize that in order to be fulfilled as an individual we must somehow achieve the same four goals. An analysis of our own behavior might yield some valuable insights.

And perhaps one could even find a parallel with the eight secondary supportive instincts. But maybe it is the third group of assisting and supportive instincts that gives us direction in life. One person has orientation as an accountant, another as a carpenter, another as a teacher and so on. If one considers their "inclinations" as instincts, that is, motivations to behave in a particular direction, the questions of *who am I* and *why am I here* could perhaps be more easily found. In the world of the animals, this mysterious quest is referred to as "The Interest of Surviving." What am I doing here?