

## Why even animals can count

You learned to count with your fingers when you were young and can easily do sums by now. You can probably also figure out which is the larger of two piles of sweets in an instant! This ability to compare quantities with one quick look is called number sense. We have it as newborns, and it gets better as we grow up.

Many animals have strong number sense, too. It's useful in different ways.

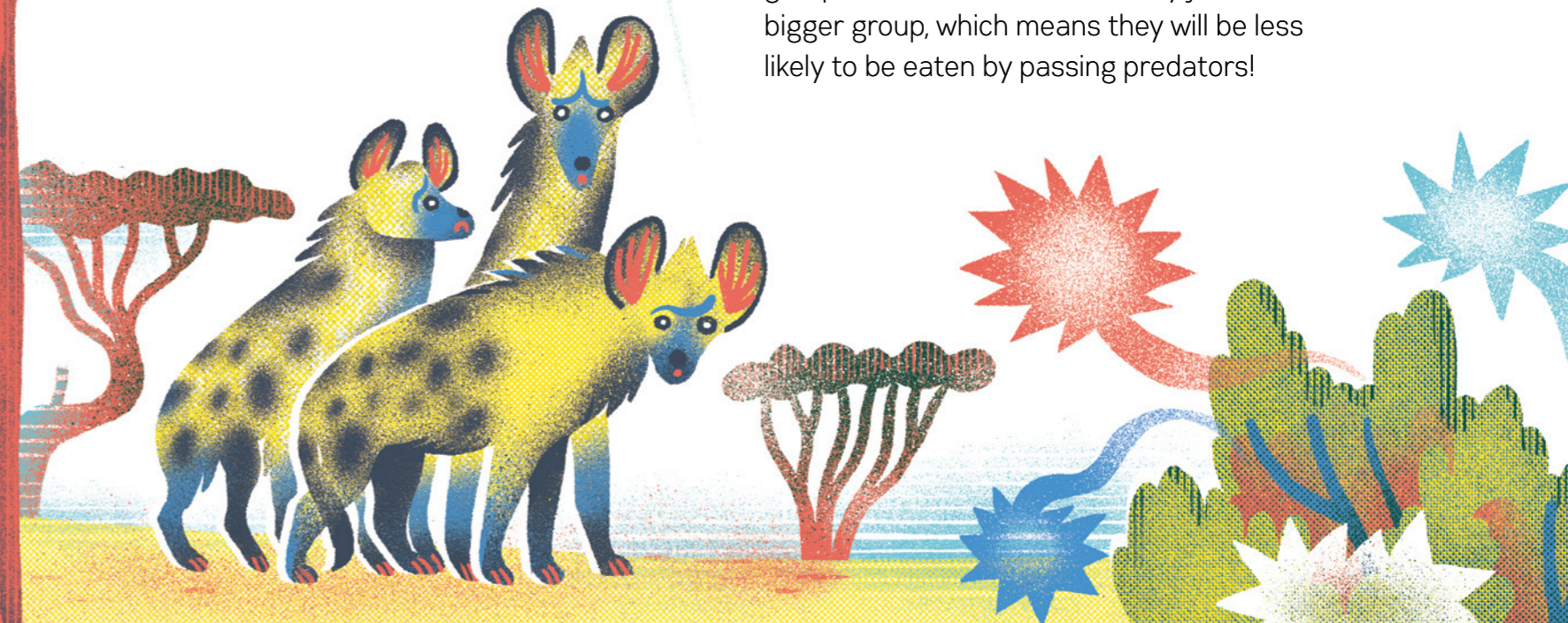


Coots keep track of the number of eggs they have laid. If another egg suddenly appears—laid by a lazy bird that wants someone else to feed its chick—they reject it.



Orb-weaving spiders seem to count the prey caught in their webs. In one experiment, scientists removed flies they had caught while the spiders weren't looking. The more flies they removed, the longer the spiders searched for them!

Just one glance is enough for a female mosquito fish to tell the difference between groups of three or four fish. They join the bigger group, which means they will be less likely to be eaten by passing predators!



Before attacking a rival group, spotted hyenas stand back and listen out for the number of different calls. Not the bravest of animals, they only approach groups that are smaller than theirs so that they are sure of winning the fight!