



BABY ON BOARD
HOW ANIMALS CARRY THEIR YOUNG

Readers' Theater

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

KANGAROO

SEA OTTER

SLOTH

OPOSSUM

MANATEE

CHIMPANZEE

COMMON LOON

ALLIGATOR

WOLF SPIDER

EMPEROR PENGUIN

ANTEATER

LION



THE SCRIPT

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NARRATOR: When you were a baby, someone carried you.
Have you ever wondered what animal parents do?

There are no baby backpacks, no wraps or straps or slings,
No seats to buckle kids in, or many other things.

KANGAROO:

This mother baby carrier is one that is well-known.
Her joey lives inside her pouch until he's nearly grown.

NARRATOR:

At birth, the baby, called a joey, is guided safely into a pouch where
it is protected while it nurses.

SEA OTTER:

This mom is like a living raft as she transports her pup.
She hunts for food for both of them and never will give up.

NARRATOR:

Before she goes out to hunt for food, a mother sea otter wraps her
baby in long strands of kelp seaweed to keep her pup from drifting
away.

SLOTH:

Baby clings on mama's hair. They slowly move with ease.
They sleep while hanging upside down from branches in the trees.

NARRATOR:

As soon as it is born, the baby sloth clutches its mother's hairy belly
with its long claws and stays really close for almost a year.



OPOSSUM:

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This animal hauls her babies from one place to another. The joeys have it easy as they all ride on their mother.

NARRATOR:

The opossum mother spends a lot of time and energy carrying her litter of joeys from one home to another.

MANATEE:

They paddle very slowly as they swim along the coast, but nestled under mama's fin, this baby likes it most.

NARRATOR:

A baby manatee, called a calf, can swim within minutes after birth. But it remains close to its mother, nursing behind the mother's flipper.

CHIMPANZEE:

This mother carries baby right upon her chest. At evening she will place it in a "sleeping" nest.

NARRATOR:

A mother chimp carries her baby in the crook of her arm close to her chest during the day. Each night she prepares a new sleeping nest for her baby.

COMMON LOON:

This baby's downy feathers hold body heat inside. It climbs on top of papa's back, and they go for a ride.

NARRATOR:

Both common loon parents care for their young, usually one or two. Carrying them on their backs keeps chicks safe from fish and turtle predators and also keeps them warm.

ALLIGATOR

When babies call their mother, there is no time to pause. She carries them to safety, gripped in her powerful jaws.

NARRATOR:

Alligator hatchlings vocalize, which attracts their mother back to the nest. She gently lifts them out, a few at a time, and carries them to the water for safety.

WOLF SPIDER:

This baby carrier mother aggressively keeps track as hundreds of her spiderlings climb right onto her back.

NARRATOR:

Spiderlings crowd onto their mother's back as soon as they are hatched. Most people do not recognize them as baby spiders until they move out from the tightly packed group.

EMPEROR PENGUIN:

The mother lays a single egg. Then she goes out to sea. The father warms it on his feet. How can this really be?

NARRATOR:

In the bitter cold of Antarctica, the female emperor penguin lays an egg. Then the male keeps it warm by balancing it on his feet under a flap of skin until the chick hatches.

ANTEATER:

Blending in with mama's fur, you hardly see this pup. It rides upon her hairy back while she digs insects up.

NARRATOR:

Mama anteater collects ants and termites with her long sticky tongue. The pattern on her pup's fur helps camouflage it from predators.

LION:

The female hides her little cubs before she hunts for prey. When she comes back, she picks them up if they have gone astray.

NARRATOR:

The mother, called a lioness, hides her young cubs in dense bushes for safety before going out to hunt for prey.

ALL

Tucked in pouches. Gripped in teeth.

Propped on backs—or underneath.

This is what some animals do.

How did someone carry you?

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