

You Lookin' at Me? “Count your enemies” might be an appropriate motto for hyenas. For the first time, researchers have shown that these spotted African mammals can discern distinct voices of other hyenas, and count whether a group of potential foes—each with its own unique laughing call—outnumbers their friends. Sarah Benson-Amram, a Michigan State University graduate student, tested the animals’ numerical know-how by playing recorded calls of up to three hyenas in Kenya’s Masai Mara National Reserve. When hyenas were outnumbered, they became increasingly wary, still, and watchful with each new foreign call. But when it seemed as if they had the upper hand, they daringly sought out the source of the ruckus, sometimes giving chase several miles in the calls’ direction. “This shows that it’s really possible for the hyenas to know how many others they are up against,” Benson-Amram says. The skill is no laughing matter: Like chimps and lions, hyenas live in highly social but fractious societies and need to be aware of neighbors that might move in on their territory.—*Daisy Yuhas*

