**A Giraffe Was Killed by Lightning. Predators Refused To Feast for Two Days [South Africa]**

BY [**JESS THOMSON**](https://www.newsweek.com/authors/jessica-thomson)ON 10/14/22 AT 5:43 AM EDT

<https://www.newsweek.com/giraffe-hit-lightning-predators-avoid-two-days-south-africa-1751804>

A [giraffe](https://www.newsweek.com/giraffe-drools-woman-wildlife-viral-1740671) that was hit by lightning was left alone by other animals, with the nearby vultures and [hyenas](https://www.newsweek.com/politicians-export-hyena-testicles-pandemic-alarm-vets-1721821) not touching the body for two days after the strike. Pictures of the giraffe were posted to [Facebook](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/facebook) by South African local AnneMarie Scheepers, who remarked that this may have been due to some poison being excreted from the body after[the lightning strike](https://www.newsweek.com/lightning-strikes-grand-canyon-dramatic-monsoon-sunset-footage-1746183).

"The lightning was rough one night and it rained nicely in Skukuza area. Next morning we drove and came upon the dead giraffe but there was no sign of predators eating or wanting to come and eat," she wrote.

"Chatting with other campers this evening at camp and heard that when lightning strikes an animal there is a poison being excreted. It takes about two days to be released from the carcass. Really, two days later the predators started eating. Countless vultures bundled in the air and like jet planes hit the carcass. Hyenas and vultures all feasted together."

Lightning is the [discharge of electrical charge](https://www.newsweek.com/rare-aerial-phenomenon-red-sprites-lightning-chile-1736932) from the clouds into the ground. Sometimes, a person or animal can get in the way, and the lightning will pass through their body on the way to the ground.

Lightning strikes are lethal in humans between 10 and 30 percent of the time, often due to cardiac arrest, with survivors suffering long-lasting injuries including burns, hearing damage and mechanical trauma. According to National Geographic, annually about 2,000 people are killed worldwide by lightning.

Lightning can also be deadly to animals, sometimes en masse: in 2016, an entire herd of 323 reindeer was killed by lightning. Giraffes, as the tallest animals, are particularly susceptible to being hit by lightning, with there having been multiple reports of giraffes being struck at safari parks and zoos around the world.

"As far as lightning strikes, they will result in multisystemic dysfunction in the animal. In most cases, lightning strikes that result in death will be due to primary [cardiac arrest](https://www.newsweek.com/woman-born-half-heart-endures-over-200-surgeries-mid-twenties-1738671)," Adam W. Stern, a professor of Forensic Pathology at the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Florida, told Newsweek.

"In addition to sudden death, we can see singe marks on the skin, fractures, and muscle trauma. I am unsure if anyone examined this animal, but in some cases, animals struck by lightning will have feed in their mouth which would provide support for an instantaneous death." However, Stern said that he has not heard of the poison seepage that Scheepers refers to in her post.

According to one article published in 2014, this delayed predation after a lightning strike has [been observed before](https://www.ajol.info/index.php/vulnew/article/view/168927/158394), but only anecdotally. "This 'myth' of delayed postmortem predation on lightning strike fatalities has been heard time and time again from farmers around the country, although no formal studies have confirmed this phenomenon," wrote forensic pathologist Ryan Blumenthal in the article. "If delayed postmortem scavenging were indeed a reality, perhaps it would be due to some sort of lightning-related chemical odor on the carcass. Perhaps singed fur could release a Sulphur-like smell. Perhaps various esters or amines are released from a body post lightning strike. Whatever the cause may be, this anecdotally reported phenomenon requires [greater scientific scrutiny](https://www.newsweek.com/humpback-whale-half-inch-lice-crawling-skin-photos-1751541)," Blumenthal said.

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Photos and more responses at website above.