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## ASK NOW THE BEASTS

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

"Hey, kids! Head on out to the flower garden, while I get a book from the library," said Mr. Jones. "I want to show you some of God's wonderful creatures."

"What's up, Dad?" asked Billy.

"This morning I was reading my Bible, and in Job, chapter 12, verse 7, it says, *'But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee;'* I wondered, what could the animals teach me?"

"Animals can't talk, Dad. How can they teach us anything?" asked Mary.

"Actually Mary, some animals can communicate, even though they are not using our language. However, I think by just looking at them we might learn something. So here is what I want you to do. Walk around in the flower garden and see how many different animals and insects you can spot," instructed Mr. Jones.

After about ten minutes Mr. Jones called the children back. "Well, what did you kids see?"

Both children started talking at once. "Whoa! Slow down. How about one at a time, starting with Billy," laughed Mr. Jones.

Counting on his fingers, Billy began, "I saw a

bird, an ant, and ah... a bee, and a spider, ah... bug with a jillion legs..."

"That was a centipede, Billy," interrupted Mary, "and there were at least four different kinds of birds."

"I'm not finished," frowned Billy. "And I saw a spider ... oops ... I already said that. Oh yeah! I saw our cat, Felix!"

Shutting her eyes, Mary began to recall, "I saw four kinds of birds, three different beetles, one green and one brown grasshopper, four different colored caterpillars, two butterflies, a red ant and a black ant, ladybugs, bees, wasps, three kinds of spiders, a couple of flies, some mosquitoes, two centipedes, and of course Felix!"

"Wow, you guys did great," exclaimed Mr. Jones. "If I had given you more time, you would have probably found even more. God created a huge number of different life forms in the air, in and on the earth, and in the sea. More than a million different animal species have been discovered, and millions of different kinds of insects. Scientists think that there are still thousands of creatures to be found!"

"What is a species, Dad?" asked Mary.

"That's a hard question, Mary. Scientists can't seem to agree on exactly what a species is. It is usually a kind of creature that can only have babies with another like itself."

"So those two grasshoppers I saw are different species?"

"Well, they could be," answered Mr. Jones. "However, they might also be the same kind of a grasshopper with different colors. These differences are what some scientists call 'variation in kind.'"

"This book tells how many species of some creatures have been found. Scientists have named over 10,000 species of bees, wasps and ants. There are over 110,000 species of butterflies and moths, and wow ...over 250,000 different beetles!"

"That's a lot, isn't it Dad?" asked Billy.

"Yes it is, Billy. Let's see how long it would take to count that many beetles ...

hmm ... if my calculations are right, it would take about 174 days to count all the species of beetles if you counted one beetle every minute for 24 hours a day."

"That's almost 6 months!" exclaimed Mary.

"Listen to this," continued Mr. Jones. "There are over 300,000 known species of plant life; 3,000 species of sponges and 5,000 of corals; the crustaceans such as shrimp, lobsters, crabs, barnacles, etc. number 25,000; over 80,000 mollusks or shellfish; 100,000 species of fungi and 5,000 of green algae."

"Dad, what about cats and dogs and stuff like that?" asked Billy.

"Well Billy, I haven't even gotten to all the different bacteria, amphibians, reptiles,



