

WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

by Lee Lamb

Do your parents make you take a friend along when you go to the park or the mall? The chance of something bad happening to you is far less when you're with a buddy. And it's way more fun than going alone. In elk country, many wild animals rely on *safety in numbers* for feeding, protection, survival and good old companionship.

SCHOOL DAZE

Isn't it cool to watch a whole *school* of fish swim together, zig-zagging this way and that, without ever crashing into each other? It's easier for fish to defend their territories if they live in a group. Schooling up can also make them look like one big fish instead of many small ones, making predators think twice before attacking. When predators do slash in, being part of the crowd gives each single fish a better chance of not being caught.

FEATHERED FRIENDS

Most birds pair off to breed, nest and raise their chicks, but many species spend much of the year hanging out in *flocks*. Many eyes mean a better chance of finding food, or spotting predators such as hawks. Snuggling together also helps birds keep warm at night or during a storm.

No doubt you've seen a V of geese migrating south across a fall sky. Flying in formation lets birds *draft* each other the way bike racers do to cut down on wind resistance. This makes flying way easier. And traveling together helps ensure no one gets lost on the way to wintering grounds.

HAVE YOU HERD?

If you've ever watched an elk herd, you'll notice at least one cow is always on the lookout while others feed or snooze. The cows take turns and the one on "guard duty" acts as a sentry, barking to warn the group when danger lurks nearby.

CAN YOU HELP THIS "SENTRY COW" SPOT THE PREDATORS?

