

Explore the

Big Cats

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Lion

The lion is a big cat that is closely related to the tiger, the leopard, and the jaguar.

These four types of cat are the only ones that can roar.

Where do lions live?

Most lions live on the open plains of Africa, called savannas. Some also live in Asia, mostly in India. The ones that do are called "Asiatic Lions". These Asiatic lions used to live all through Southwest Asia, but now they only live one place in the wild, the Gir forest in India. Though Asiatic lions are different than the ones who live in Africa, the difference is not large.

Even though they have the nickname "King of the Jungle", they don't actually live in jungles. There are fewer and fewer lions left, and most live in national parks in the African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

What do lions eat?

Lions mostly eat other large mammals like zebra, gazelle, and wild pigs. Lions live and hunt in groups called "prides". The female lions do most of the hunting, the males' main duty being defending the pride.



A lioness tries to move a buffalo



How do they raise their young?

The lion cubs are raised in prides which are family groups of related female lions, their cubs (both male and female), and an unrelated male, who fathers the cubs. The female lions do most of the hunting, bringing back meat for the pride's cubs, while the male lion defends the pride's territory from other lions. When a younger male lion is fully grown, he usually has to leave the pride, though once in a while they can take over their own pride.



Lions in captivity

Many lions live in zoos. Many zoos used to contain small, uncomfortable cages; now, though, most of them have large grassy areas for lions to live in, with shelter from rain, the sun, and cold. They are normally fed on raw meat because this is what they would need to catch in the wild. However, the meat is normally hidden or hard to get at, so lions have to use their intelligence to reach the meat. You should never try to feed a lion yourself in a zoo. Keepers are able to safely feed the animals.

Cool Facts

- No two lions have the same pattern of whiskers.
- Lions say hello by rubbing cheeks.
- Lions say goodbye by tugging on each other's stomachs with their teeth.
- The lion is the loudest of the big cats. A male lion's roar can be heard from up to 8 km (5 miles) away.
- Lions can also leap distances of up to 12 m (36 feet).

Tiger

The tiger is a big cat that is closely related to lions, leopards, and jaguars.

Those four cats are the only ones who can roar. Tigers can also swim.

Where do tigers live?

Places where tigers live are marked in dark green



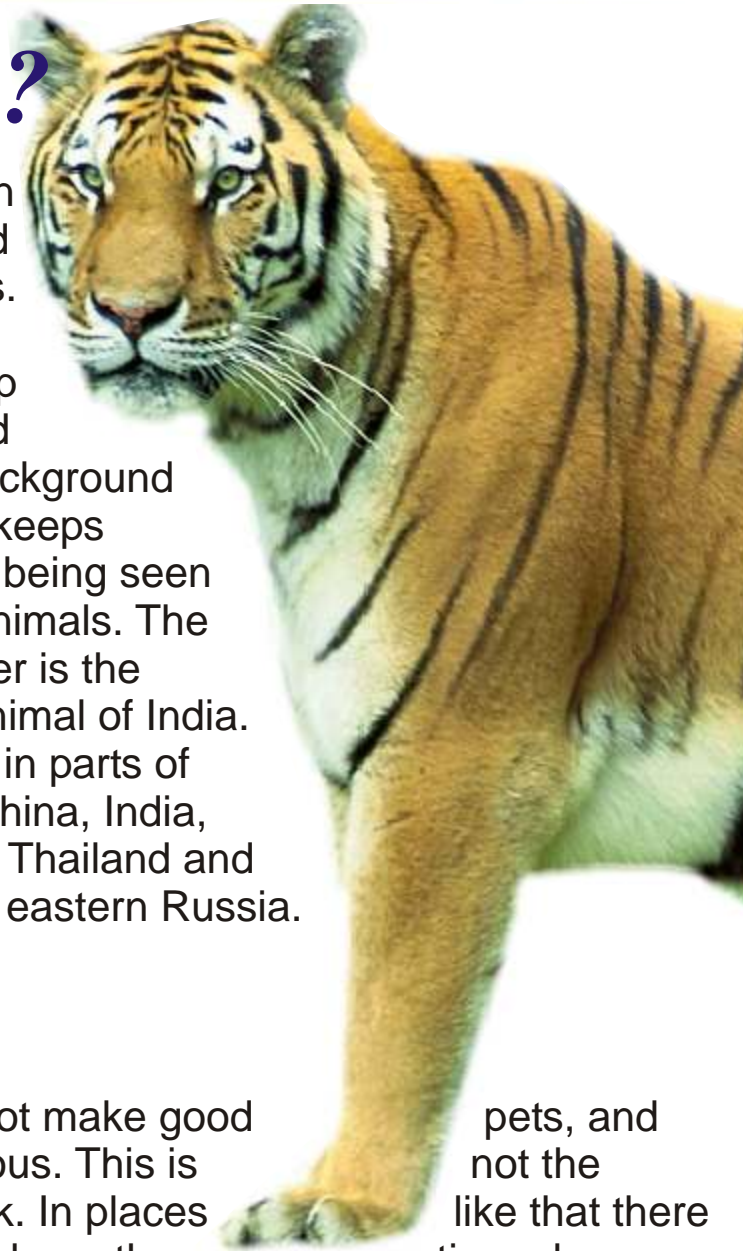
They live in forests and grasslands. Their stripes help them blend into the background there and keeps them from being seen by other animals. The Bengal tiger is the national animal of India. Tigers live in parts of

Asia, in countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Nepal, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, Indonesia (Java and Sumatra), and eastern Russia.

Tigers in captivity

Some people keep tigers as pets. Tigers do not make good pets, and this makes the tigers unhappy, ill and dangerous. This is not the same as keeping them in a zoo or wildlife park. In places like that there are people who have been specially trained to keep the tigers happy and well, and there is enough space for them. Keeping them like this also can help to increase the numbers and protects them from poachers.

Tigers are sometimes trained by people who know how to look after them, and work in circuses or other kinds of show. Some people think this is wrong because this is not the tigers' natural behavior. Very occasionally a tiger will kill or injure its trainer even when they have known each other for years. Trainers know this can happen, and decide to take a risk when working with tigers.



What do tigers eat?

Tigers mostly eat vegetarian mammals (herbivores), like elk, deer, wild pigs, and buffalo. While many animals hunt in groups called packs, tigers hunt alone. They often hide close to the ground, waiting for an animal to come by. When their prey arrives, they pounce on it. They kill the prey by breaking its neck with a bite.



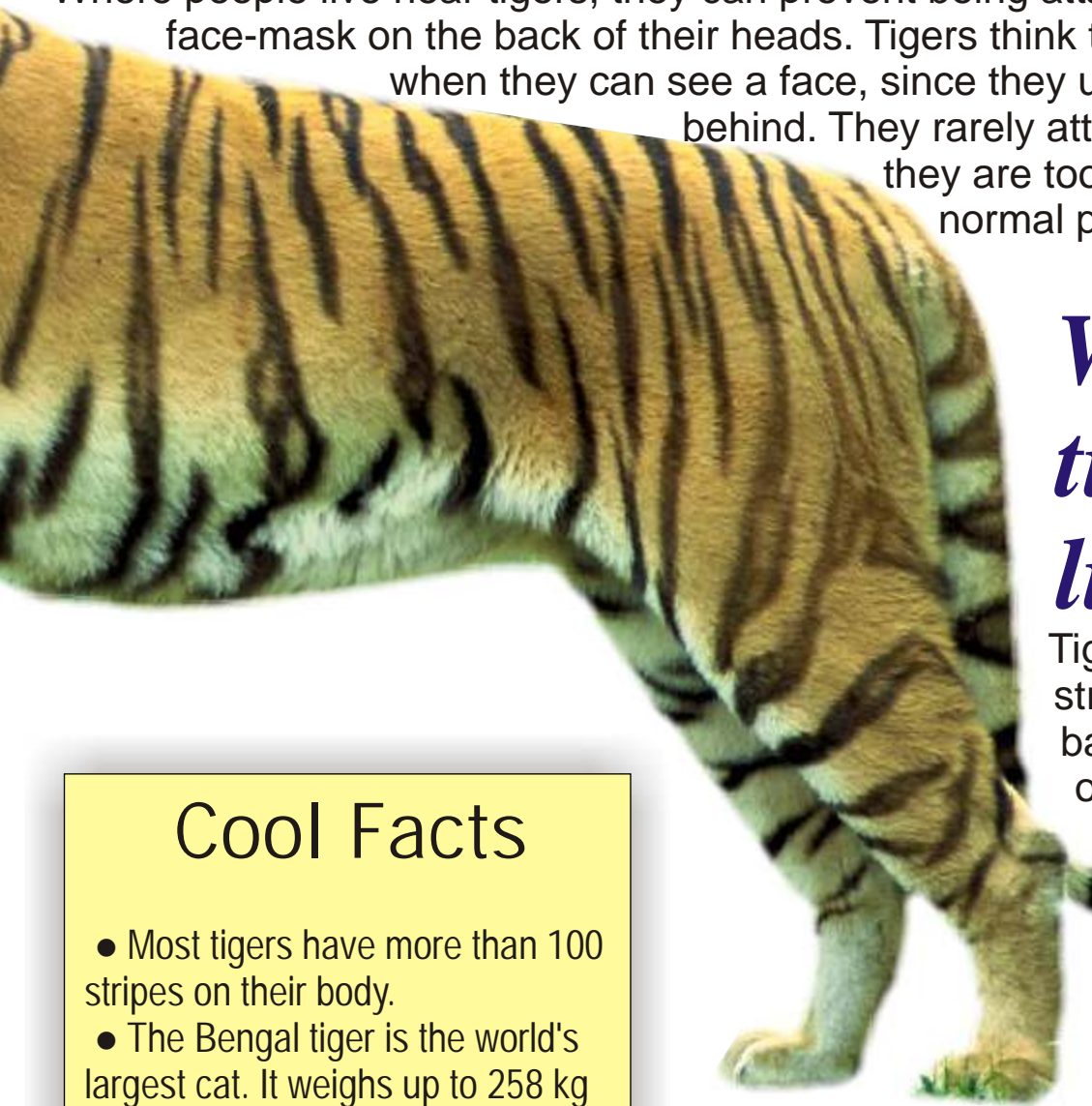
Where people live near tigers, they can prevent being attacked by wearing a face-mask on the back of their heads. Tigers think twice about pouncing when they can see a face, since they usually attack from behind. They rarely attack humans unless they are too ill to hunt their normal prey.

What do tigers look like?

Tigers have very bold black stripes on their fur. The background color is mostly orange or reddish orange, with some white areas on the chest, neck, and inside of the legs, but some tigers are all white with black stripes instead. A large tiger might be 3 meters (10 feet) long, and weigh 300 kilograms or 650 pounds.

Cool Facts

- Most tigers have more than 100 stripes on their body.
- The Bengal tiger is the world's largest cat. It weighs up to 258 kg (570 lb).
- There are only about 5,930 tigers left in the wild



Puma

The Puma is a big cat that is sometimes called a "mountain lion", but they are more closely related to leopards than to lions. In some places, pumas are called cougar, mountain lion, catamount, or painted cat.

Where do pumas live?

Pumas can be found almost anywhere in the Western Hemisphere, in North and South America. They can be seen from northern British Columbia in Canada to the Southern end of the Andes mountain range.

What do pumas look like?

Most pumas are a light brown color, with black-tipped ears and tail. The pumas that live closest to the



Equator are the smallest, and increase in size in populations closer to the poles. The endangered Florida Panther is the smallest of the Pumas. Like many other cats, they can retract their sharp claws into their paws, which have four toes. The largest male pumas can be as big as eight

feet (2.4 meters) long, and females can be as large as seven feet (2.1 meters). The males can weigh up to 150 pounds (70 kilograms), twice the weight of a female puma which will usually be 75 pounds (35 kilograms) or less.



How do pumas raise their young

Pumas are born in litters of 2-4 kittens and raised by their mothers. When they are born they weigh about one pound (about half a kilogram) and are about one foot (30 cm) in length. The kittens have dark spots that fade by the time they are 8-12 months old. The mother teaches them to hunt, and when they are a year and a half to two years old (and have their adult teeth) the kittens

separate from their mother

and find their own territory, though the siblings might stay together for a while after they separate from their mother.



What do pumas eat?

Pumas eat other animals, mostly large animals like deer. Because the puma can run very fast, as much as 30 mph (50 km/h), and because they can jump 20 ft (6 m) from a standing position, they can very easily catch slower animals.

Pumas can jump 8 ft (2.5 m) straight up and can climb on rocks and in trees to hunt. Their bite is very strong, much stronger than a strong dog's bite, and their largest teeth are about twice the size of a large dog's teeth.

Pumas have a very powerful hunting instinct, and have sometimes been known to chase and catch humans on bicycles. A favorite food for pumas is the deer, but they will also eat smaller animals. In areas where pumas and people live close together, pumas have hunted dogs and cats for food, but they usually do not hunt people for food. If you are around a puma, it is better not to run fast or to ride a bicycle, because their instinct is to chase, catch and kill running animals.

Cheetah

A fast mover, the Cheetah can sprint for very short distances at very high speed. They cannot retain this speed for long, unlike their prey. Cheetahs are the fastest land animal in the world.

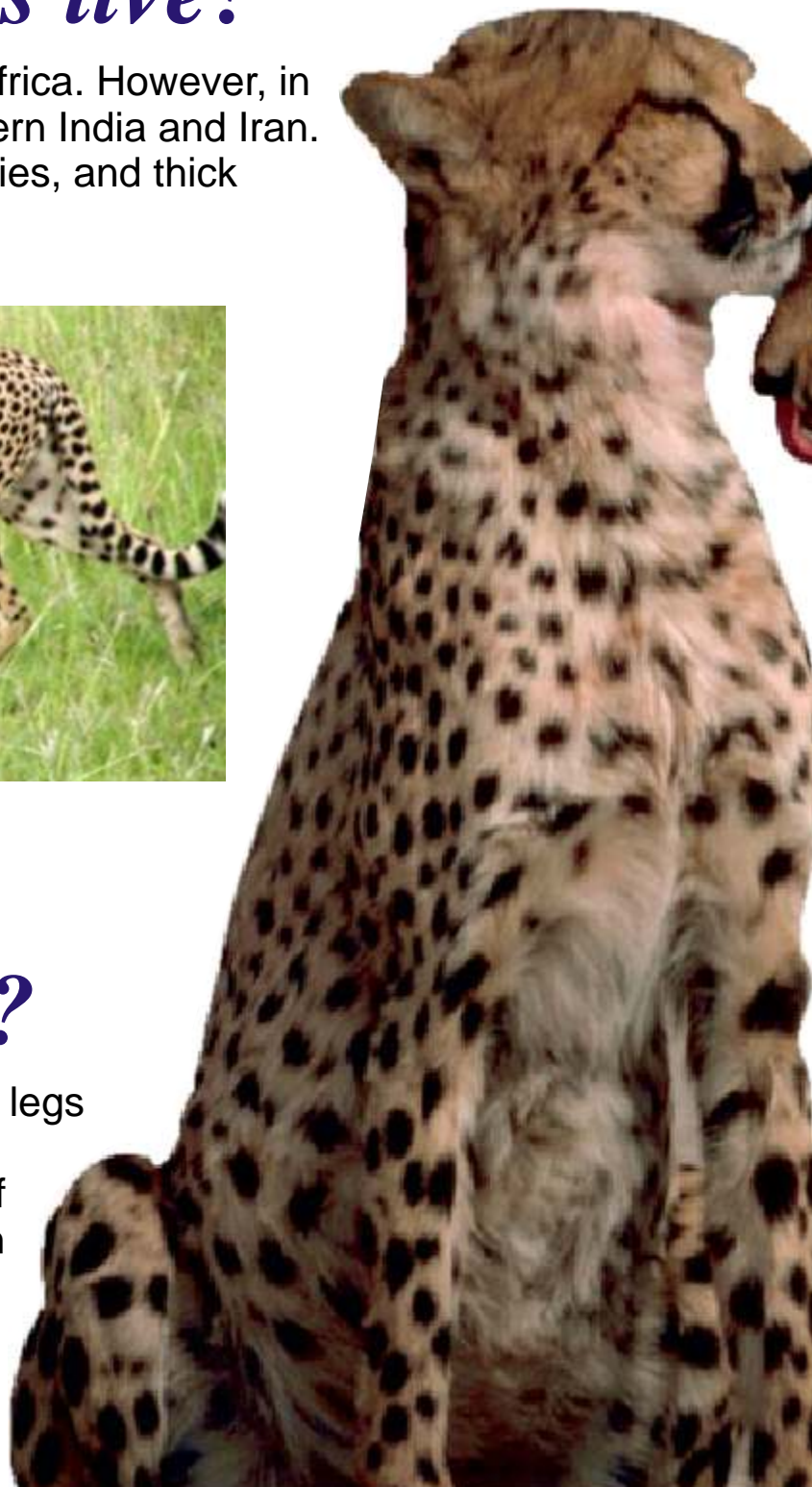
Where do cheetas live?

Cheetahs are found in the wild only in Africa. However, in the past, they used to be found in northern India and Iran. They prefer to live in semi-deserts, prairies, and thick brush.



What do cheetas look like?

Cheetahs are big spotted cats with long legs and slender bodies. They have white bellies and a tear stripe on both sides of their face. In contrast to leopards, which have palmette shaped spots, the cheetahs have round dark spots.



How do cheetas raise their young?

Females give birth to three to five cubs at a time. Some cubs will die due to lack of food or from being killed by natural enemies (lions and hyenas). The mother Cheetah must train the young cubs to hunt food for themselves so they can survive on their own. The cubs leave their mother about one or two years later, and will usually live in groups of two or three while reaching

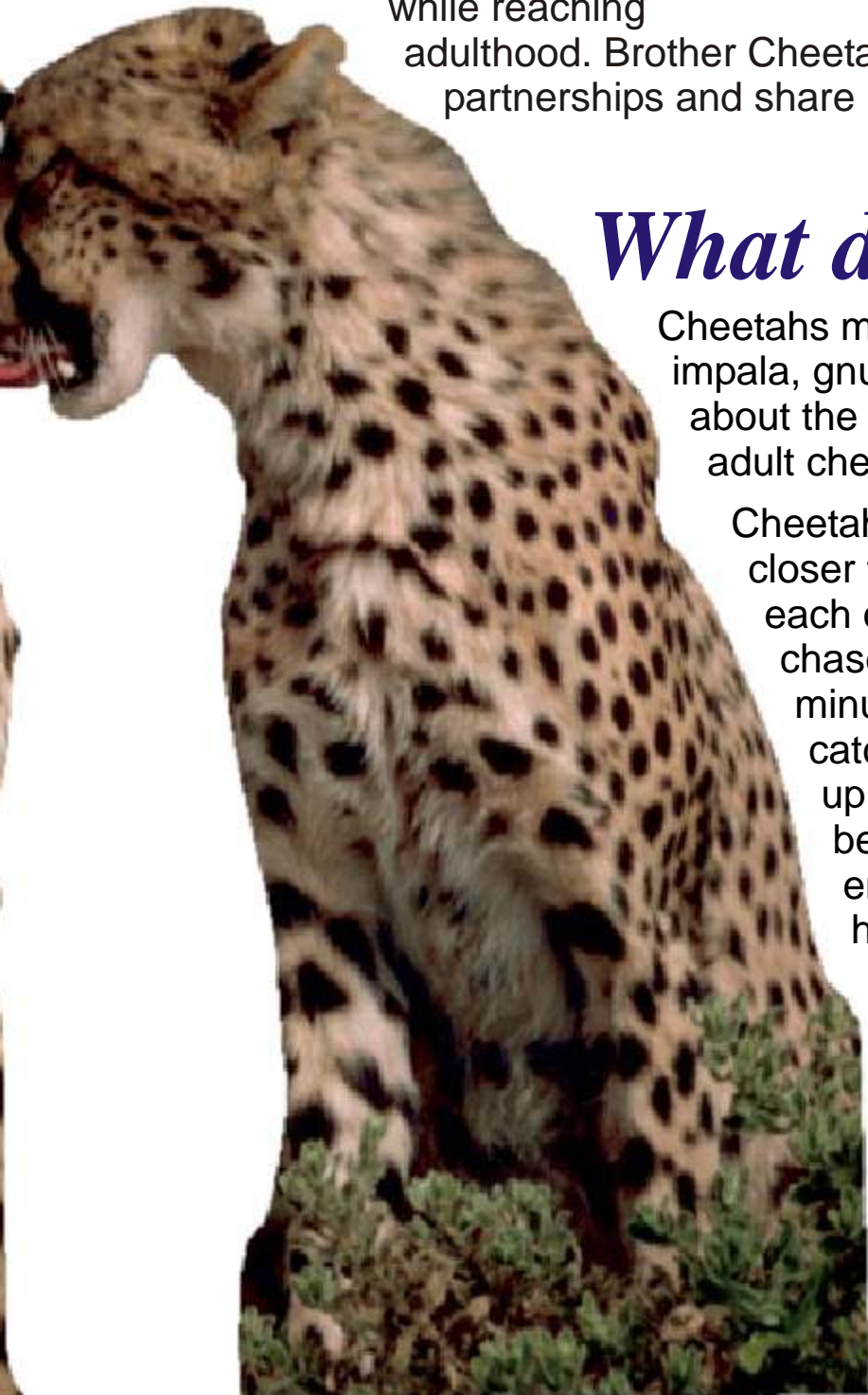


adulthood. Brother Cheetahs will sometimes form partnerships and share in the hunt to survive.

What do they eat?

Cheetahs mostly eat mammals like gazelles, impala, gnu calves, and hares, which are all about the same size as, or smaller than, an adult cheetah.

Cheetahs stalk their prey until they are closer than about thirty meters from each other, and then give chase. The chase is usually over in less than a minute and if the cheetah doesn't catch its prey quickly it will often give up rather than waste energy. This is because cheetahs use a lot of energy when chasing prey at such high speed. About half of the chases are successful. Cheetahs must eat their catch quickly or risk losing their food to other stronger predators. Cheetahs will not fight with a larger animal over food because they can't risk an injury which would mean certain starvation.



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