

African Lion

Lions are very large cats, part of what is known as the big four, in cats. They live on the grassy areas, what are called the savannah of Africa, and in some grassy areas of India. They are a beautiful gold in color and can grow to be up to 6 feet long and weigh nearly 500 pounds.



African Lion

Lions in the wild will live to be about fifteen years old. Their scientific name is *Panthera Leo*. Lions live in what are called prides. This is a permanent family group of cats that may have twenty or twenty five lions in it.

Diet

The females are the primary hunter, and will bring down game for the entire group. The males eat first usually, and the little cats or cubs eat next. So although the female has done all the hunting sometimes she is the last to eat the meal.

Lions hunt and eat mostly larger game, as this is needed to feed the whole pride. They eat their fill and leave the rest to be eaten by vultures. They will hunt and kill [zebras](#), [warthogs](#), antelopes and many other animals that are native to the savannah.

A lions territory, or the territory of the pride can cover as much as a hundred square miles of land, and the male lions are very territorial in defending it.

Male lions have a distinctive mane, which are long tufts of fur that surround their features. Science doesn't know exactly why they have the mane other than perhaps to protect them from the dust and sun on the savannah.



African Lion Hunting

Female lions will mate only once per year. Usually they mate in the rainy season and give birth during the dry season. They give birth to one to four cubs, which they defend vigorously. The males will help to care for the cubs while the females hunt.

Little cubs are tiny and helpless in the beginning but grow rapidly to become rough and tumble extra larger versions of the adults. They play very much like the house cats we have at home, but with larger claws and teeth.

The mother takes them out hunting and will teach them to bring down their own game starting at about three months of age. Young females will usually grow up to stay with the pride, while the males will strike out on their own after about a year. When a strange lion comes to the territory, he will fight the resident male to win the females and the pride.

If the male who owns the territory is able to defend it, the pride stays the same. If he loses, then he is either killed or must leave the pride. When this happens, the new male will usually kill all the cubs of the other male, so that the females will go into season and he may breed his own cubs from the females.



Lioness

Lions are nocturnal, which means they are more active, doing their hunting at night. They are however also active in the daylight hours, and will hunt then as well. For the most part they simply doze or nap during the day.

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