

## Rare White Lions Born in Serbia

**Belgrade Zoo now has five of the rare big cats.**

Posted: Dec. 18, 2008, 3 a.m. EST

White lions — this one lives in South Africa — are the result of a recessive gene that both parents must possess. The Belgrade Zoo welcomed a pair of rare white lion cubs this week, born to a white lioness named Masa and a regular tawny-colored father named Vambo, AFP reports. Zoo manager Vuk Bojovic briefly showed the cubs to zoo visitors this week.

The pair of cubs marks the first white lions to be born at the Belgrade Zoo, which now has five of the rare lions. Programs are in place around the world to breed the genetically rare big cats to preserve their population; only about 300 of the cats exist worldwide.

White lions, while not a separate species of lion nor albino, are the result of a recessive gene that both parents must possess. The rare coloration originated in the Greater Timbavati and southern Kruger Park areas of South Africa. The cats are extremely rare in the wild, in part because their pelts are so prized by hunters. A 2004 study found fewer than 30 of them living in Africa.