

Leopard

Leopard
Panthera pardus

The leopard's coat can come in a few different forms, such as the "rosette" — rose-shaped black or brown designs often seen on other wildcats — patterned or melanistic coats, which are dark brown or black, that often get leopards mistaken for black panthers. Leopards commonly are confused with jaguars; leopards tend to be smaller with smaller rosette markings than jaguars.

Leopards are one of the smaller "big cats," weighing anywhere from 65 to 155 pounds and stretching to about 6 feet long. Leopards can run up to 40 miles per hour, leap more than 10 feet up in the air and 20 feet horizontally, and swim with ease. They live about 10 years in the wild and about 20 in captivity.

As solitary cats, leopards often show similar territorial behavior of other cats such as scent marking, burying feces and scratching. Leopards use a variety of vocalizations including grunting, growling, hissing, purring and meowing to communicate.

A litter includes two or three cubs, whose coats look gray until the rosettes become more prominent as they age. Cubs are usually hidden for about the first eight weeks. Then the cubs learn to hunt small animals, such as fish, reptiles, birds and rodents before they move on to larger prey in adulthood, such as antelopes, monkeys and baboons.

The IUCN currently lists the leopard as "least concern."

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