

Wild Cats - Lions, the Heritage of Domestic Cats

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Panthera leo

The average adult male lion is about 4 feet tall and 8.5 feet long and averages 450 pounds. Adult female lions usually weigh around 300 pounds or less. Cubs tend to have spots until they reach adulthood. Male lions are known for their thick, large manes that grow fuller and darker as they age. Lions live anywhere from 15 to 18 years in the wild and 25 to 30 years in captivity.

Lions are the only wild cats or domestic cats that live in large family groups called prides. Prides differ in size and formation, but a typical pride consists of two males, seven females and various cubs. The pride hunts as a group and when they attack and capture prey, the male lions will usually eat their share first while the rest of the pride stays at a respectful distance.

The rough tongue of lions helps them remove parasites and other insects from their coats as well as hold meat. The roar of a lion can be heard up to five miles away; males often use it for intimidation and to mark their territory, while females often summon it to call their cubs.

Today, the only naturally-occurring lions live in Africa. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (ICUN) currently lists the lion as vulnerable.

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