

# Visit The Wildside!

## Lions

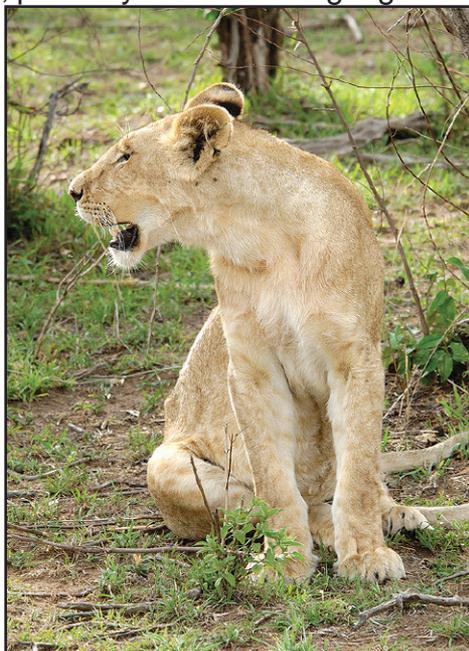
Lions live in the savannah and are the second largest cat species in the world after the tiger. The average male lion weighs around 400 pounds, while the average female weighs around 290 pounds. The heaviest lion on record weighed a shocking 826 pounds!! The lion is also the tallest of the large cats, reaching an average of 2 inches taller than the tiger. Lions usually are a sandy color, but can vary from a reddish to dark brown coat. Male lions are known for their thick manes.

Lions are commonly found in the southern and eastern parts of Africa, but one species of lion is found in Asia. Lions usually live 10-14 years in the wild, but up to 30 years in captivity. A cross between a lion and tiger also exists. These hybrids are called a ligers or tigons.

Lions are very social compared to other cat species and often live in groups called prides. The pride consists of five to six females their cubs, and possibly two males, led by one male. Male lions spend their time guarding their territory and their cubs. In a pride, the female lions, called lionesses, primarily do the hunting together.

The lionesses hunt at night as they are generally nocturnal. They are smaller and more agile than males. But since their prey is still generally faster than them, they use teamwork to bring an animal down. Fanning out, they form a semicircle, with the smaller, weaker lionesses herding the prey towards the center. Then the stronger females knock the animal down and make the kill. Lions don't usually chase prey, because they can't run for a long period of time. When they do run though, they can run as fast as 50 mph!

Pride members keep track of



one another by roaring. Both males and females have a very powerful roar that can be heard up to 5 miles away.

Lions are carnivores. Their prey includes antelopes, buffaloes, zebras, young elephants, rhinos, hippos, wild hogs, crocodiles and giraffes. But they also sometimes eat smaller prey like mice, birds, hares, lizards, and tortoises. The male will eat first, then the females and lastly the cubs.

- Did you know that lions are the national animal of Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, England, Ethiopia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Singapore? They are a very important symbol in human culture.

- Lions are actually great swimmers! They are some of the only cats to have this skill.

- When lions walk, their heels don't touch the ground.

- Each adult lion needs 10-15 pounds of meat every day.

- Remember Simba from Disney's Lion King? Did you know that the Swahili (a language in Africa) word for Lion is Simba!