



TIGER

The tiger is the largest of the cats. Like lions, tigers are very strong and fierce hunters. Tigers are found in the wild only in parts of Russia, China, and South and Southeast Asia. They live in forests, grasslands, and swamps. The scientific name of the tiger is *Panthera tigris*.

Physical Features

Male tigers can grow to more than 3 feet (1 meter) high and 10 feet (3 meters) long, including the tail. They usually weigh between 350 and 640 pounds (160 to 290 kilograms). The fur of most tigers can range from light yellow on the belly to deep yellow or orange on the back. Dark stripes cover the head, body, and legs. There are also black rings on the tail. Some tigers are white with black stripes or all white. White tigers are mostly found in India. Black tigers are even rarer.

There are five different kinds of tiger. The best known is the Bengal tiger, found mainly in India. The rare Siberian tiger is larger and has longer, softer fur. The Bengal and Siberian tigers are the kinds most often seen in zoos.

Behavior

Tigers hunt alone at night. They prey on animals such as deer and wild hogs. Tigers generally avoid large animals such as elephants and bears. They also try to stay away from people. But sometimes they attack people to save themselves or because they cannot find other food.

A tiger crouches in the grass and watches its prey before attacking it. It grabs the prey with its paws and bites the animal's neck. Then the tiger drags the dead animal to a safe place and eats it over several days.

Life Cycle

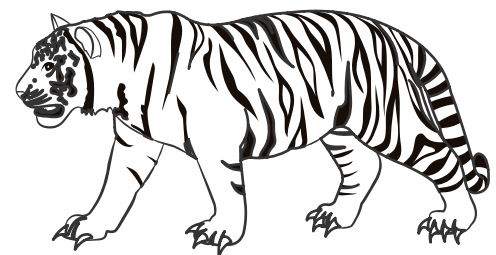
Tigers normally come together only to mate. About three months after mating, the female has two or three cubs. She looks after them for about two years and teaches them to hunt. Tigers live about 11 years.

Tigers and Humans

Tigers are endangered, or in danger of dying out. People have moved onto land where tigers once lived, destroying their homes. Plus, people hunt tigers for sport and for their skin. Many countries now have laws to protect tigers.

Tigons and Ligers

Mating between tigers and lions is not likely to happen in the wild. However, tigers have mated with lions in some zoos. The young of a male tiger and a female lion is called a tigon. The young of a female tiger and a male lion is called a liger. Tigons and ligers have features of both their parents. They usually cannot have cubs of their own.



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