

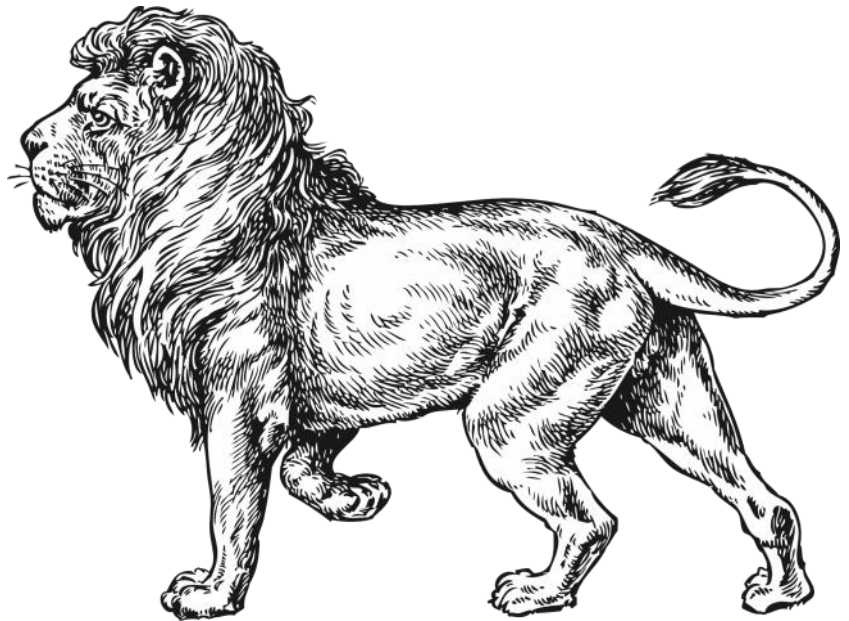
Lion

A lion is a big, wild cat. It lives in the grassy flat lands of Africa. It lives with other lions in a group called a pride.

Lions eat meat. They hunt for food at night. They eat mammals, birds, and fish. They steal food from other animals.

Lions take care of their cubs until they are 2 years old. Then the males go away to find a new home.

Lion



Lions may be called “king of the jungle”, but they live in the tall grassy plains of the savanna.

Adult lions are 4-6 feet long (2 m), and weigh 250-500 pounds (113-226 kg). They can run up to 50 miles per hour (80 km per hour),

but only for a short time. A loose flap of skin on the belly protects them from kicks during a prey attack. A lion’s rough tongue has sharp hooks on the top. The hooks catch and pull out loose hair as they lick themselves. This is called grooming. They can pull their large claws into their paws, or push their claws out to help them grip and hold. Only male lions have a big, bushy mane.

Lions are the only big cats that live together in groups. The group is called a pride. There can be as many as 40 lions in a pride. The females are in charge of the pride and they all work together as a team to hunt, protect their kills, guard their territory, and raise their young. One day a man saw 4 lionesses attack a male lion. He saw a fifth lioness leading the cubs away to safety.

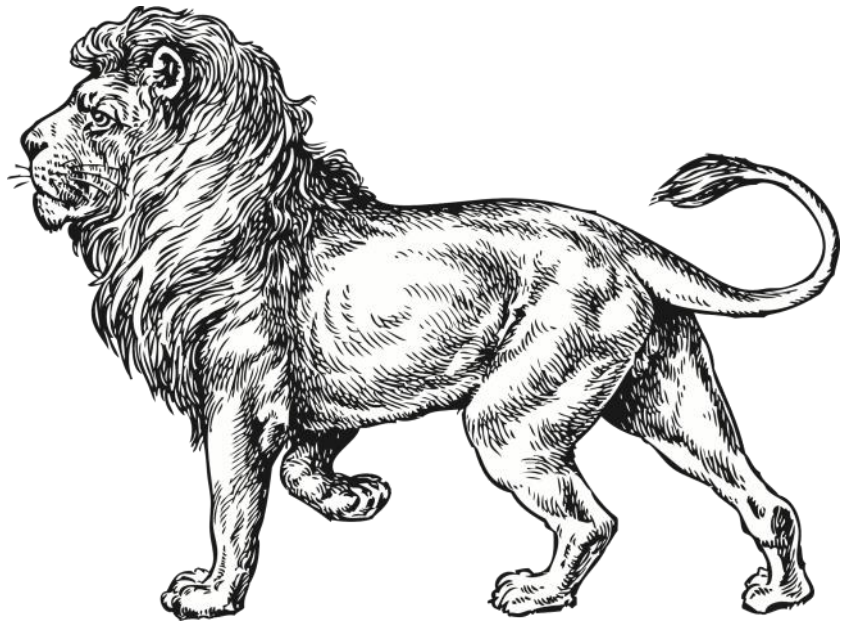
The females of a pride hunt together at night. Some of the lions spread out and hide in the grass. The rest of the group chases the prey toward them. When the prey reaches the hiding lions, they jump up. They all attack it together, from every side. Their strong jaws crush ribs and tear skin. Wildebeest, antelope, and gazelle are favorite foods. After a kill, the male adults eat first, then the females. Finally the young cubs are able to dig in.

Male lions leave their birth pride when they are two and a half years old. The young males make their own group, and start looking for a pride they can take over. If they can kill the male lions in the pride, or drive them away, the pride becomes their new home.

Estes, Richard D. *The Safari Companion*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1993. Print.

Shah, Anup and Shah, Manoj. *The Circle of Life: Wildlife on the African Savanna*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003. Print.

Lion



The “king of the jungle”, actually lives on the grassy plains of Africa’s savanna, and the dry, arid plains of India’s national preserves. At one time they were found across the southern part of Europe and throughout all of Africa, but they have been wiped out of those areas by their most dangerous predator—man. However, recently scientists from Germany photographed lions in the rainforests of Ethiopia, so maybe he is “king of the jungle” after all!

Lions are the only big cats that live together in groups. The group, called a pride, often has 1-3 adult males, and 12-15 adult females and their cubs. All of the female lions in a pride are related to each other—grandmothers, mothers, sisters. The females rule the pride. Each pride needs a large territory. They mark it by spraying urine, and rubbing their scent glands on plants, rocks, and the ground.

Adult lions are 5-8 feet (1.5-2.4 m) in length, and weigh 330-500 pounds (150-227 kg). They can run up to 50 miles per hour for a short time, but are not built for running long distances or hard fighting. A flap of loose skin on their bellies protects them from kicks directed at them as they attack prey. A lion’s rough tongue has sharp hooks on the top. The hooks catch and remove loose hair as they groom themselves. These hooks are also strong enough to tear skin off their prey. Their large claws retract into their paws. They can extend them to help them grip and hold.

The females of a pride hunt together at night. Several lions will spread out and hide in the grass as the rest of the group chases the prey toward them. When the prey reaches the hidden lions, they spring up in ambush, attacking it together, from all sides. Medium sized animals such as wildebeest, antelope, and gazelle are their favorite prey. Sometimes males assist the females in hunting very large prey such as cape buffalo and giraffe, but male lions do not generally hunt. Their huge mane makes them too noticeable. After a kill, the male adults eat first, then the females. Finally the younger members of the pride are able to dig in.

Male lions leave their pride when they are two and a half years old. The young males form their own group, and start looking for a pride to take over. They attack the pride’s male lions, and if they are able to kill or drive them away, the pride becomes theirs. They often kill, and sometimes eat, the cubs of the previous males to get rid of any competition from them.

Life on the savanna, even for lions, is hard. Male lions live 10-12 years in the wild, while females may live up to 19 years.

Estes, Richard D. The Safari Companion. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 1993. Print.
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