

African Lion

**Scientific Name:**

Panthera leo (P.l. krugeri)

Range:

Savannahs of Africa

Habitat:

Grasslands

Average Size:

Body Length: 5.5-8 feet

Body-Tail Length: 8-11 feet

Weight: 350-650 pounds

Lifespan:

About 28 years in captivity

Diet:

Wild: Large hoofstock such as wildebeest and zebras

Zoo: Carnivore meat diet, chicken, organ meat, occasionally fish and cow bones.

Reproduction:**Gestation:**

100-120 days

Litter size:

1-6 cubs, usually 3-4.

Appearance:

Most easily recognized of the wild cats. Lacking stripes or definitive spot as adults, both sexes are tawny colored. Males have manes that tend to be a dark brown or even black.

Predators:

Humans, hyenas (as cubs)

Population Status:

Vulnerable

**About the Animal**

African Lions are perhaps the most Originally ranging across Europe and Asia, down through Egypt to South Africa, and even North America, lions are now confined to open savannah areas in Eastern Africa and parts of South Africa. The second largest of the big cats (tigers are larger) with females reaching up to 320 pounds and males an amazing 550 pounds, lions are considered the largest carnivore in the Africa.

Although all lions belong to the same genus and species, *Panthera leo*, there are several sub-species of lions. Lions found in and around Kruger National Park in South Africa are *Panthera leo krugeri*. The only documented cases of the white color morph belong to this subspecies. Specifically, the white lions are seen in the Timbavati Game Reserve.

White lions are NOT albinos! Albinos have no genetic information that produces color. The result is an animal with very pale blue, red or pink eyes, very pink skin and white fur (if it is a mammal). Instead, white lions are the result of an exceedingly rare, recessive gene. This genetic rarity is known as *leucism* (loo-kiz-im). *Leucistic* mammals have normal colored eyes, skin, etc. but the fur is much lighter than normal – or 'white'.

Not all white lions are snowballs! As the lion gets older the snowball white of 'cub-hood' changes to a blonde, with adults being more of a lovely alabaster white.

Mating and Reproduction:

They are one of the only truly social wild cats, living in female dominated groups called prides. Each pride has a dominant male – sometimes a pair of males – that protect and defend the pride against threats and other males. The dominant male will mate with all the females as they come into heat. All the females care for the cubs. When the females are off hunting, the dominant male is responsible for watching the cubs.

Amazing Information:

In the local dialect, Timbavati means 'place where the star lions came down from the heavens'.



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