

Lions

- Lions typically live 10 – 15 years in the wild. (*20 years in captivity*)
- This golden cat has short powerful limbs, heavy torso, thick neck and a long tail.
- **Lion's tails are stiff and do not make sharp turns or twists like other cats.** They are tapered with a tuft of fur at the end. A sharp nail hidden in the tuft is called a "tail claw."
- As adults, lion's eyes are a warm, golden amber.
- Lions can measure 9 ft from nose to tip of tail and weigh as much as 400 lbs. Females are smaller than males. They average 8 ft in length and 300 lbs. Most of the weight is from their enormous muscles.
- They are remarkable jumpers with vertical leaps of 10 feet up banks or over hedges with ease.
- Their typical diet includes impala, wildebeests, gazelles and zebra. Cape buffalo are more difficult to bring down, but also a common feast. Lions will eat any meat and can also be seen eating rats, foxes, birds, porcupines, pythons, crocodiles, rhinos, giraffes and people.
- A unique characteristic of male lions is their manes. This shaggy ruff covers the top of the head, throat, neck and sometimes shoulders and upper chest. Some lions have large tufts on their elbows.
- Lions are known to be gregarious. Other cats live alone or in pairs, but lions are extremely sociable and are typically found in groups or prides. Pride sizes vary but can contain 20 or more individuals.
- Lions frequently butt heads. Offspring with parents, Siblings with one another, Friends, Females, Males ...
- Prides maintain a hierarchy with the largest and strongest male at the top. He is followed by the other grown males, then females in order of their strength and seniority, finally by the adolescents.
- They have a resonating below sounding like "Oohhoowrrrgh, uuuf, uuuuf, uuuf" to call other lions.
- Lions are sensitive to the significance of graded roars, meows, growls, snarls, and grunting calls of their colleagues. Changing the volume, intensity, tempo, and tone of the call allows lions to express a wide range of emotions.
- Females give birth from age 3 through 10. Gestation lasts 3½ months. The lioness will leave the pride to find a secluded place in deep brush or hidden away in some rocks - always near water.
- In lean years, litters are smaller. For her first family, a young lioness will produce only 1 or 2 cubs. Later she will have 3 or 4 at a time. Lionesses only give birth every other year.
- Lion cub mortality is high at about 50%. Many die from mother's neglect, ferocious males, starvation, respiratory ailments, injuries by prey, hyenas, crocodiles, and even painful teething.
- Lions have an extended period of childhood in which they learn how to be a lion. Play is where their mental capacities and muscles are developed. It takes at least a year to master the rudiments. At two or three years, many lions are still learning the fine points of their trade.
- At one year of age, the first wisps of mane appear on males. Manes are fully filled in by age 5 or 6. Colors range from a rich golden with blonde highlights to a deep brownish-black.
- Cubs mature at about age 2. Lionesses may stay with the pride while juvenile males become unruly and are kicked out or leave the pride. Since prides are flexible, females may find new prides.
- Males will form small bachelor groups and do their own hunting.
- Whenever a male takes over a pride, he will typically kill any cubs under 1 year of age.
- Lion's roaring is a social or territorial utterance, a proclamation of power and proprietorship. "I'm a fine fellow and this is my domain." That roar can be heard for five miles on a still night.

- Cubs do not get to hunt. They tend to ruin the quiet stalking. An elderly lioness will stay behind with cubs.
- Lionesses are the primary hunters who hunt by speed and strength. One will act as a decoy to distract while another lioness or two will stalk.
- Hunting can happen throughout the day when opportunity arises. However, it frequently begins at dusk because that's when an antelope's normally keen eyesight limits its view of a stalking lion. In the dark, all cats are gray and vanish from sight.
- Many hunts end unsuccessfully. Everything is gambled on the initial charge. A lion has great initial takeoff and then can run at 30 mph. If it starts within 50 yards of its prey, lions can generally catch it.
- The lion makes a leap for the shoulder, usually hooking one paw around the muzzle and tugging back on it and bringing it down on its face with such force the neck is broken. If not, the lion finishes it off with a bite to the neck or throat.
- Males may come at the end of hunt or if help is needed. A strike from his paw can break a Zebra's back.
- No matter who hunts, the dominate male eats first. Others must wait. Sometimes there is not enough food and the younger and weaker must go without.
- A lioness who makes a kill will walk for miles, if necessary, to notify her pride – allowing the dominate male to eat – usually alone - before eating herself.
- They first lick up any fresh blood. Then, they bite their victim open in the lower belly to eat the preferred liver, kidneys and heart. (*Intestines and stomach are often dragged aside to bury.*)
- Sometimes the kill is dragged away for sharing. Other times, the remains are left for hyenas to finish.
- Members of the pride who have eaten, stroll off one by one, take a drink of water and almost immediately fall groggily to the ground to sleep. Three or four days later, the pride will be hungry again.
- Dominate males mark their territories by urination as a warning sign for juvenile males to stay away. Their territories can vary depending on where game is available.
- Lions like to lay on kopjes and use these large rock formations to observe the plains below.
- Lions are known to steal the kills of leopards and of hyenas.
- The prime of a lion's life is from age 4 to age 8 or 9. Physically, they start going downhill. Their legs stiffen, reactions slow, teeth wear down, and eyesight fades. Typically, males are driven away by younger, stronger males. Hunting is difficult alone causing lions to become skinny, weak and feeble. Many are killed and eaten by hyenas.
- Other lions who attack easier game like chicken, goats, or cattle, are killed by pastoralists or herdsmen.

Find more lion pictures and info about the other animals in this play at: www.theater4church.com/Animals.htm

