



# Panthera leo

Common name: **Lion**Latin name: **Panthera leo**

Local name: الأسد



## INTRODUCTION

The lion is one of the largest members of the big cats.

A powerful and formidable predator, it used to roam a vast stretch of land, spanning Africa and Eurasia, but is now found mainly in Sub-Saharan Africa, aside from a small population in India.

The lion has been a symbol of strength, royalty and bravery in many cultures.

In Sudan, lions can be found in the Savanna and grasslands south of Kharoum. It was revered in ancient Kush.

It is currently threatened by extinction due to hunting and habitat loss.

## LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

### Human interaction

Like many large predators, lions and humans have long had a tense relationship. In places where lions live near human settlements, attacks of lions on livestock and humans have caused retaliatory killings of lions.

### Cultural value

Lions are a symbol of strength, courage and masculinity.

#### History:

Lions were revered in ancient Sudan, as the god Apadamak is depicted as a human with the head of a lion. It was said to be the god of war and creation, as it is depicted carrying a bow and arrow in some artifacts.

Lions images were carved into pottery and statues, and painted on murals in archaeological sites from Bajrawiya, Musawarat and other sites, depicting the lion protecting the rulers in ancient Sudanese Kingdoms.

There is evidence of lions being captured and raised to use in religious ceremonies, and were also sent to other countries, such as ancient Rome.

### Cultural expression

*Jabal al Barkal kaan bindhum kaan gaal ihna oosod*

.A song by the singer Nada al Gal'a

مرفعين كتلوا الأسد

(Lit.: Two hyenas killed the lion)

A proverb meaning teamwork can achieve more than .what one individual can

## THREATS

Although lions used to roam a larger area in the world, their range and numbers have been dwindling due to hunting and encroachment on their habitats. Lions are classified as vulnerable due to their population decline.

## ECOLOGY

### Type:

**Wild**

### Role in Ecosystem:

The lion is an apex predator. Its presence keeps the population of herbivores from overcrowding and consequentially degrading vegetation in its habitats.

## HABITAT

Lions live in a variety of habitats but prefer grassland, savanna, dense scrub, and open woodland. They are mostly found in east and southern Africa.



### Food

**Carnivore**

Lions prey on zebras, antelopes, gazelles, deer, buffalos, young giraffes, warthogs, wildebeest, young elephants, and less frequently on hares and birds. Lions will also scavenge on carrion; such as animals dead from natural causes such as disease or those that were killed by other predators such as hyenas.

Lions hunt either alone or in prides. In groups, the lioness are usually in charge. Lions hunt by stalking their prey and, when close enough, attempt a short charge on their prey, trying either to pounce on their target or knock it over.



### Movement and Communication

#### Communication:

Lions communicate in many different ways. They use sounds like roars, grunts, moans, growls, snarls, purrs, hums, puffs and woofs, as well as body language. A lion's roar can be heard from as far as 5 km. They also spread their scent by rubbing their muzzle on tufts of grass or shrubs, and they rake the earth with their hind paws, as the paws have scent glands, in order to mark their territory. Adult males also spray urine.

#### Movement:

Lions can run for short distances at 50 mph and leap as far as 36 feet. A lion can leap 3 times higher than a human. Lions can't move their eyes from side to side very well, so they have to move their whole head to look in different directions.

### Social Habits

**Social**

Lions form groups known as prides, which are lead by females. These consists on average of six related females, their cubs, and 2-3 males that joined the pride from elsewhere. Lions are highly territorial and occupy the same area for generations. Females actively defend their territories against other females, while resident males protect prides from rival males. Territory size depends on prey abundance, as well as access to water and denning sites.

### Reproduction

**Viviparous**

Lions begin to breed at two years but reach their prime at five years. Mating take place at most times of the year and a male may mate with several females. A lioness has cubs about every two years and gestation is 105 - 112 days. Shortly before birth, she chooses a sheltered place for her lair.

The litter size is 2 - 5, born blind and with a spotted coat. Their eyes open at 6 days and for the first two months they are dependent on their mother's milk. At six weeks, the cubs begin to accompany their mother to the kill and she teaches them how to hunt. By 15 months a cub can kill small prey.

Cubs will stay with their mothers until they are two years old. Some females stay in the pride, but all the male cubs are driven out by the dominant male.

Male lions take no interest in the rearing of the young and may sometimes even try to kill them.

### Attributes

#### Appearance:

Lions have strong, compact bodies and powerful forelegs, teeth and jaws for pulling down and killing prey. Their coats are yellow-gold, and adult males have shaggy manes that range in color from blond to reddish-brown to black.

#### Size:

Male: between 5.6 and 8.3 feet.

Female: between 4.6 and 5.7 feet.

Tail length is 27 to 41 inches.

#### Weight:

Male: 330 to 570 pounds.

Female: 270 to 400 pounds.

#### Lifespan:

10-14 years in the wild, up to 20 years in captivity.

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