

AFRICAN LION

Everyone calls me the “king of the animals.” I have strong muscles and am proud of my beautiful mane. It’s arranged in a wide circle around my neck. When I open my mouth to roar, all the animals become quiet.



Who am I?

Name: lion
Class: mammals

Noisemaker:
The African lion roars ferociously with its mouth wide open.

Legs:
4 sturdy, muscular legs

ears turn in different directions

Enemies:
I have no enemies among the animals. My only enemies are:



humans

Cubs (young lions) are sometimes attacked by:



hyenas



jackals



leopards

I'm the **leader**, and **no other lion** is allowed to **hunt** in our area. We live in a **pride** of **10 to 40 animals**. It consists mainly of **lionesses and cubs** and a few weaker males. **Male cubs** have to leave the pride after three years. They wander around on their own or form a **new group** with other males.

Size:
males up to 4 feet (1.2 meters) shoulder height and up to 7 feet (2.1 meters) long, plus a tail of 3 feet (1 meter); females up to 3 feet (1 meter) shoulder height and up to 5 feet (1.5 meters) long



mouth can open up to **11 inches (28 centimeters)**, with **powerful jaws** to break the neck of the prey

very **rough tongue** to lick dirt from its own fur and to scrape flesh from the bones of prey

4 canines (teeth) to tear off flesh and skin; they're **up to 3 inches (7 centimeters)** long

Habitat:

warm areas in Africa where there's a lot of grass, with trees here and there



Speed:

I can reach a top speed of 50 miles per hour, but I can't keep that up for long.



only lions have a **mane**; lionesses do not

Food:

I'm a carnivore and eat mostly:



gazelles



wildebeests



zebras



antelopes

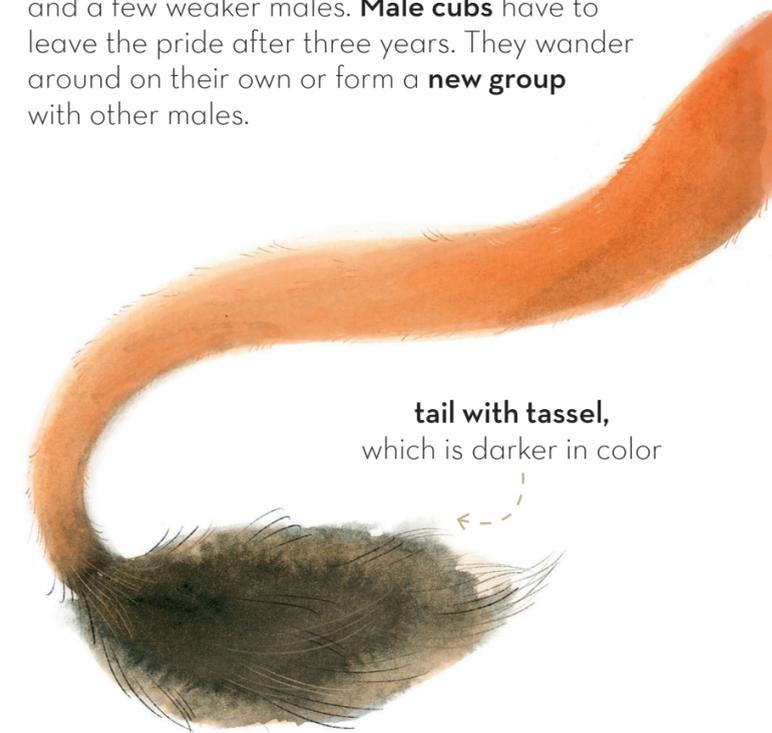


buffaloes

Like a cat, I have **soft pads** under my paws. But as soon as I attack, my **supersharp nails** come out. They're almost 2 inches (5 centimeters) long, and I plant them deep into the flesh of my victim.



tail with **tassel**, which is darker in color



The **lionesses** are the **best hunters** because they're faster and more agile. But the animals they hunt are also fast and can run longer. That's why the lionesses **work together**. They sneak in a **semicircle** through the tall grass toward a herd of prey. When they're close, they sprint to a **weak animal** and attack it.



As the **leader**, I always get to **eat first**. Then come the other males, then the lionesses, and lastly the cubs. Most of the day, we **laze** in the grass or in a tree.