

TIGERS



Common Name: Tiger

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata (Vertebrata)

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Felidae

Genus: Pantherinae Panthera

Species: tigris

Sub-species:

Bengal Tiger - *Panthera tigris tigris*

Siberian (Amurian) Tiger - *Panthera tigris altaica*

Sumatran Tiger - *Panthera tigris sumatrae*

Indo-Chinese Tiger - *Panthera tigris corbetti*

South China Tiger - *Panthera tigris amoyensis*

Javan Tiger - *Panthera tigris sondaica* - extinct since early 1980's

Bali Tiger - *Panthera tigris balica* - extinct since the 1940's

Caspian Tiger - *Panthera tigris virgata* - extinct since the early 1970's



Misc.: This species has been (and is still) widely hunted throughout its range for sport, for the fur trade, and for the traditional Asian medicine market. For the medicine trade - no part of the Tiger's body goes unused (see diagram below). Each number represents a part of the tiger that has value in the Asian medicine market. The tiger is one of the best known mammals, and has become a symbol everywhere for conservation. Today, sadly, there are more tigers in captivity than exist in the wild. There are only 200-400 Siberian tigers left in the wild and less than 400 Sumatran Tigers as of 2005. There are more than **15,000 tigers** in cages and 90% of them are in miserable **roadside zoos**, **backyard breeder facilities**, **circus wagons** and **pet homes**.



Size and Appearance: The largest of all the living cats, the tiger is immediately recognizable by its unique reddish - orange coat with black stripes. Stripe patterns differ among individuals and are as unique to the animal as are fingerprints to humans. The dark lines above the eyes tend to be symmetrical, but the marks on the sides of the face and body can be different. Males have a prominent ruff or collar, which is especially pronounced in the Sumatran tiger. White tigers have been seen in the wild in India, and 1 single white cub taken by the name of Mohan was the progenitor of most white tigers now in captivity. [White tigers](#) would never survive in the wild as the white coat is only produced through severe inbreeding. White tigers have brown stripes and crystal blue eyes, and some specimens in captivity have no stripes at all. Black tigers have been reported, but only a single pelt from illegal traders remains the only evidence. The pelt shows that the black only occurs on the top of the head and back, but turns into stripes down the sides, unlike in other cats that are completely and truly black (or melanistic). Body size of the tiger varies with latitude, the smallest occurring at low latitudes in Indonesia and the largest at high altitudes in Manchuria and Siberia. The largest, the Siberian tiger can reach weights exceeding 700 pounds and reach lengths of 10+ feet, and the smallest, the Indonesian or Bali tiger weighing a mere 200 pounds with a total length of 7 ft.

In sanctuaries tigers have lived more than 26 years, as compared to 15 in the wild. Tigers only live 10-12 years in [zoos](#).



Habitat: Tigers occupy a wide variety of habitats including tropical evergreen forests, deciduous forests, coniferous woodlands (Taiga), mangrove swamps, thorn forests and grass jungles. The common factors of all of the tiger's habitats, is some form of dense vegetative cover, sufficient large prey,

and access to water. Tigers are extremely adept swimmers and readily take to water. They have been recorded easily swimming across rivers achieving distances of just under 20 miles. The tiger also spends much of its time during the heat of the day during hot seasons half submerged in lakes and ponds to keep cool. Indian tigers generally have a range of 8-60 square miles, based on availability of prey. Sumatran tigers have a range of about 150 square miles. Due to the severity of the climate and lack of prey, the Siberian tiger can require a range of 400 square miles.

Distribution: Indian subcontinent, Amur River region of Russia , China, and North Korea, South central China, Sumatra, Indonesia, and Continental southeast Asia.

Reproduction and Offspring: Tigers will mate throughout the year, but most frequently between the end of November to early April. After a gestation of 103 days a litter of up to 7 cubs, although averaging 3, is born. Cubs will leave their mothers as young as 18 months old, or as old as 28 months old. During the first year, mortality can be as high as 35%, and of that 73% of the time it is the entire litter that is lost. The main causes of infant mortality are fire, floods, and infanticide, with the latter being the leading cause. Females tend to reproduce around 3 ½ years and males just under 5 years. In captivity, females have produced through age 14.

Social System and Communication: Tigers, like most cats are solitary, however, they are not anti-social. Males not only come together with females for breeding, but will feed with or rest with females and cubs. There have actually been reports of some tigers socializing and traveling in groups. Females with cubs have also been seen coming together to share meals. Most likely, in all of these cases they are somehow related. Males will kill cubs from other males, so it is likely that the offspring in question is his own. The females most likely are mother and daughter with overlapping home ranges.

Hunting and Diet: Tigers hunt primarily between dusk and dawn, and they attack using the same method as do the lions. They stalk, chase, and attack, bringing down and killing the prey with usually a bite to the nape of the neck or the throat. The bite to the throat allows the tiger the ability to suffocate the prey bringing death relatively quickly and painlessly. Smaller animals are often killed with the bite to the nape of the neck allowing the tiger to fracture the vertebrae and compress the spinal chord of its victim. Once killed, the tiger either drags or carries its meal into cover. The tiger's enormous strength allows it to drag an animal that would require 13 adult men to move. Tigers consume anywhere from 35 - 90 pounds of meat at one sitting, beginning at the rump of the prey. If undisturbed, they will return to the carcass for 3-6 days, feeding until it has completely consumed its kill. Because tigers are not the most successful of hunters, only killing 1 in every 10-20 attempts, it may be several days before it has its next meal. In the wild, cooperative hunting among tigers has also been observed where couples and families hunted like a pride of lions. This, however, is the exception not the rule. Unlike the other felids, man is a regular part of the tiger's diet and has earned them greatest reputation as man-eaters. The most common prey items are various species of deer and pig, but they will also take crocodiles, young elephants and rhinos, monkeys, birds, fish, leopards, bears, and even their own kind. They have also been reported to eat carrion.

Status: IUCN: Endangered

Felid TAG recommendation: Tiger (*Panthera tigris*). The SSP for tigers supports a target population of 150-160 individuals for each of three subspecies. The Amur (formerly called the Siberian) Tiger SSP is nearly 20 years old, has functioned well with this target population, and has periodically obtained new founders from orphan situations or as F1 captive-born individuals from Europe. Its goals are not likely to change in the future. The Sumatran Tiger SSP is well under its target population, and additional spaces are readily available, especially in zoos located in warmer climates. Additional founders are periodically available from Sumatra via captive-bred individuals or wild-born tigers that must be removed from the wild. At this time, the Indochinese or Corbett's tiger also is included in the RCP (albeit present in only four zoos). Given the small founder population presently in the North American population, additional animals from range-country zoos that are unrelated to those in North America are being sought. Although still present in large but declining numbers, no space is allocated for hybrid tigers (including white tigers, since they are all inbred, crossbred, and suffer congenital birth defects). No purebred Bengal tiger are known to exist in North America because the zoos hybridized all of their stock trying to produce white tigers that could survive the inbreeding necessary to create the white coat. Due to this and a lack of space, this race will not be targeted by the Felid TAG for inclusion in its RCP. This subspecies currently is being managed in Europe under the umbrella of the EEP. No one who breeds tigers outside of the Species Survival Plan which is only for AZA accredited zoos is really [breeding for conservation](#).

How rare is this cat ? The largest wild population of tigers are in India. According to statistics released in 2004 there are 1576 tigers left on 27 wildlife reserves in 11 states in India. The International Species Information Service lists in captivity 1098 worldwide in captivity with 330 being registered with ISIS in the U.S. There are 15 living at Big Cat Rescue.