

Unit 2: The Lion's Roar

Narrator: Maybe you already know that lions are big cats. Weighing up to 500 pounds and growing up to ten feet long, lions are the second largest members of the cat family after tigers. But here are some things you probably didn't know about them.

Lions have extremely loud roars. A lion's roar can be heard up to 5 miles, or 8 kilometers away. It can be as loud as thunder. Lions begin to vocalize—or make sounds—as soon as they are born. But the sounds they make turn into roars at about one year old. Roaring allows lions to communicate. Lions roar to tell others to stay away from their territory. They also roar to communicate with other lions in their family.

Lions are the only cats that regularly live in social groups, called prides. These prides are family units. A pride can have as few as three and as many as forty lions. Usually, one dominant male lion leads each pride. But sometimes there can be more than one male lion leading the family. The rest of the pride's adult members are females—lionesses. They work together to catch food for the pride and to feed their cubs.

Lions were once scattered worldwide. About 124,000 years ago, many different species of lions lived all over the planet. This included the American lions of North America, and cave lions that lived throughout Asia and Europe. Unfortunately, these lions became extinct by 8,000 B.C. Today, we have just two types of lion. The African lion from sub-Saharan Africa, and the Asiatic lions of India. The numbers of these lions have declined due to poaching, habitat loss, and disease. Only 20 thousand African lions remain in the wild, and only 500 Asiatic lions, leaving us all to wonder what the future is for the king of beasts.