

Lion

The lion (*Panthera leo*) is one of the most iconic animals in the world, often referred to as the "king of the jungle," despite typically living in open grasslands and savannas rather than forests. Lions are unique among big cats for their social behavior, living in family groups called prides that can include up to 30 individuals. A pride usually consists of related females, their cubs, and a small number of adult males. Male lions are known for their distinctive manes, which make them appear larger and more intimidating to rivals. Lions are apex predators and mainly hunt large herbivores like zebras, wildebeests, and buffaloes. Despite their fearsome reputation, they spend much of their day resting, often sleeping for up to 20 hours. Lions are currently found mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, with a critically endangered small population remaining in India's Gir Forest. Unfortunately, lion populations are declining due to habitat loss, human conflict, and poaching. Lions play a critical role in maintaining the balance of ecosystems by regulating herbivore populations. Conservation efforts include protected reserves and anti-poaching initiatives. Their powerful roar, which can be heard up to 5 miles away, is a symbol of strength and dominance across many cultures.