The ***lion*** (*Panthera leo*) is one of the four [big cats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_cat) in the [genus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genus) *[Panthera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panthera%22%20%5Co%20%22Panthera)*, and a member of the family [Felidae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felidae%22%20%5Co%20%22Felidae). With some males exceeding 250 kg (550 lb) in weight,[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-nowak-3) it is the second-largest living cat after the [tiger](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiger). Wild lions currently exist in [sub-Saharan Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sub-Saharan_Africa)and in [Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia), with an [endangered](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Endangered) remnant population in [Gir Forest National Park](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gir_Forest_National_Park%22%20%5Co%20%22Gir%20Forest%20National%20Park) in [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), having disappeared from [North Africa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Africa) and [Southwest Asia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southwest_Asia) in historic times. Until the late[Pleistocene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleistocene), about 10,000 years ago, the lion was the most widespread large land mammal after humans. They were found in most of Africa, across Eurasia from western Europe to India, and in the Americas from the [Yukon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yukon) to [Peru](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peru).[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#cite_note-Harington69-4) The lion is a [vulnerable species](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vulnerable_species), having seen a major population decline of 30–50% over the past two decades in its African range.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#cite_note-IUCN-1) Lion populations are untenable outside designated reserves and national parks. Although the cause of the decline is not fully understood, habitat loss and conflicts with humans are currently the greatest causes of concern. Within Africa, the [West African lion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_African_lion) population is particularly endangered.

Lions live for 10–14 years in the wild, while in captivity they can live longer than 20 years. In the wild, males seldom live longer than 10 years, as injuries sustained from continual fighting with rival males greatly reduce their longevity.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#cite_note-5) They typically inhabit[savanna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Savanna) and [grassland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grassland), although they may take to [bush](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrub) and [forest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest). Lions are unusually[social](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_animal) compared to other cats. A pride of lions consists of related females and offspring and a small number of adult males. Groups of female lions typically hunt together, preying mostly on large [ungulates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ungulate). Lions are [apex](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apex_predator) and [keystone predators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keystone_species#Predators), although they scavenge as opportunity allows. While lions do not typically hunt humans, some have been known to do so. Sleeping mainly during the day, lions are primarily [nocturnal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nocturnality), although bordering on [crepuscular](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crepuscular)[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#cite_note-earthtouch-6)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion#cite_note-phxzoo-7) in nature.

Highly distinctive, the male lion is easily recognised by its mane, and its face is one of the most widely recognised animal symbols in human [culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture). Depictions have existed from the [Upper Paleolithic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Paleolithic) period, with carvings and paintings from the [Lascaux](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lascaux) and[Chauvet Caves](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chauvet_Cave), through virtually all ancient and medieval cultures where they once occurred. It has been extensively depicted in sculptures, in paintings, on national flags, and in contemporary films and literature. Lions have been kept in [menageries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menagerie) since the time of the [Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire), and have been a key species sought for exhibition in [zoos](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoo%22%20%5Co%20%22Zoo)over the world since the late 18th century. Zoos are cooperating worldwide in breeding programs for the endangered [Asiatic subspecies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asiatic_Lion).