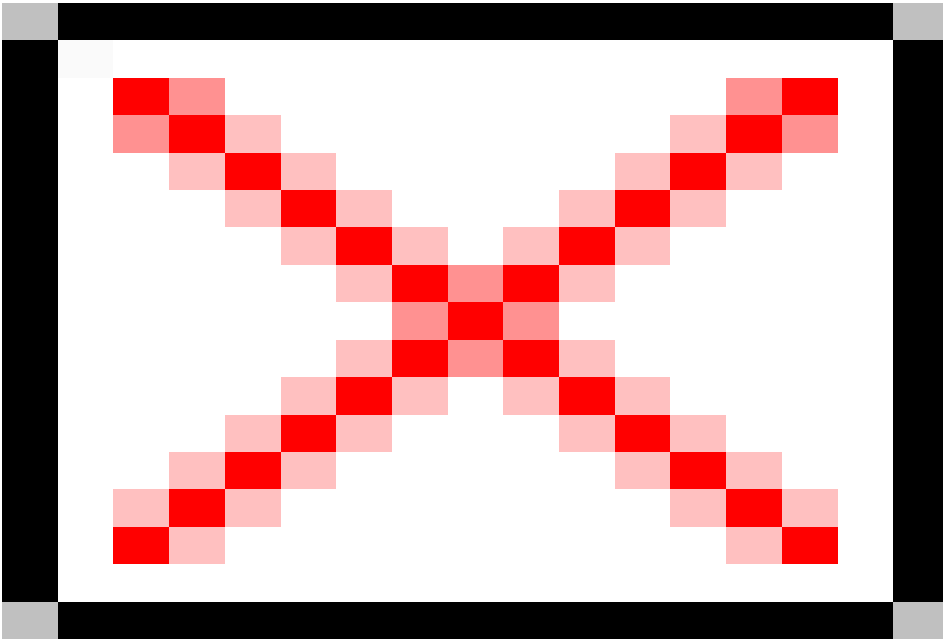




Cats (Big)



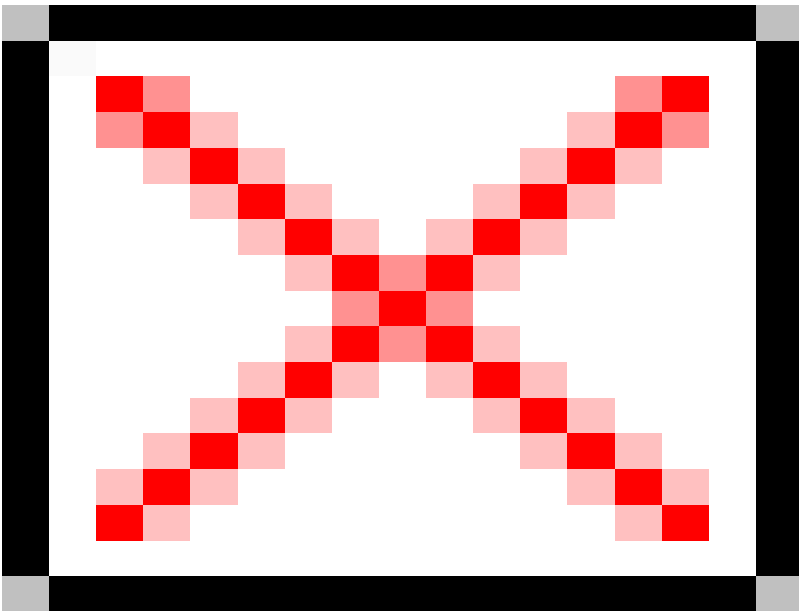
Leopard

(
Felis pardus)

The leopard is also known as the panther; the black panther is simply a black or melanistic leopard and is commonest in regions with heavy rainfall. Leopards feed on monkeys, pigs and numerous other animals and are found in Africa and southern Asia. They are immensely strong and very good climbers. They live in forest, open country and even on bare, rocky hillsides. A large leopard is 7 feet long and weighs about 150 pounds.

Jaguar

(
Panthera onca
)



The jaguar is the largest cat of the New World and is found in Central and South America. It is about as big as a leopard but heavier in build, weighing up to 300 pounds. Black (melanistic) jaguars are not uncommon. Like the tiger, the jaguar is a forest animal and is most often found near rivers. It swims well and even catches fish, but its usual prey are tapirs, large rodents and reptiles such as alligators and turtles. Jaguars live to about 22 years.



Snow Leopard

(
Panthera uncia
)

This animal is also known as the ounce and it lives in central Asia in treeless mountainous areas; very little is known of its habits. It is rather smaller than the leopard and usually pale grey with irregular spots; its coat is very long and thick. Its prey consists of marmots, goats and other mountain-dwelling animals.



Puma

(

Felis concolor

)

This cat inhabits North and South America and is also known as the cougar or mountain lion. It is about the size of a leopard. Pumas are very powerful and active and are good climbers; they live in a great variety of habitats from forest to desert, but they are most numerous in wooded mountainous country. Deer are their most usual prey. Length of life is up to 20 years.

Lion

(
Panthera leo
)



Lions are now limited to a small area of India and to Africa south of the Sahara.

In Africa they are still quite numerous, but only two hundred of the Indian lions still survive. The fully grown lion may measure up to 9 feet in length, plus 3-foot tail, and can weigh more than 500 pounds. Males usually have a mane, the lioness is smaller and lacks the mane.

These big cats live in family groups or 'prides' numbering up to 20 individuals. The lionesses of the pride work as a team when hunting. Lions may reach a speed of 50 mph over a short distance and can leap more than 35 feet on level ground. They have also been seen to jump over obstacles more than 10 feet high.

Lions live in open bush country and feed largely on zebra and antelope. They are born blind, like kittens, and have spotted coats for some time after birth. They are weaned at 3 months and can hunt for themselves when a year old. A lion is in the prime of life at five and may live up to 30 years.



Tiger

(
Felis tigris
)

Tigers are to be found only in Asia, but extend from Siberia southwards to India and Malaysia. The tiger is the largest of the cats; males may reach up to 10 feet in length and well over 500 pounds in weight. The male is larger than the female (tigress). They are good swimmers and often lie in water to escape the heat of the sun. Tigers are more at home in forests than in open country. They prey on a great variety of animals from buffalo to small game. The young are born blind but develop quickly and can hunt at seven months. The tiger is mature at three but may live for 25 years.

Cheetah or Hunting Leopard

(
Acinonyx jubatus
)



The cheetah is very different from all other cats, much more long-legged with blunt and partially retractile claws - that is, they cannot be completely withdrawn into the sheaths.

Cheetahs are the fastest of all mammals; they are said to reach 70 mph. The cheetah may be 7.5 feet long, but is much lighter than the leopard, weighing only 100 pounds. It is found in Africa and Asia but it is now very rare in Asia and is rapidly disappearing in Africa. It is, in fact, an animal that is threatened with extinction. Cheetahs can be tamed and are sometimes kept as pets. The Indian princes used to keep them and train them to hunt deer and antelopes. They live for about 16 years.

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