

TIGERS-5th Grade

The tiger is the biggest of all living cats. Its fur is reddish-orange with black stripes that allow for excellent camouflage or the ability to blend in with the background. Each stripe pattern is one of a kind just like our human fingerprints. Male tigers have extra thick fur around their necks. This is called a collar or ruff. Males are usually bigger than females. Tigers are very strong.

Baby tigers are called cubs. They can have up to 7 babies at one time but usually have around 3 in a litter. After they grow up they move away from their family and live alone most of the time. This solitary lifestyle is true of most big cats.

Tigers are meat eaters. Meat eaters are also called carnivores. They hunt between sundown and sunup. Common prey (food) would include deer, pig, crocodiles, young elephants, rhinos, monkeys, birds, fish, leopards and bears. They also eat people. Tigers can eat 35 to 90 pounds in one sitting. Despite their size they are not always successful when they hunt. They will capture prey only 1 time out of 10-20 attempts.

Tigers are from the Continent of Asia where they live in Russia, China, Korea, and Indonesia. Their home or habitats include forests, swamps and jungles. In order to survive their habitats must have dense vegetative cover, large prey and access to water. They are good swimmers who enjoy the water and swim as far as 20 miles at a time. Tigers will roam an area of 8 to 400 square miles depending on the type of tiger and its needs.

Due to captive breeding more tigers reside in captivity than in the wild. Three types of tigers (Javan, Bali and Caspian) are already extinct due to hunting, habitat loss, the fur trade, and the Asian medicine market. Five types of tigers remain in the wild but are considered to be "Endangered" and are at risk of becoming extinct. The lifespan of a tiger can be longer in captivity due to veterinary care, quality food and no predators to harm them. In the wild a tiger's lifespan would be around 15 years while they can live nearly 26 years in captivity.

Many are surprised to hear that white tigers are not a separate species of tigers. They are bred in captivity for their color which due to a lack of camouflage would not serve them well in the wild. Due to the nature of their breeding they are often not healthy animals due to birth defects.

FIFTH GRADE:

1. What physical/behavioral characteristics improve the tiger's chances of survival?
 - a. Size & strength
 - b. Camouflage
 - c. Extremely adept swimmers
 - d. Live in a wide variety of habitats

- e. All of the above

Answer: e

2. What factors decrease the tiger's chances of survival?

- a. The fur trade
- b. Asian medicine market uses tiger parts
- c. Tigers have a high mortality rate during the first year of life
- d. All of the above

Answer: d