

Tigers – *Panthera tigris*

Tigers, which are known scientifically as *Panthera tigris*, are the largest type of cat. There are six subspecies of tiger – named after the area in which they inhabit (Bengal, South Chinese, Indo-Chinese, Malayan, Sumatran and, the largest, Siberian). These felines can live up to 20 years



of age in captivity. However, they usually only live a maximum of 15 years in the wild. Moreover, half of all cubs die during the first year of their lives. Tigers are predominantly solitary animals and roam across large territories.

Appearance

Tigers are recognisable by their distinctive appearance, and they have adapted to many features to enable them to survive in their environment. They are large mammals and can grow to approximately four metres long and 1 metre high. In addition, they weigh between 75 and 300 kilograms. These felines are covered in thick, orange fur with dark, vertical stripes. As a result, they are camouflaged in jungle areas and long grass. This allows them to not be detected by potential prey. However, their colouring varies slightly depending on the area in which they inhabit.

These creatures have long, sharp claws (up to 10cm). Therefore, they can grip uneven terrain and climb trees. Moreover, these retractable claws are used for grasping animals and ripping flesh.



Diet

Tigers are carnivores, so their diet consists solely of meat from animals. Furthermore, they are predators, which hunt and consume a range of prey.

An integral component of these felines' diets is large-bodied mammals: deer, wild pigs and buffalo. However, when this type of animal is not available, they will eat smaller creatures (such as lizards and birds), other



predators' prey and carrion (decaying flesh or meat). Due to reductions in food available, tigers are occasionally forced to kill cattle from farms. This often results in humans killing tigers in retaliation.

In conclusion, this magnificent animal has many fascinating appearance features, which enable it to be a successful predator in the wild. Tigers inhabit a diverse range of environments across the continent of Asia. However, they have been classified as an endangered species because they



face a number of threats: habitat loss, increasing human populations and poaching. Consequently, conservationists and governments are working together to change laws and protect tigers. Hopefully, over time, population numbers will and there will be a more positive future for this iconic creature.