

Name: _____

A Pride of Lions

By Guy Belleranti

African lions are one of the world's most powerful cats. They're larger than other big wild cats, including leopards, cheetahs, and jaguars. In fact, only Asian tigers are bigger.

Most interesting, the African lion is the only cat to live in cooperative groups. These groups are called prides.



A pride usually has no more than three unrelated adult males. Together with adult females (lionesses) and young cubs, a pride has from three to over 30 members. The females are related, and they usually stay together for life. Non-dominant males, meanwhile, remain only a short time. In many cases, they battle for top cat in another pride. Their thick manes of neck fur provide some protection during these battles.

Living in a pride gives African lions benefits other cats don't have. Other cats live alone, coming together only to mate. This means the mother must raise the young and provide all protection and food. African lion mothers, however, have a pride of lions to help. Pride members communicate vocally, by roaring, meowing, and snarling. They also use facial expressions, scent, and touch, including rubbing and licking.

The largest male lion's job is to protect the pride, especially the cubs. Males are usually gentle with cubs in their own pride, but not with the cubs in other prides.

Females, meanwhile, do most of the hunting. With their smaller size, they can sneak closer to prey through tall savannah grasses. They hunt mostly during the night and in the

early morning when light is poor. Large, fast animals like zebras, buffalo, wildebeest, wild hogs, and gazelles are the lions' favorite prey. However, these fast animals often escape. So lions also hunt smaller animals such as hares, birds, and reptiles. They also use their size and numbers to steal dead prey from other



predators, including cheetahs and leopards. That's why cheetahs drag their kills to hiding places and leopards pull theirs into trees. For neither cat is a match for a pride of lions.



About the Author

Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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A Pride of Lions

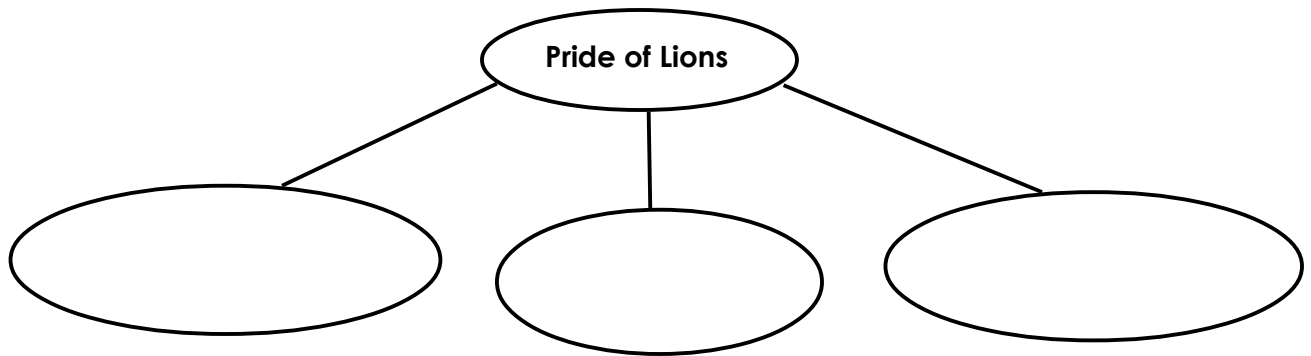
By Guy Belleranti



1. According to the article, how are lions different from any other wild cat?

- a. Lions are the largest wild cat species on earth.
- b. Lions are the only wild cats that live in Africa.
- c. Lions are the only wild cats that are endangered.
- d. Lions are the only wild cats to live in cooperative groups.

2. On the web graph organizer below, fill in the different “family members” you would find in a pride of lions. Use the information in the article to help you with your answer.



3. According to the article, what is one benefit of living in groups that mother lions have over other wild cat mothers?

4. What is one reason why female lions, the lionesses, do the hunting instead of the males?

- a. The females run faster than the males and can catch up to their prey quicker.
- b. The females are stronger than the males and can take down their prey easier.
- c. The females are smaller than the males and can sneak closer to their prey in the tall savannah grasses.
- d. The females have better eyesight than the males to spot prey easier.

5. Why do cheetahs and leopards hide their prey or drag it into trees?

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Match each vocabulary word from the reading passage with the correct definition.



- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. cooperative | a. advantages |
| _____ 2. savannah | b. a group of lions |
| _____ 3. protection | c. using the voice or vocal chords |
| _____ 4. gazelles | d. working together |
| _____ 5. pride | e. relatives of rabbits |
| _____ 6. benefits | f. safety from harm or injury |
| _____ 7. vocally | g. most powerful, strongest |
| _____ 8. hares | h. a sprawling grassland with scattered shrubs and trees |
| _____ 9. dominant | i. long, thick hair on the neck of a male lion |
| _____ 10. mane | j. small, deer-like animals that mostly live in Africa and are capable of running at fast speeds |

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In the article, "A Pride of Lions," you learned that lions are the only wild cats that live together in cooperative groups. The lions benefit from living in a pride by receiving protection, additional hunters, and help raising their young.



Identify another type of animal that lives in community groups. Describe the animal and the community it lives in on the lines below. Discuss some benefits that this type of animal receives by living in groups.

[illegible]

ANSWER KEY

A Pride of Lions

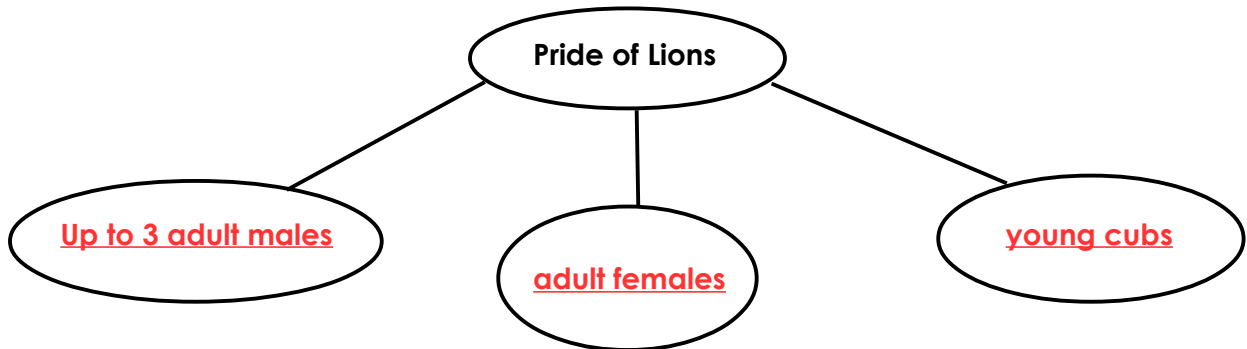
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3. According to the article, what is one benefit of living in groups that mother lions have over other wild cat mothers?

Mother lions have help from members of the pride in feeding and protecting their cubs, while other wild cats have to raise their young alone.

4. What is one reason why female lions, the lionesses, do the hunting instead of the males? c.

- a. The females run faster than the males and can catch up to their prey quicker.
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- d. The females have better eyesight than the males to spot prey easier.

5. Why do cheetahs and leopards hide their prey or drag it into trees?

Cheetahs and leopards must hide their prey from lions, who will steal their kills.

ANSWER KEY

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