

Name: _____

Tiger Talk

by Guy Belleranti

Tigers are the largest of all cats. They're also one of the most endangered. Let's learn more about these beautiful animals.

Like other wild cats (except African lions), tigers are solitary animals. The only time they aren't alone is when they mate or when a mother cares for her young.

The tiger mother gives birth to two, three, or sometimes even more, cubs. Each cub weighs only two to three pounds and is blind the first week or two. The mother has a tough job, as she must raise the cubs alone. This means hunting and catching enough food for all, while also guarding her cubs from danger. About half of the cubs never survive the first year. Those that do survive learn hunting skills by watching their mother. They even practice



ambush moves by jumping on her while she rests! Finally, at around two years old, the cubs are ready to set out on their own.

The tiger is famous for its stripes. These stripes aren't just for looks, however. They help the cat blend in with the grasses and trees. This helps the tiger stalk prey on its nighttime hunts.

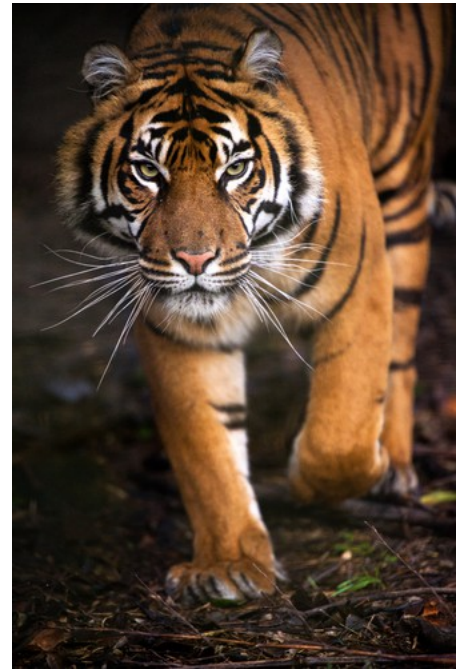
What does a tiger hunt? Large animals like deer, water buffalo, wild pigs, and antelope. Tigers eat smaller animals, too, and even hunt leopards, bears, and young elephants and rhinos. When close enough, the cat rushes and leaps, biting the animal's neck or throat with its powerful jaws. The tiger eats as much as it can and then either drags away the rest or covers it with dirt and grass. It returns over the next few days to eat more.

Sadly, the number of these amazing cats left in the wild continues to shrink. One hundred years ago, nine tiger subspecies and 100,000 tigers roamed rainforests, snow forests,

evergreen forests, swamps, and grasslands in Asia. However, poaching, habitat destruction, and other human activities made three of those subspecies extinct. A fourth subspecies only exists in a small number of zoos. Meanwhile, studies indicate that the combined wild population of the other five subspecies is fewer than 5,000.

A couple other tiger facts:

- Each tiger's stripes are unique, just like your fingerprints. The stripes aren't just in the tiger's hair, but on the skin itself.
- Unlike most cats, tigers love water and can even kill their prey while swimming.



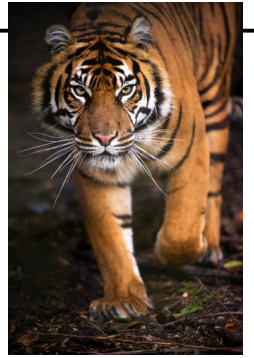
About the Author

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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1. You are exploring the jungles of southeast Asia, and you hope to see some animals. Which animal are you more likely to see, an antelope or a tiger? Explain why.

2. According to the information in the article, what is one way you can tell one tiger apart from another tiger?

3. Name one important lesson that tiger cubs learn during playtime when they are growing up.

4. Approximately how many tigers have disappeared from the wild since their numbers were recorded 100 years ago?

5. Name one threat to the remaining population of wild tigers.

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. ____ b ____ p e ____ i e ____

hint: a smaller group within a species

2. ____ o ____ i t ____ r ____

hint: living alone

3. p ____ a ____ h ____ n g

hint: illegally hunting animals

4. ____ m ____ ____ s h

hint: a surprise attack

5. a ____ ____ e l ____ ____ e

hint: a deer-like animal found in Africa and Asia

6. ____ w ____ ____ p s

hint: low-lying areas where water collects; marshes

7. e ____ ____ a n ____ e ____ e d

hint: at risk of becoming extinct

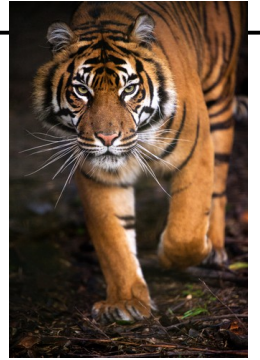
8. h a ____ i ____ a ____

hint: an area where an animal lives

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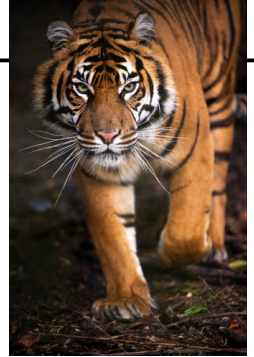


In the article, "Tiger Talk", you learned many interesting facts about the beautiful and powerful tiger.

Based on what you learned in the article, what are some reasons why it's difficult, and even dangerous, to be a tiger?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

ANSWER KEY



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1. You are exploring the jungles of southeast Asia, and you hope to see some animals. Which animal are you more likely to see, an antelope or a tiger? Explain why.

You are more likely to see an antelope because tigers are very endangered and are therefore rare.

2. According to the information in the article, what is one way you can tell one tiger apart from another tiger?

You can identify a tiger by its stripes, which are unique like human fingerprints.

3. Name one important lesson that tiger cubs learn during playtime when they are growing up.

Tiger cubs learn hunting skills by ambushing their mothers during playtime.
(Also accept: Tiger cubs learn by watching their mothers hunt.)

4. Approximately how many tigers have disappeared from the wild since their numbers were recorded 100 years ago?

approximately 95,000 tigers

5. Name one threat to the remaining population of wild tigers.

Accept the following answers: poaching, habitat destruction, or human activities.

ANSWER KEY

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. s u b s p e c i e s subspecies
hint: a smaller group within a species
2. s o l i t a r y solitary
hint: living alone
3. p o a c h i n g poaching
hint: illegally hunting animals
4. a m b u s h ambush
hint: a surprise attack
5. a n t e l o p e antelope
hint: a deer-like animal found in Africa and Asia
6. s w a m p s swamps
hint: low-lying areas where water collects; marshes
7. e n d a n g e r e d endangered
hint: at risk of becoming extinct
8. h a b i t a t habitat
hint: an area where an animal lives