

# TIGER

Tigers are among the most magnificent of all the cats. The largest of the four "big cats," a tiger can reach up to 4 metres (13 ft) in total length and weigh up to 300 kilograms (660 pounds).

## Unique as Fingerprints

Apart from its huge size and power, the tiger's most remarkable feature is the pattern of dark stripes on its fur. Most tigers have over 100 stripes and no two tigers share the same pattern of stripes. Thus, the stripes on a tiger could be used to identify individuals, much as fingerprints are used to identify people.

## A Place Called Home

The tiger lives in a variety of habitats – it can be found in the tropical evergreen and deciduous forests of southern Asia as also the coniferous, scrub oak, and birch forests of Siberia. It also flourishes in the mangrove forest of the Sundarbans, the dry thorn forests of north-western India, and the tall grasses of the terai at the foot of the Himalayas.

## Young Ones

A tigress usually lays about 3–4 young ones. The cubs are dependent on their mother's milk for about the first 2 months of their lives. After that the cubs start accompanying the mother to kills. The cubs are weaned at 6 months but are totally dependent on their mother for food until they are about 18 months old.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Tigers are solitary animals and you will rarely see a group of them together. However, when seen together, a group is termed a 'streak' or an 'ambush'.

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