

African Lion

Panthera leo leo

DESCRIPTION (*male*) Length, including tail, 8-1/2 to 10 feet (260-305 cm), occasionally more. Shoulder height 40-48 inches (100-120 cm). Weight 350-500 pounds (160-225 kg), sometimes more. (*female*) Head and body length, including tail, 7-9 feet (215-275 cm). Shoulder height 38-42 inches (97-107 cm). Weight 265-375 pounds (120-170 kg). The female normally has two pairs of teats, but some individuals have been recorded with three pairs.

The lion is the largest cat in Africa and, among the world's cats, is second in size only to the tiger. The smooth short coat is usually tawny beige in color, but can vary from light gray to dark reddish brown. The end of the tail has a black tuft, and there are black markings on the backs of the ears. There are five toes (including dewclaws) on the front feet, four on the hind feet, all with sharp, curved, retractile claws. The male usually has a mane of long hairs on its head, shoulders and chest, but there is much variation, with some individuals having magnificent manes and others being nearly bald, and the color varying from blond to black. Besides being considerably smaller than males, females are more lightly built and lack a mane.

