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## Bengal Tiger

PANTHERA TIGRIS TIGRIS

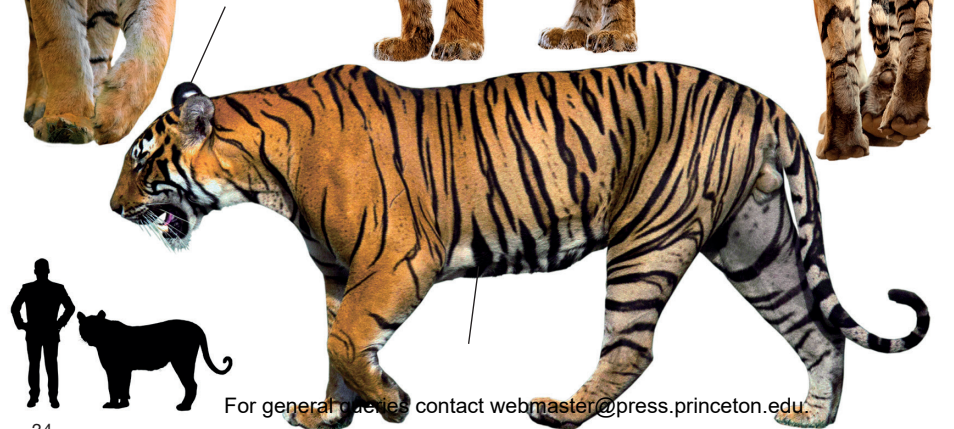
BL: 173-221 cm (♂), 157-175 cm (♀). TL: 85-110 cm. SH: 90-110 cm. W: 175-260 kg (♂), 100-160 kg (♀). SL: 31.1 cm (♂), 26.8 cm (♀). SW: 25.1 cm (♂), 19.6 cm (♀). DF: 30. CN: 38. The largest cat, with a deep chest, muscular forequarters, and heavily built limbs. A large subspecies. Coat is short and glossy, rich orange to rufous-fawn in color, patterned with black stripes, often doubled, from shoulder to root of tail. White underparts. Pseudomelanism (very wide and merged stripes, giving an almost entirely black appearance) and erythrism (strawberry tigers) may occur; complete melanism is unknown. White forms with blue eyes and chocolate-colored stripes on a white background are very rare. Males with a cheek ruff. White patches around eyes and on cheeks. Ears small and rounded, black on the back, with a large, conspicuous white spot. Nose pad flesh colored. Long whiskers. Powerful forelimbs with large paws, shorter than hind limbs. Tail is long, slim, and banded with black rings almost to the tip. Females are smaller and lighter than males.



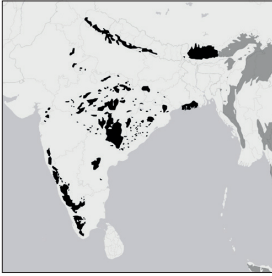
white form



Young



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*Panthera tigris tigris*  
(Bengal population)

**OTHER NAMES** *French:* Tigre du Bengale. *German:* Königstiger, Indischer Tiger, Bengaltiger. *Spanish:* Tigre de Bengala, tigre indio. *Russian:* Бенгальский тигр. *Hindi:* Bagh, sher. *Kannada:* Hoole. *Malayalam:* Kaduwa, naree. *Marathi:* Patery, dhanya wagh.

**TAXONOMY** The IUCN Cat Specialist Group recognizes only two subspecies: *P. t. tigris* (comprising Bengal, Malayan, Indochinese, South Chinese, Siberian, and extinct Caspian Tiger populations), and *P. t. sondaica* (Sumatran and extinct Javan and Balinese populations). A recent genetic study supports six monophyletic tiger clades: *tigris* (Bengal), *altaica* (Amur), *amoyensis* (South China), *corbetti* (Indochinese), *jacksoni* (Malayan), and *sumatrae* (Sumatran), with *virgata* (Caspian), *sondaica* (Javan), and *balica* (Balinese) having become extinct within the 20th century.

**REPRODUCTION** *Gestation:* 93-106 days. *Young per Birth:* 1-4. *Weaning:* 6 months. *Sexual Maturity:* 3-4 years (♀), 4-5 years (♂). *Life Span:* 15 years, over 20 years in captivity. *Breeding Season:* Throughout the year, with most births occurring in December and April. Cubs are born in a shelter situated in tall grass, thick bush, or in caves, with eyes and ears closed. At 5-6 months of age they begin to take part in hunting, and at 2-3 years, they slowly start to separate from the family group and become transient.

**BEHAVIOR** *Social Behavior:* Solitary. *Diet:* Mainly sambar, but also wild pig, spotted deer, or even fish from mangroves; large animals such as rhinos, elephant calves, and gaur are taken opportunistically; they may attack humans if prey is unavailable, or if the tiger is old or injured. They hunt nocturnally, but in certain protected areas are diurnal due to tourist presence. They stalk their prey through high grass cover or undergrowth and, with one sudden onrush, take it down with a bite to the throat, and hold on until prey is lifeless; suffocation is also practiced. Tigers tend to eat the prey from the rump forward as opposed to Leopards, which eat from the belly up.

**DISTRIBUTION** *Native:* Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal. *Regionally Extinct:* China, Pakistan. In India, it is distributed along the Terai foothills of the Himalayas, in NE India, in central India, the Eastern Ghats and the Western Ghats including the Nilgiri plateau. The states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Arunachal Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh have large Tiger habitats left while those in Assam, Karnataka, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan support large numbers in protected areas.

**HABITAT** Tropical moist evergreen forests, tropical dry forests, tropical and subtropical moist deciduous forests, mangroves, subtropical and temperate upland forests, and alluvial grasslands. In the Sundarbans, it is adapted to a mangrove habitat, in the Terai it frequents a moist deciduous-grassland-riverine habitat complex, and in higher altitudes such as Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, it inhabits coniferous, oak, and rhododendron forests.

**CONSERVATION STATUS** Endangered. CITES: Appendix I. Estimated population of this subspecies was 2,400 animals in 2010 (1,700 in India, 440 in Bangladesh, 200 in Nepal, 75 in Bhutan), with no subpopulation larger than 250. India is home to the largest number of Bengal Tigers and the largest number of Tigers among all Tiger range states.

**PHOTO CREDITS** TL: *Oakdalecat*, Kanha (India); TR: *Kirill Kurashov*; CL: *Amit Rane*, Tadoba Andhari (India); CR, Young: *Vladimir Cech*, Ranthambhore NP (India) B: *EPhotocorp*, Ranthambhore NP (India).

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