

African Lion (*Panthera leo*)

- African lions are large predators that can weigh up to 500 pounds. Males are larger than females and can be distinguished by their mane, which surrounds their head and extends down to their chest.
- Lions are a social species who live in prides of up to 40 individuals; the average group has 13 members.
- This species is found in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, and its habitat ranges from forests to shrublands and grasslands.
- Lions breed year-round. Males compete fiercely for the ability to breed with prides of females. Young males often band together to gain control of a pride, with stronger males forcing weaker ones out in battles that can end in death.
- The females of a pride often give birth in close proximity and can help one another care for their cubs. Cubs are kept in hiding for the first eight weeks of their lives and can remain dependent on adults until they are 16 months of age.
- Female lions remain in their pride upon reaching maturity, while males leave the group after two and a half years—living nomadically for a time before seeking to take over their own pride.
- Lions are the only wild big cats that live and hunt in groups. They often use coordinated group attacks to capture prey, surrounding their prey before charging from the left, right, and center.
- This species normally spends up to 20 hours a day resting.
- The estimated wild population is less than 40,000, making the African lion a vulnerable species.

Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)

- Canada lynxes have long and dense fur, triangular black tufts at the tips, and snowshoe-like paws. Their back legs are longer than the front legs, causing their back to slope downward to the front.
- These felines are good swimmers and agile climbers.
- Specialist predators, Canada lynxes almost exclusively hunt snowshoe hares, and they mainly hunt at night when their prey is most active.
- This North American species is found throughout much of the boreal forest and grasslands of Alaska and Canada.
- Individual lynxes, particularly of the same sex, tend to avoid each other, forming “intrasexual” territories.
- This species’ large paws act like snowshoes and keep them from sinking into the snow when they hunt. The tufts on their ears may aid their hearing or help them detect objects above their head.
- A lion weighs 20 times more than a lynx, but their paws only differ in size by an inch.
- Lynxes stay in the same territory all year and have to find food in the winter. If snowshoe hares cannot be found, they will prey on small mammals or birds.
- Canada lynxes can reach nearly two feet tall and weigh up to 35 pounds.

Snow Leopard (*Panthera uncia*)

- Snow leopards have thick, spotted fur that keeps these feline predators warm in their cold environment and provide camouflage against rocky terrain.
- This species is a largely solitary feline, coming together only to breed.
- An average litter includes two or three cubs. Females give birth in a shelter lined with their own fur, and the cubs remain secluded up to three months before venturing outside. Young remain dependent on their mother for another year after leaving the den.
- Snow leopards are found throughout Central and East Asia in mountain ranges.
- These felines use their long tails for balance when running, jumping, or leaping.
- Snow leopards live at the highest altitude of any cat species. During freezing temperatures, they wrap their tail around their face for additional protection.
- Sheep, boar, deer, rodents, and other small mammals make up the bulk of this predator's diet.
- These cats can jump 20 feet into the air and leap 50 feet across the ground to navigate mountainous terrain.
- This species can reach more than four feet in length and weigh up to 160 pounds.
- They are rarely seen in the wild since they blend into their surroundings so perfectly.
- The estimated wild population is less than 3,500, making snow leopards vulnerable.

Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*)

- Red pandas resemble raccoons with a red coat, long tail, and white spots on their cheeks, mouth, and ears.
- This species is found in the mountainous forests of Central and East Asia.
- An arboreal species, red pandas spend most of their time in the branches, where they eat bamboo shoots, bamboo leaves, berries, flowers, and the occasional egg or insect.
- Red pandas are a largely solitary animal. Males and females define separate territories via scent marking, coming together only for breeding.
- Females rear young alone, giving birth in leaf-lined tree cavities and leaving the cubs while foraging for food. After a year of care, mother and offspring go their separate ways, each pursuing a life of solitude among the trees.
- Red pandas are not related to cats, racoons, or pandas. According to DNA testing, they are the only living member of the taxonomic family Ailuridae.
- Special adaptations in their wrists and ankles help them grasp branches and climb head first down tree trunks.
- This species uses a “panda’s thumb”—an extension of the wrist bone—to grasp fruit and branches.
- Bamboo makes up the bulk of their diet, but because the omnivores can’t fully digest bamboo fiber, red pandas spend a large part of their day foraging for necessary nutrients.
- Red pandas are an endangered species.