



# SUMATRAN TIGER

CARNIVORA

Family: Felidae

Genus: *Panthera*

Species: *tigris*  
*sumatrae*



**Range:** Island of Sumatra near the Malaysian Peninsula

**Habitat:** Evergreen forest, swamp forest, grassland and tropical rain forest.

**Niche:** nocturnal/crepuscular, terrestrial, carnivorous

**Wild diet:** wild pig and Sambar deer

**Zoo diet:** fortified horsemeat

**Life Span:** (Wild) 15 yrs  
(Captivity) 26 yrs

**Sexual dimorphism:** Male is larger and heavier than female

**Location in SF Zoo:** Lion House

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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The background color of the upper parts ranges from reddish orange to reddish brown while the under parts are creamy to white. The head, body, tail and limbs have a series of narrow vertically oriented black, grey, or brown stripes though they are proportionally wider than the others. The Sumatran is the smallest of the five remaining tiger subspecies and has the darkest coat. Their smaller size makes it easier for them to make their way through the jungle where they can stalk and ambush their prey. The hind limbs are longer than the fore limbs that along with the shoulders are more heavily muscled (more so than the hind limbs). The forepaws have long, sharp retractile claws enabling them to grab and hold prey once contact is made. The skull is foreshortened, thus increasing the shearing leverage of the powerful jaws. Ears have well developed earflaps that are keen sound collectors. The tongue is coated with sharp-pointed papillae, which retains and lacerates food, and rasp flesh off a carcass. This tiger has distinctively long whiskers that are useful sensors in the dark and dense underbrush. Their darker coloration may be a hunting advantage within their heavily wooded forest habitat. Their large canines are used to bring down and hold prey. Carnassial teeth act as scissor cutting meat, so it can be swallowed. They have webbing between their toes, which makes them excellent swimmers; they will chase fast moving hoof stock into the water where they become slow swimmers and easy prey.

<b>Weight:</b> M 200-350 lbs F 180 - 300 <b>Length:</b> 7.2 - 8.9 ft <b>TL:</b> 23.5 - 37 ins.
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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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The tiger is classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN and is on CITES Appendix I. Ninety percent of all tiger species have disappeared during the 20th century and today only about 400 to 500 Sumatran tigers still exist in the wild. Sumatran tigers are the smallest surviving tiger subspecies. Deforestation has fragmented the tiger's range and poaching remains a problem. In 1992 AAZPA listed 54 (23.29.2) individuals in the North American Sumatran Tiger SSP in 21 institutions. As of 2006 there are 65 Sumatran tigers in Indonesia zoos, 85 in European zoos and 20 in Australian zoos. There are 70 tigers managed by North American zoos.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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Tigers roar to announce they have made a kill or to attract a mate. Purrs and grunts may be heard for a variety of reasons, but territories are marked with urine, feces and tree scratching. They are primarily solitary except when courting or females with young. While a male's range will overlap several female territories, they do not overlap another male's range. Female may share a home range but do not defend territories. For males, avoidance rather than fighting seems to be the rule. Tigers require adequate cover or shade (for cooling and sleep), water (to bath and drink), and prey. To hunt, the tiger depends on sight and hearing more than on smell. Stalks slowly through cover, approaching prey from the side or rear then leaps on prey trying to knock it down and grab its throat to either strangle it or bite it at the back of the neck. Tigers fail in at least 90% of their attempts to capture prey. While tigers may be responsible for more human deaths through direct attacks than any other wild mammal, tigers rarely become man-eaters and normally avoid contact with humans. Occasionally indulges in cannibalism by eating dead or dying cubs.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Tigers can mate at any time but most frequently between November and April. Females usually give birth every 2-2.5 years but if a litter is lost, it can be replaced within 5 months. Births can occur in caves, rocky crevices or dense vegetation. Cubs open their eyes in 6-14 days and are able to travel with mother at 5-6 months of age. They are capable of killing at 11 months.

Estrous polyestrous ~ receptivity lasts 3-6 days

Gestation: 102 - 112 days

# of Mammarys: 2-4 pair

# of Young: 1-6 but 3-4 is average

Sexual Maturity: M 3-4 yrs / F 4-5 yrs

Weaning Age: 3-6 months

Weight at birth:

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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They can swim well, easily crossing river 4-6 miles wide and have been known to swim 18 miles. 3 of the 8 subspecies are now extinct Caspian- 1970s, Bali - 1940s and Javan - 1980s. With only 20-30 animals the South China/Amoy Tiger may be next.

### **Sources:**

Encyclopedia of Mammals; MacDonald © 1984 p 36-9

[http://tigersincrisis.com/sumatran\\_tiger.htm](http://tigersincrisis.com/sumatran_tiger.htm)

<http://www.honolulu zoo.org/tiger.htm>

**Last Revision: 6/92**

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