

MALAYAN TIGER

Panthera tigris jacksoni



Location: Tigers, in general, are found in isolated pockets of Asia. The Malayan tiger, a subspecies of tiger, reside in the forests of southern Malay Peninsula. Tigers inhabit forested regions that offer dense cover for camouflage, and food and water sources.

Diet: The Malayan tiger is a carnivore, preying primarily on sambar deer, barking deer and wild boar. As a large predator, a tiger regards most animals it encounters as potential food, including monkeys, birds and reptiles.

Tigers are nocturnal hunters. They are thought to locate prey using their sensitive hearing and sight more than their sense of smell. Tigers can see long distances during the day; however, their night vision is about 5 times better than humans. The soft pads on their feet aid tigers to silently stalk prey so that the cats are not detected. With their powerful strength and sharp claws, these cats are able to bring their prey down. It has been estimated that a tiger needs between 12-15 pounds of protein a day but it can eat around 70 pounds of meat at a time.

Life Cycle: Except when females are raising cubs, tigers are solitary. Communication is maintained among tigers by visual signals, scent markings and vocalizations. Tigers communicate vocally with roars, growls, snarls, grunts, moans, mews, hisses and low-frequency sounds (infrasound). Their sense of hearing is so sharp that the tigers are capable of detecting these low-frequency sounds, which have the ability to cover long distances and travel through the dense forests. Each sound has its own purpose, and appears to reflect a tiger's intent or mood.

Malayan tigers may mate at any time of the year. The gestation period for tigers is approximately 93-112 days (roughly 3-4 months). Litters range from 2-4 cubs but sometimes as many as 6 are born. Depending on the subspecies, each cub typically weighs between 1.5-3.5 pounds; a Malayan tiger cub weighs around 1.5 pounds. The newborns are blind and helpless. Their eyes open between 1-2 weeks after birth. By 3 weeks of age, the cubs can walk. The coat color of the cubs tends to be rather light but darkens to the adult shade in about 3.5-5.5 months.

The mother spends most of her time nursing her offspring for about the first 3-6 months. The cubs start following the mother at around 2 months old and begin to take some solid food at that time. By approximately 6 months of age, the cubs begin to take part in hunting expeditions. Young tigers are dependent on their mother until they become proficient hunters, generally by 1.5-3 years of age. When they begin to make their own kills, the young tigers leave their mother's range. Females reach sexual maturity between 3-4 years; males grow faster as cubs but take up to 5 years to mature.

Tigers are the largest cats found in the wild but the subspecies differ in size. A male Siberian tiger commonly ranges from 400-675 pounds; the female weighs between 220-370 pounds. In contrast, the Malayan tiger is considered among the smallest subspecies of tiger. The Malayan tiger's weight is around 220-308 pounds for an adult male and approximately 165-245 pounds for a female. For the Malayan tiger, the male measures almost 8 feet in length from head to tail and the female approximately 6.5 feet in length.

Remarks: Tigers have a reddish-orange coat with vertical black stripes along the flanks and shoulders. These stripes help camouflage a tiger. The form and density of the stripes differs between the subspecies. The unique pattern of stripes is used to identify individuals, much in the same way as fingerprints are used to identify people.

Like most cats, tigers have retractable claws. The claws are usually tucked in their paws. The advantage to retractable claws is that it keeps them from rapidly wearing down. The claws are extended when they are needed.