



Zoo Activity Packet

Big Cats
Big Cats



Dear Educator,

Niabi Zoo, located in Coal Valley, Illinois, is part of the Rock Island County Forest Preserve. The ground covers 38 acres, with an additional 200 acres set aside for native flora and fauna preservation. Niabi, an Oswego Indian word means “young deer spared from the hunter’s arrow”. A fitting name, Niabi is home to a variety of animals.

Niabi Zoo takes pride in the quality animals and experience we provide for our communities! Our education department is committed to providing top quality educational programming. It is our goal to help spread the message about the importance of caring for our earth by leaving healthy ecosystems for our families and future generations.

Niabi Zoo is a great place to visit and we want to make your experience as educational as possible. The purpose of this material is to encourage students and teachers to explore the animal kingdom while learning about conservation efforts to protect our ecosystems.

Zoos provide an opportunity to learn about animals, but more importantly, to develop positive attitudes and curiosity about nature. Niabi Zoo hopes to create an adventure that encourages our visitors to leave this experience with a greater appreciation for all living things!

After completing this guide, we ask that you complete and return the attached evaluation form. We would love to hear your comments and appreciate any suggestions for improvement!

Sincerely,

Education Department
Niabi Zoo



Teacher Guide- Big Cats

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to classify members of the Big Cat family.
2. Students will be able to define animal enrichment.
3. Students will be able to list different types of enrichment.
4. Students will be able to discuss modern husbandry techniques.
5. Students will be able to explain differences between species.

IL State Learning Standards that could be applied with this material:

English Language Arts:

1A, 1B, 1C; 3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B; 5A, 5B, 5C

Goal 1 (Reading) 1A, 1B, 1C

Vocabulary skills, animal stories, compare and contrast reading

Goal 3 (Writing) 3A, 3B, 3C

Creative writing, animal cards, research paper, worksheets

Goal 4 (Listening & Speaking) 4A, 4B

Class discussion, student reports

Goal 5 (Research) 5A, 5B, 5C

Research, organize and report information

Science:

11A; 12A, 12B

Goal 11 (Inquiry and Design) 11A

Investigating conservation efforts, collecting data on species, Food chain

Goal 12 (Concepts & Principles) 12A, 12B

Conservation efforts, conservation status of big cats, ecosystems and habitats.

Social Science:

17A, 17C

Goal 17 (Geography): 17A, 17C

Culture & demographics, relationship between humans and animals



Niabi Zoo Evaluation Form

Packet/ Kit

Please take a few minutes to complete this form and return to the Education Department. We appreciate your input to help us provide quality educational programs and materials! Please return evaluation form to Niabi Zoo, Kohler Education Center. All returned evaluation forms will be entered for a drawing!

Which packet/kit did you use:

Scavenger hunt

Notebook tour

Zoo Trunk

Zoo Activity Packet

Creature Feature Kit

Please specify title: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please rate the following by circling the appropriate number:

1= Unsatisfactory, 4= Excellent

Information provided was useful?	1	2	3	4
----------------------------------	---	---	---	---

Subject material was age appropriate	1	2	3	4
--------------------------------------	---	---	---	---

Would you recommend this packet/ kit to others	1	2	3	4
--	---	---	---	---

If used in correlation with a field trip to Niabi Zoo:

Packet/ kit corresponded with the field trip	1	2	3	4
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Pre and post activities were relevant	1	2	3	4
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Vocabulary Sheet

Animal Enrichment: Animal enrichment is stimulating an animal in captivity to investigate and interact with their surroundings.

Carnivore: Animals that are meat eaters.

Carrion Dead and rotting meat or animals.

Diurnal: Active during the day, but inactive during the night.

Endangered: At risk of becoming extinct.

Herbivore: An animal that is a plant eater.

Husbandry: The care and feeding of zoo animals.

Nocturnal: Active during the night, but inactive during the day.

Predator: An animal that kills and eats other animals

Prey: An animal that is killed and eaten by another animal.

Omnivore: An animal that eats both plants and meat.

Facts about Big Cats!

A tiger can eat 70 pounds of meat in a serving! When full the tiger will cover their prey with grass and dirt returning to it for days, until it is consumed.

A tiger's stripes help them hide in tall grasses!

All cats walk on their toes!!

Cats have specialized teeth called "carnassial" teeth for slicing!!

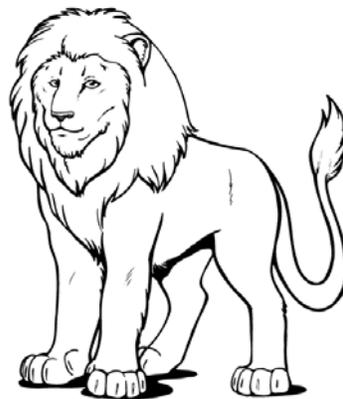
A tiger's stripes are as unique as human fingerprints!!

A cougar is also called a puma or mountain lion!!

Three species of tigers have become extinct since 1950!!

Cats have a special "smell-taste" organ in the roof of their mouth!!

Lions are the only big cats to form lasting, social bonds!!



Tiger Information Sheet

Panthera tigris

There are 5 subspecies including the Bengal Tiger, Siberian or Amur Tiger, Sumatran Tiger, South China Tiger, and the Indochinese Tiger.

There are 3 extinct subspecies including the Bali Tiger, Javan Tiger, and the Caspian Tiger.

Habitat:

Tigers live in southern and eastern Asia in forested areas with waterways or dry forestland and savannahs. They are able to tolerate the low temperatures of the higher elevations. A tiger's territory may range from 20 to 40 square miles. Tigers will use scent or tree scrapings to mark their territory. They may become dangerous when their hunting routines are disturbed or if they are wounded or ill.

Natural Behaviors:

The tiger is an excellent swimmer and will use the water to cool off or to chase prey. They are not good climbers so they seldom take to the trees.

Tigers use their sense of hearing and smell to find their prey. They are solitary hunters which will hide in tall grass and silently stalk their prey for 20 – 30 minutes before pouncing. The black stripes serve as a camouflage which is especially effective at sunset. Tigers are opportunistic, unfussy eaters since they must make a kill once or twice a week to survive. If available, they will eat large animals like elephants or rhinoceros calves, however they prefer less dangerous prey such as wild pigs, deer or bears. They have also been observed eating, crabs, frogs, fish, or even insects or carrion. Although they avoid areas inhabited by man, they will hunt domestic cattle and sheep if necessary.

Small prey is killed by a bite to the back of the neck which severs the spinal cord. Larger prey can be suffocated by a bite to the throat. Tigers often hunt near the water and have been known to drag prey into the water to drown it. The leftover food will be buried and covered with leaves, or hidden in the water until the tiger returns on another day.

A tiger's roar can be heard as far as two miles away. Tigers can growl and purr. A tiger's tail communicates when tigers meet. An upright tail is friendly, while a lowered wagging tail means beware.

Physical Characteristics:

The tiger is the largest and most powerful member of the big cat family. Tigers can grow to 12 feet in length and weigh up to 700 pounds. Their powerful muscles allow them to leap, but can only run fast for a short distance!

A tiger's fur is a rusty yellow (orange) with black stripes. The fur on the belly is white with stripes. The pattern of each tiger is unique. The tail is very long and closely striped. The hair is longer around the face. Northern species tend to be larger and lighter in color, while species from warmer areas are typically darker and smaller. Most tigers have a white spot on their ears. It is thought that this allows them to identify other tigers in heavy brush. This is especially important when a mother is teaching her cubs to hunt.

Tigers have long, sharp teeth, sensitive whiskers, and a rough tongue. The eyes have round pupils and yellow irises. A tiger can see depth, but not color. They also see very well in the dark.

Tigers can walk very quietly on their toes. Each toe is padded and there are retractable claws on each paw. The forepaws have 5 toes, while the hind paws have 4 toes. Like most cats, their claws are retractable. Not only does this allow them to walk silently, but also keeps their claws sharp for hunting.

Tigers communicate in a variety of noises and postures. Like most big cats, they can growl and roar, but not purr. A friendly greeting is a "chuff" which is a short, quiet exhale of air. In addition, body position and tail movements communicate a great deal about the mood of a tiger.

Did you know.....

There is no such animal as a "panther"? Panther is the generic slang term for all big cats of the genus "panthera". A "black panther" refers to a melanistic, or very dark big cat – usually a leopard or jaguar.

Jaguar Information Sheet

Panthera onca

Habitat:

Today the jaguar territory ranges from Mexico to Central America and South America. They were also found in the southwestern United States until the early 1900's. Most jaguars currently live in the Amazon rainforest. The jaguar is the largest cat in the Americas.

While it shares its territory with many other cat species, jaguars prefer to live in the dark, wet areas of the jungle. Jaguars are currently endangered so it is illegal to hunt them. However, humans remain their only real enemy. Many jaguars are killed every year for their beautiful fur. In addition, they suffer from habitat loss as their jungle homes are destroyed for farming and logging.

Natural Behaviors:

The jaguar is a carnivore which is most active at night and prefers to hunt at dusk and at dawn. It lives in dens in caves and sleeps or suns on the rocks during the day. It is a solitary hunter whose territory may range from 2 to 20 square miles. The jaguar loves water and is a good swimmer who often fishes for food. It can also climb quite well and often hunts in the trees. Its prey includes a wide variety of large animals, including domestic livestock, rodents, turtles, tapirs, and monkeys. It can kill its prey by slapping the head with a paw or biting through the skull. Jaguars can crush a turtle shell with their jaws!

Sometimes the jaguar will bury the prey to eat later. The jaguar grunts and snarls when hunting, and rarely roars. Its roar sounds more like a deep cough than a typical roar.

Physical Characteristics:

The jaguar is the strongest of all cats. A grown jaguar can weigh from 100-300 pounds and be 5-7 feet long. Its tail often reaches 3 feet in length. The jaguar is heavily built and is very muscular. It has a large head, a wide nose, small ears, sharp teeth and a rough tongue. Its neck is thick and its jaws are very strong. The powerful forelegs have paws with sharp retractable claws. The thick beautiful coats can range in color from gold to dark brown with rosettes of black. (Rosettes are circle of spots with spots inside of the circle).

Leopard Information Sheet

Panthera pardus

Habitat:

Leopards live in a variety of natural surroundings ranging from the forest and plains to swamps and deserts. Their range includes Sub-Saharan and northeastern Africa as well as central Asia, India and China.

They are solitary animals that are seldom seen living in the trees, scrubs, or rocky hills. A leopard's territory is usually about 6 square miles, but may cover up to 200 square miles depending on the availability of food. Leopards may live near settlements.

Natural Behaviors:

Of all the big cats the leopard is the best stalker and climber. Like most big cats, they are nocturnal and very secretive. Its gracefulness assures success when hunting prey. The spots of the leopard provide good camouflage among the leaves and shadows in trees. Leopards often wait quietly on a branch for an animal to walk underneath the tree. The leopard will drop onto the animal, seize its throat or sink its teeth into the skull to kill the prey. It will then carry the animal up into the tree away from other hungry predators that might steal it. Sometimes, leopards pull prey which weighs more than they do into the tree. This versatile hunter will eat young herbivores (eland, wildebeest, impala or gazelle) or small mammals, reptiles and insects. The leopard can catch a bird with a swipe of his paw!

Like many cats, the leopard will mark his territory with urine or tree scratches. A leopard seldom roars, but makes a raspy coughing sound. It may also grunt, growl, snarl, or hiss.

Physical Characteristics:

The leopard is the smallest of the big cats that roar. Although it appears very graceful, leopards are extremely strong with short powerful limbs and neck. Leopards may weigh around 100 to 150 pounds. They can grow to be up to 8 feet long with tails averaging 3 feet in length. They have broad heads, rounded ears, and big paws with retractable claws. They use their whiskers to feel their way along small spaces. Because leopards can see well at night, they are usually nocturnal hunters. The fur on the coat is short and sleek. It may range in color from tawny yellow to black with darker spots. All variations of color can occur in the same litter. Unfortunately, the darker leopards don't survive as well in the wild since they are not as well camouflaged.

Jaguars and leopards are often mistaken for each other. Both are spotted cats... here are some of the differences:

Jaguars	Leopards
Spotted pattern called "rosettes" - circle of spots, with spots in the center	Circles of spots, no spots in the center
Body very compact and muscular	Body appears "long and lean"
Broad head, strong jaw	Relatively narrow, sleek head
Short, thick tail	Very long tail
From the Americas	From Africa and Asia

Think about it.....

Can you think of some good reasons why most cats – including pet cats - have retractable claws? Here's a hint: the only cat that doesn't have retractable claws is the cheetah which doesn't stalk prey but rather chases it down.

(answers below)

There are two reasons.

1. The claws stay sharper, and 2. The animal can move silently without the claws "clicking" on the ground.

Cougar Information Sheet

Puma concolor

Other common names for the cougar include mountain lion and puma.

Habitat:

The cougar has a large territory ranging from Alaska and Canada to South America, including the tropical rainforest of the Amazon. In the United States, most cougars are found west of the Mississippi River. But cougars can also be found in Florida, where they are endangered animals.

Natural Behaviors:

The cougar can leap, climb and run swiftly for short distances. It hides in rocky places and tends to avoid people and other cougars. A cougar will mark its territory with tree scrapings, piles of leaves and dirt, and sprays of urine. Although cougars usually dislike water, they can swim. A cougar cannot roar like most large cats. It will purr and yowl. The cougar, which is a nocturnal predator, does most of its hunting alone at night. They are carnivores and prefer to hunt for deer, but they will eat mice, raccoons, rabbits, or porcupines. After stalking, the cougar uses its claws to bring down the prey, bites its neck to kill, eats his fill, and then hides the remainder for a later meal. A cougar does not need to eat every day.

Physical Characteristics:

A cougar may weigh up to 200 pounds. They can reach lengths of up to 8 feet from head to tail. Its fur varies in color from tan to dark brown with lighter under parts that blend into the environment. The coat has 2 layers with the thickest fur on the inside to provide warmth and guard hairs on the outside to shed the rain and snow. The fur sheds throughout the year but grows longer and thicker for the winter. The claws are sharp and retractable. A thick, furry tail enables the cougar to keep its balance when leaping. The hind legs are longer than the front legs and the front paws are smaller than the hind paws. Each foot has padding on the toes and on the base of the paw to muffle sounds. The tongue has short, sharp hooks to assist in cleaning the bones and scissor type teeth to cut the meat into small pieces as the cougar does not chew its food. At maturity it will be colorblind and its eyes, on the front of the head, are circular and do not contract to slits like most cats. A cougar's lifespan ranges from 10 to 15 years.

Lion information sheet ***Panthera leo***

Habitat:

Although once found as far north as Greece and the Arabian peninsula, lions now live only in areas of sub-Saharan Africa, with a very few remaining in India. They occupy grasslands, woodlands and brush areas (but never jungles). Since their range, (and numbers) has decreased steadily, they are now considered to be a “vulnerable” species.

Natural Behaviors:

Lions are unique among the cats because they live in well structured family groups, called prides. Prides consist of up to 40 individuals which are related. The pride typically has only one or two males. Males defend the group, often warning off intruders with a roar that can be heard 5 miles away. The females hunt and care for the cubs.

Hunting parties of lionesses stalk prey at night. After selecting their prey, they will surround it to attack. Generally the chase is short, lions can run over 30 mph, but only for short distances. This habit of working as a team allows the lionesses to take much larger prey than they could individually. Prey will include anything from a hare to hippos, rhinos or even immature giraffes. Once killed, prey is brought back to be shared by the pride. Males eat first, then lionesses and finally the cubs. Lions don't need to eat everyday. When they do eat, an average meal for a male consists of 15 pounds of meat!

Lions conserve their energy by resting during the heat of day. Lions are inactive about 20 hours a day. Their tan colored coat allows them to blend into the grassy terrain.

Physical Characteristics:

Adult lions are 5-8 feet long with a shoulder height of about 4 feet. Males can weigh from 330 – 550 pounds, females are smaller.

Of course the males are famous for their manes, another unique feature of lions. The mane is considered to play an important role in protecting the throat during fight between competing lions.

Lion cubs can be born any time during the year. Litters usually contain 2-4 cubs. Lionesses share the responsibilities of raising them and teaching them to hunt.

Lions can live up to 30 years in captivity but only about 15 years in the wild.

The Food Chain:

An ecosystem is a living community which depends on each member and its surrounding environment. The living part of an ecosystem is sometimes called a food chain.

Every participant in an ecosystem has an important part to play and if one becomes more dominant than the others, the ecosystem can develop problems.

We'll start with the producers. These are living things which take the non living matter from the environment, such as minerals and gases and uses them to support life. Green plants are considered producers and they are at the beginning of the food chain.

Next are the consumers. These living things need the producers to be their food.

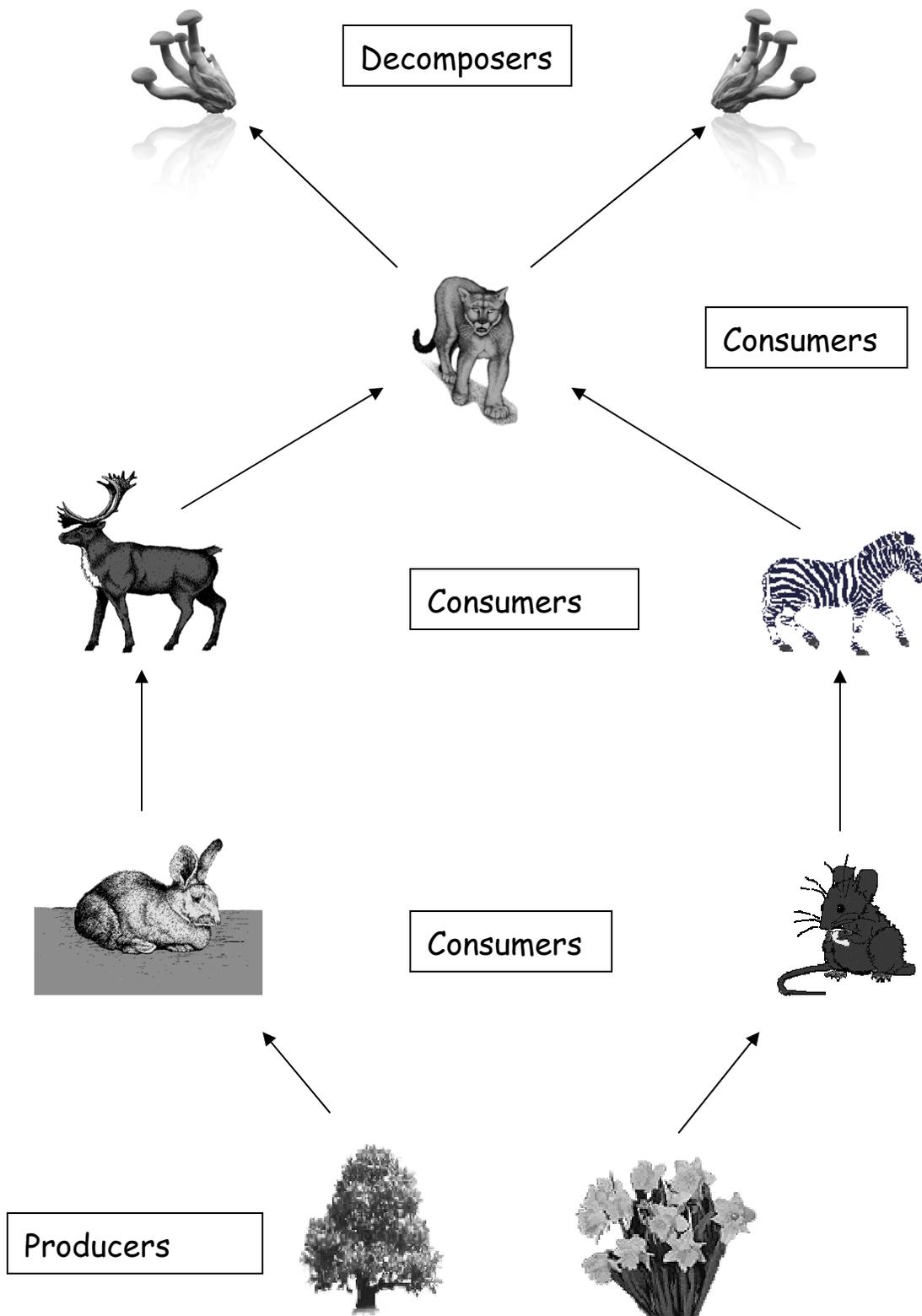
Animals that eat plants are called herbivores. They are considered consumers and are next in the food chain.

Animals that eat other animals are called carnivores. They also are considered consumers and are a link farther along on the food chain since they need the herbivores for their food.

Animals and people who eat both animals and plants are called omnivores, and they are also part of the consumer piece of the ecosystem.

Finally, the last part of the ecosystem is the decomposers. These are the living things which feed off dead plants and animals and reduce their remains to minerals and gases again. Examples are fungi, like mushrooms, and bacteria.

The Food Chain



Pre Field Trip Activities

Behind each activity you will find state goals that can be applied to each activity.

Discuss Large Cat Anatomy with the students so they are familiar with special features of these animals. (1A)

Have students complete “What is a Big Cat” worksheet. (3A)

Have students complete “Which Cat Am I?” worksheet. (3A)

Have students complete the first part of the “What I Know” worksheet. (3A)

Call upon students to be investigators before visiting Niabi Zoo. Have them complete the “Animal Investigators” worksheet. Have students present their animal and findings to the classroom! (1B, 1C; 3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B; 5A, 5B, 5C; 12A, 12B)

Have students select one animal. Using that animal, have students create a food chain that shows where their animal fits in. Students will have to research the diets of various animals to make sure their food chain is accurate! Have students make a food chain... see attached worksheet. (1C; 3A, 3B, 3C; 5A, 5B, 5C; 12A, 12B)

Have students develop 3 research questions based on elephants. Collect and redistribute questions. Using research methods have students answer the questions. Ask several students to report their information to class! (1B, 1C; 3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B; 5A, 5B, 5C; 11A; 12A, 12B)

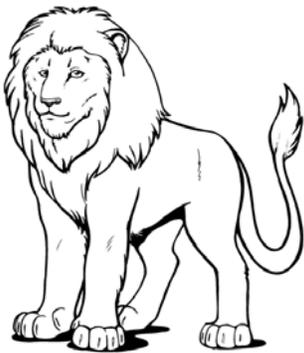
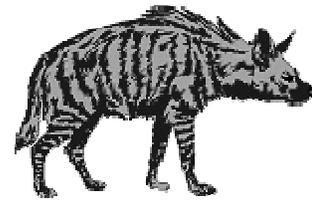
Read books to students on Big Cats. Books to consider: “Annie and the Wild Animals” by Jan Brett, “Big Cat Summer” by Dougal Dixon, “World Above the Clouds: A Story of a Himalayan Ecosystem” by Ann Whitehead Whitehead Nagda, “Why Don’t Tigers Eat Bananas?” by Katherine Smith. (1B, 4A)

Discuss endangered and threatened animals with students. Choose an animal to research. Is this animal endangered, threatened, or not threatened? Why? What can be done or is being done to revive the species population? Develop a class project directed towards conservation efforts and carry out the project. (1C; 3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B; 5A, 5B, 5C; 12A, 12B; 16E; 17A, 17C)

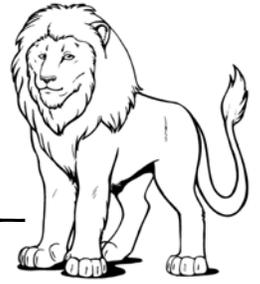
What Is A Big Cat?

Name: _____

Circle the animals that are a Big Cat!



Which Cat Am I?



Name: _____

Use the clues to figure out which cat is being described.

Possible Answers:

Leopard Jaguar Tiger Cougar

I am all one color, a light tan color. I am sometimes called mountain lion or puma. Who am I?

I am a cat with spots. I am the best climber of the cat family! I seldom roar, but make a coughing sound. My fur is often imitated for clothing fashions! Who am I?

I am the largest member of the cat family, and the only one with black stripes. Under my stripes I am an orange color. Who am I?

I have spots, but my spots have spots inside them! I have a car named after me! Who am I?

What I Know About Big Cats

Fill out Part 1 before visiting Niabi Zoo. Fill out Part 2 after visiting Niabi Zoo.

Part 1:

I think I know that Big Cats _____



Part 2:

I know that Big Cats _____

Animal Investigator

Name: _____

Animal I am investigating:

Use 3 sources to find information:

Source # 1: _____

Source # 2: _____

Source # 3: _____

Write 3 things you learned from these sources...

1. _____

2. _____

3.

Food Chain

Plants make food for all living things and use the sun's energy to grow. When animals eat plants, they get energy. You also get energy from eating food. Your food may be plants or animals.

A food chain shows how energy is passed from one living thing to another. All food chains start with plants. You can make your own food chain.

You will need:

- 8 ½ in. by 11 in. sheets of paper or construction paper
- Crayons or markers
- Pencils
- Tape
- Pictures of plants and animals

1. Cut a few pieces of paper in half the long way.
2. Find a picture of a plant or draw one. Tape it to one of these strips of paper.
3. Loop the ends of the strip of paper together and add tape to make a closed circle. You now have the first link in your food chain.
4. Find or draw a picture of something that can eat your plant. Tape it to another strip of paper. Put one end of the strip through the first link and tape the ends to make another closed circle. Now your food chain has two links.
5. Find or draw a picture of something that eats the animal that is eating your plant. Make a third loop. Follow the directions in Step 4.
6. Keep going.

Here are some food chain ideas for you to start with:

Grass—prairie dog—rattlesnake

Acorn—gray squirrel—red-tailed hawk

Flower—beetle—skunk—great horned owl

Mayfly—sunfish—wood stork—alligator

Post Field Trip Activities

Behind each activity you will find state goals that can be applied to each activity.

Jaguars and leopards are often mistaken for each other, but there are several characteristics that are different. Have the students write a compare and contrast paragraph on jaguars and leopards. (3A, 3B, 3C; 5A, 5B, 5C; 12A)

Have students make a homemade “Zoo Book” about their trip to Niabi Zoo! (3A, 3B, 3C)

Have students write a paragraph telling which cat was their favorite and why. Include in the paragraph a fact about that animal that you did not know before visiting the zoo! Have students read their paragraph to the class! (3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B; 5A, 5B, 5C)

Have students complete the last part of the “What I Know” worksheet. Have each student tell the class their fact about big cats! (3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B)

Have students choose a cat from the cat family and write a riddle about that cat. The riddle should give clues to guess Who Am I? Also have students draw a picture of their chosen cat. Read cards to students and have them choose which cat is being described. (3A, 3B, 3C; 4A, 4B)

Have students use their “Animal Investigators” worksheet to create animal fact cards. These cards should contain true or false facts on various animal(s) studied. Use 3x5 index cards. Add creativity by having students draw pictures or cut out pictures and glue to the cards. (3A, 3B, 3C; 5A, 5B, 5C; 12A, 12B)

7. Give students the Big Cat Quiz.

Big Cats Quiz

Name: _____

1. Name four species of big cats

1.

2.

3.

4.

2. Name the two species which have spots

1.

2.

3. Which animal is the largest member of the cat family?

4. True or False: All members of the cat family are carnivores. _____

5. Which cat has spots inside the spots?

6. Which animal is all one color?

7. Define nocturnal:

8. Is it legal to hunt jaguars?

9. True or False. Members of the cat family are all mammals. _____

10. What was your favorite animal at the Big Cats Exhibit at Niabi Zoo?

**Big Cats Quiz
Answer Key**

1. Name four species of big cats
 1. Tiger
 2. Cougar
 3. Leopard
 4. Jaguar

2. Name the two species which have spots
 1. Leopard
 2. Jaguar

3. Which animal is the largest member of the cat family?
Tiger

4. **True** or False: All members of the cat family are carnivores. _____

5. Which cat has spots inside the spots?
Jaguar

6. Which animal is all one color?
Cougar

7. Define nocturnal: Active during the night.

8. Is it legal to hunt jaguars?
No

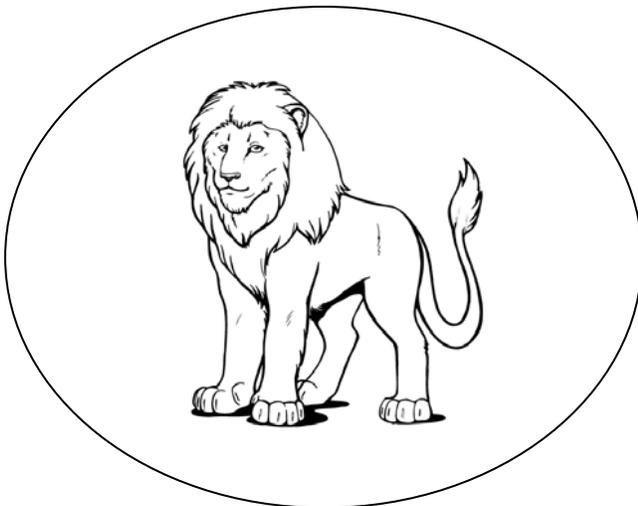
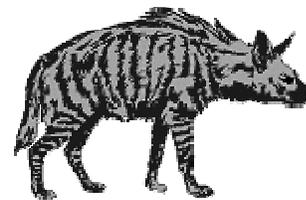
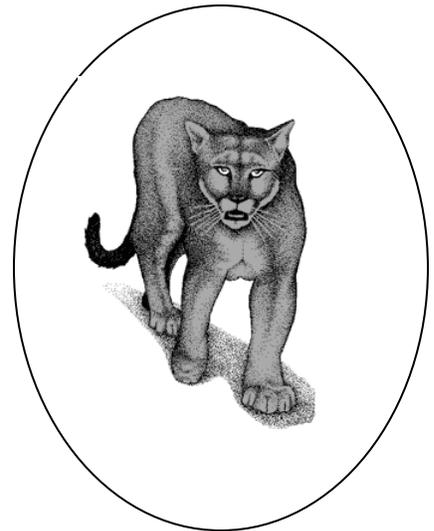
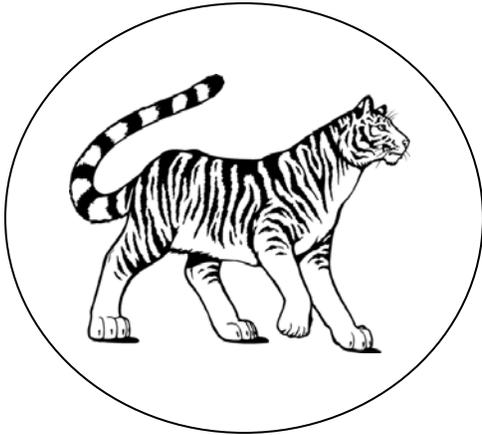
9. **True** or False. Members of the cat family are all mammals. _____

10. What was your favorite animal at the Big Cats Exhibit at Niabi Zoo?

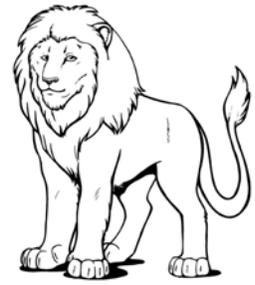
What Is A Big Cat?

Name: _____

Circle the animals that are a Big Cat!



Which Cat Am I?



Name: _____

Use the clues to figure out which cat is being described.

Possible Answers:

Leopard Jaguar Tiger Cougar

I am all one color, a light tan color. I am sometimes called mountain lion or puma. Who am I?

Cougar

I am a cat with spots. I am the best climber of the cat family! I seldom roar, but make a coughing sound. My fur is often imitated for clothing fashions! Who am I?

Leopard

I am the largest member of the cat family, and the only one with black stripes. Under my stripes I am an orange color. Who am I?

Tiger

I have spots, but my spots have spots inside them! I have a car named after me! Who am I?

Jaguar