A close-up photograph of a tiger's face, looking slightly to the left. The tiger's mouth is open, and its bright red tongue is extended. The fur is a mix of orange, black, and white stripes. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light blue.

Wildlife

W O N D E R S

TIGERS

**THE LARGEST**

# Cat

**IN THE WORLD**

Being the world's largest cat, the tiger is a symbol of power and beauty to many. Of the nine subspecies or races of tigers, the Siberian tiger is the biggest, with males weighing 300kg or more. Tigers are found only in Asia. They inhabit diverse habitats, which include snowy mountains, swamps, dry scrub country and hot, steamy rainforests.

Tigers have a lifespan of 15 to 18 years. But these days, many wild tigers do not live this long - they are killed because of poaching. Almost every part of the tiger is thought to have some sort of power to heal, to strengthen or to protect us. It is ironic that the plight of the world's largest cat is a result of humans' admiration for the beautiful feline.

We hope that by providing you with an insight into this awesome and fast disappearing cat, you will come to understand it better and help, in whatever small way, to save the some 3,000 tigers left in the wild.

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**Wildlife Reserves Singapore Group**





## A BODY DESIGNED TO

# Hunt

### Ears

Excellent hearing. Can rotate nearly 180 degrees. Each ear can move independently – one swings backwards and the other forwards to pick up sounds accurately.

### Eyes

Forward-facing eyes, which allow binocular vision to judge distances when stalking prey. In the dark, tigers can see six times better than we do.

### Nose

Excellent sense of smell to detect prey.

### Whiskers

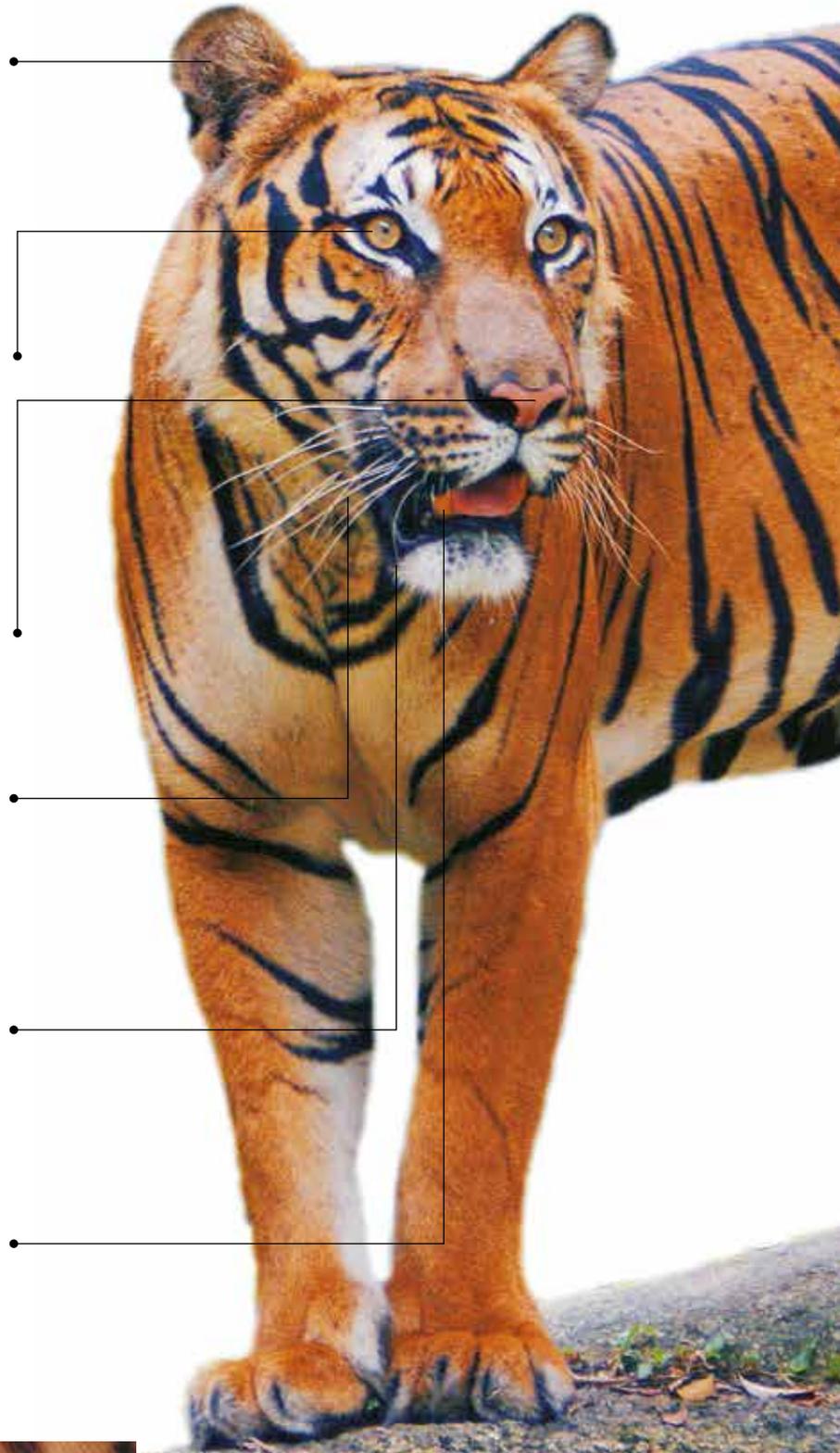
Very sensitive to the touch. Help the tiger to feel its way in the dark, detect obstacles and assess prey's body position.

### Jaws

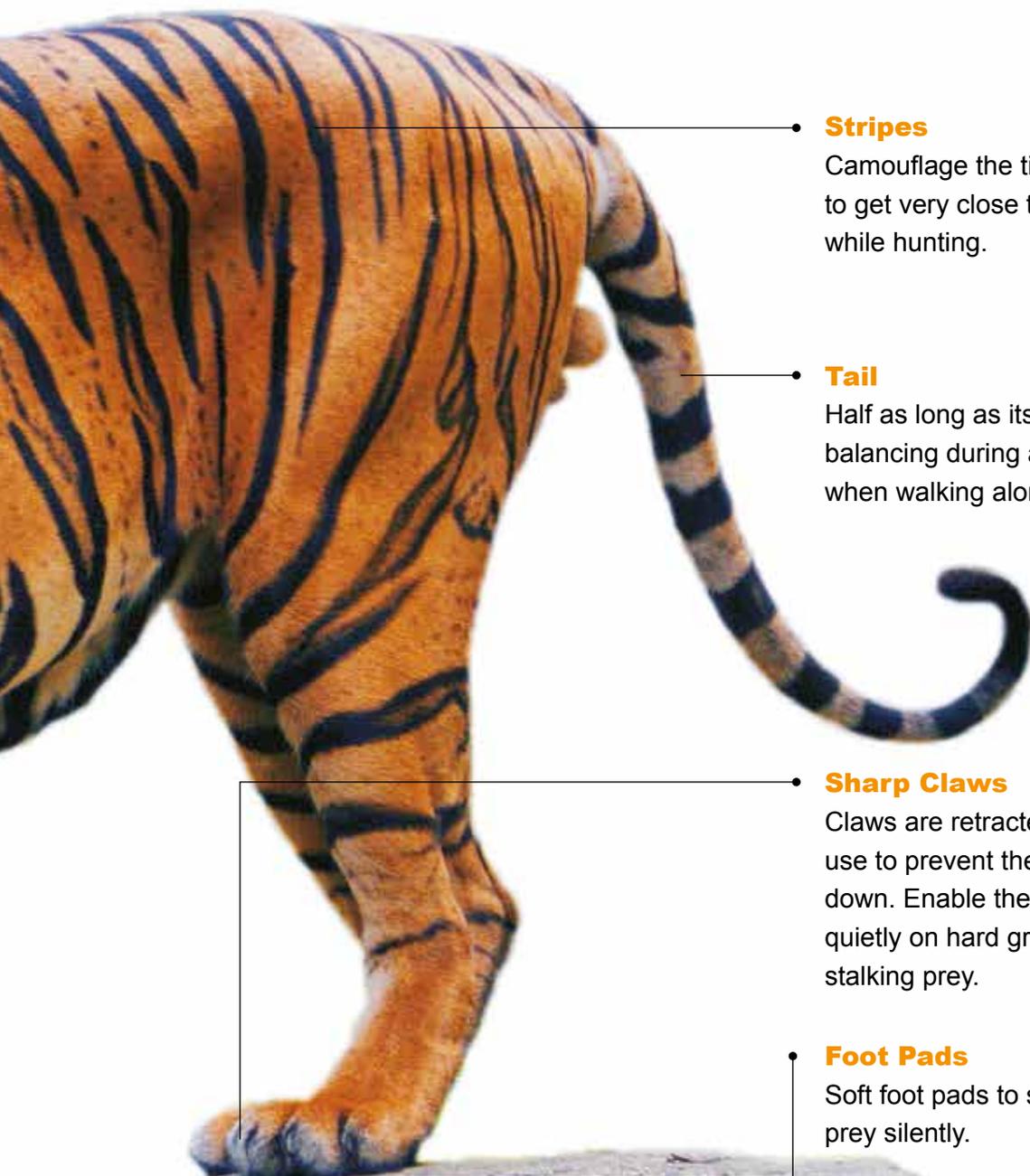
Powerful jaw muscles connect the lower jaw and skull such that the tiger can open its mouth very wide to bite.

### Teeth

Deliver fatal bites to the prey's throat or back of the neck (please see Deadly Weapons).



Tigers are excellent hunters. In fact, they are probably the most powerful land predators when it comes to hunting down large prey single-handedly.



- **Stripes**

Camouflage the tiger and allow it to get very close to the prey while hunting.

- **Tail**

Half as long as its body. Used for balancing during a chase or when walking along branches.

- **Sharp Claws**

Claws are retracted when not in use to prevent them from wearing down. Enable the animal to walk quietly on hard ground when stalking prey.

- **Foot Pads**

Soft foot pads to sneak up on prey silently.



**DEADLY**

# Weapons

## TIGER TEETH

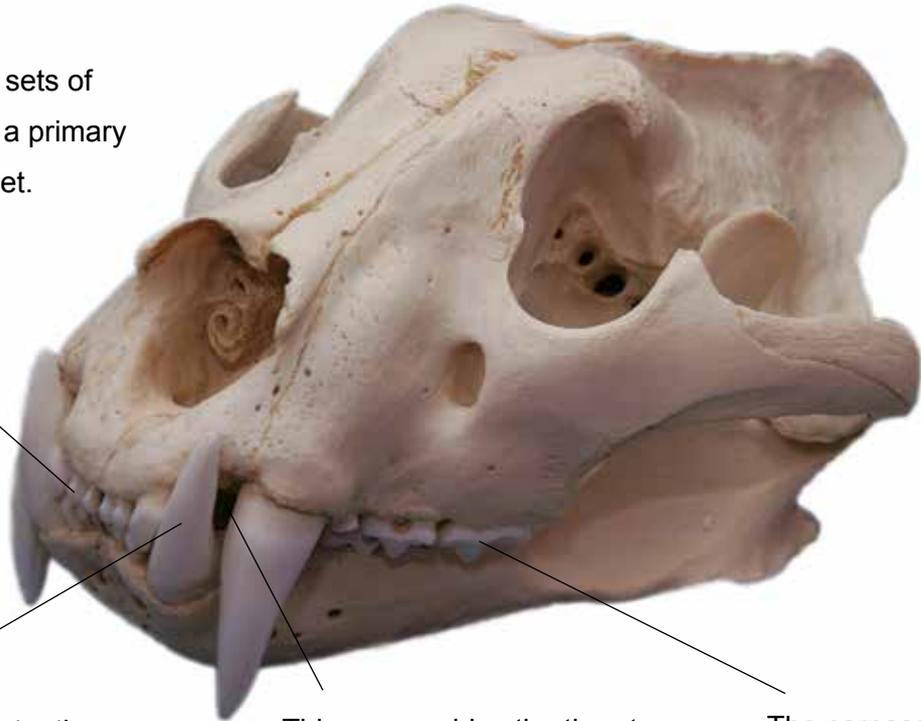
Like us, cats have two sets of teeth in their lifetime – a primary set and a permanent set.

Incisors to pluck feathers and scrape meat.

Fang or canine tooth to stab and hold prey during a kill.

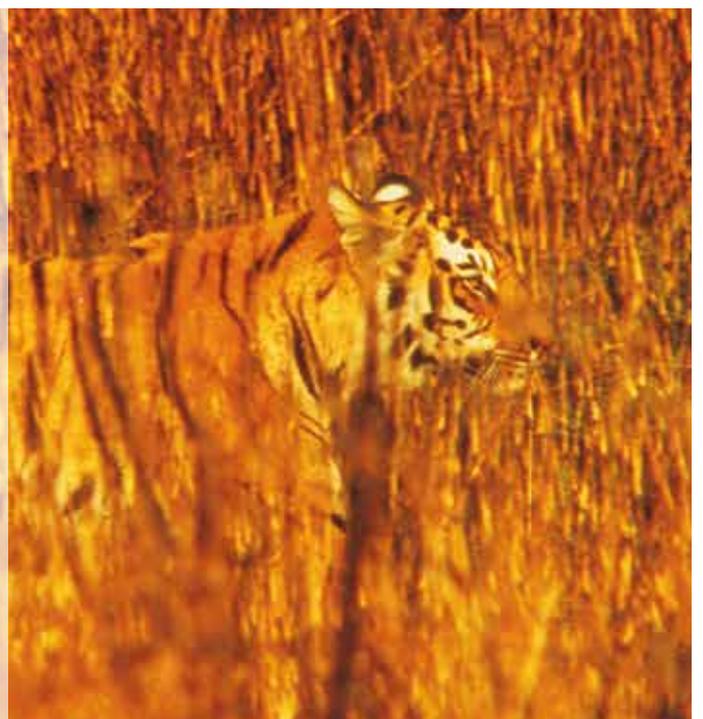
This gap enables the tiger to sink in its teeth as deep as possible to deliver a deadly stab.

The carnassials or scissor-like molars to cut through skin and muscle.



## TIGER STRIPES

Tigers cannot run fast for long distances. The stripes of a tiger help hide it in tall grass. Being camouflaged allows it to get as close as possible to its prey before pouncing. The stripe pattern of a tiger is unique to individual animals – no two tigers have exactly the same pattern.

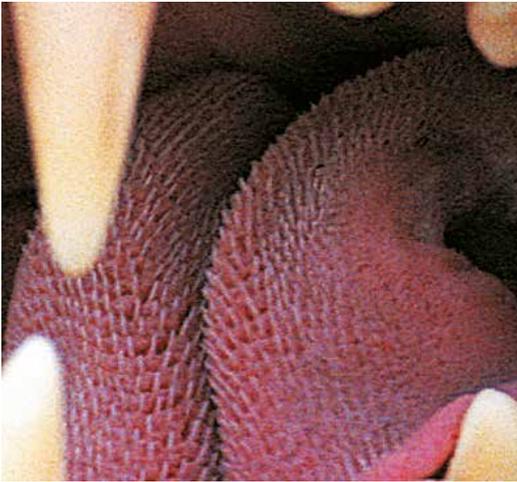


## TIGER TONGUE

Cats' tongues are so rough that they can lick the fur off their prey. This is possible because their tongues are covered with small hook-like projections called papillae.

The papillae also act as tiny cups to hold water when the cat laps the fluid with its tongue.

Cats also use their tongue to groom themselves and their cubs.



## TIGER CLAWS

Every tiger has a hunting territory, which it does not share with another tiger. Scratching trees is one way of marking its territory and warning the others to stay away. While scratching, the glands in its paws release secretions for scent marking. They mark their territory with their urine and faeces too.

Tigers scratch trees for another reason - to sharpen their claws. Having sharp claws help them hunt successfully.



# TIGERS ON THE

# Prowl



Axis Deer

Tigers are strict carnivores. They have been known to eat everything from bears to crocodiles, but their main food source is hoofed mammals such as deer, antelopes, tapirs, and wild cattle and pigs.



Gaur

A tiger will stalk its prey for kilometres, leaping to kill it with a powerful bite to the neck. However, most of the time the animal gets away. Only one or two hunts out of twenty are successful.

As predators, tigers play an important role in nature. They help to keep prey populations in control by killing those that are too weak to escape. Therefore, only the healthy animals remain within prey population.



Tapir

Tigers have big appetites. In a year, one tiger needs to feed on about 70 large animals to survive. This is why tigers usually do not hunt in groups otherwise there will not be enough food to go around.



**DID YOU KNOW**  
tigers can leap up to 10m in a single bound!



1.

The tiger usually hunts at night when their prey are most active. It hides amongst tall grass or behind trees so that it can sneak up on its prey.



2.

Then, it leaps forward and attacks its prey from behind.



3.

It grabs its prey with its sharp claws and pulls it to the ground. Next, comes the fatal bite on the throat or the back of the neck.



4.

It drags its kill to a secluded place and eats until it is full. It buries the leftovers in leaves or tall grass and returns to feed over several nights. Although it has a habit of consuming a kill over a few days, a hungry tiger can eat over 36kg of meat at one sitting.



# THE *Man-eaters*

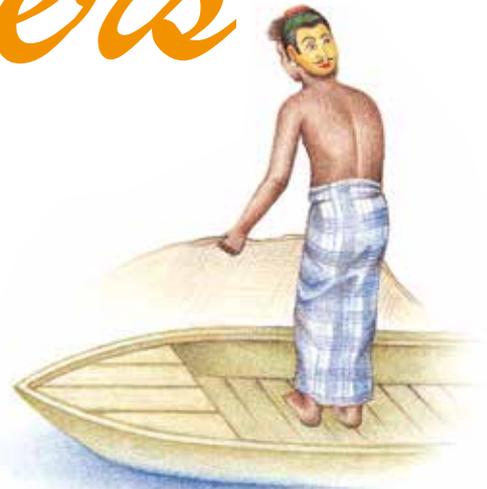
Stories of man-eating tigers abound. While it is true that they exist, they usually attack because humans enter their territory. Crop plantations and villages are located increasingly closer to the tigers' habitat. Such close encounters between humans and cats often result in tragic ends.

The most notorious man-eater was the 'Champawat tigress', which killed 436 people in Nepal and India over a period of 8 years. The tigress was eventually shot in 1911 by the legendary Jim Corbett.

Today, tigers living in the Sundarbans, a wetlands area shared by India and Bangladesh, are known to kill 50 to 100 people each year. There are some 500 tigers living in the reserve. When villagers enter the area to fish and collect honey and wood, they come into close contact with the tigers and may get killed. Some of the tigers have become so bold that they swim out to attack fishermen in their boats.

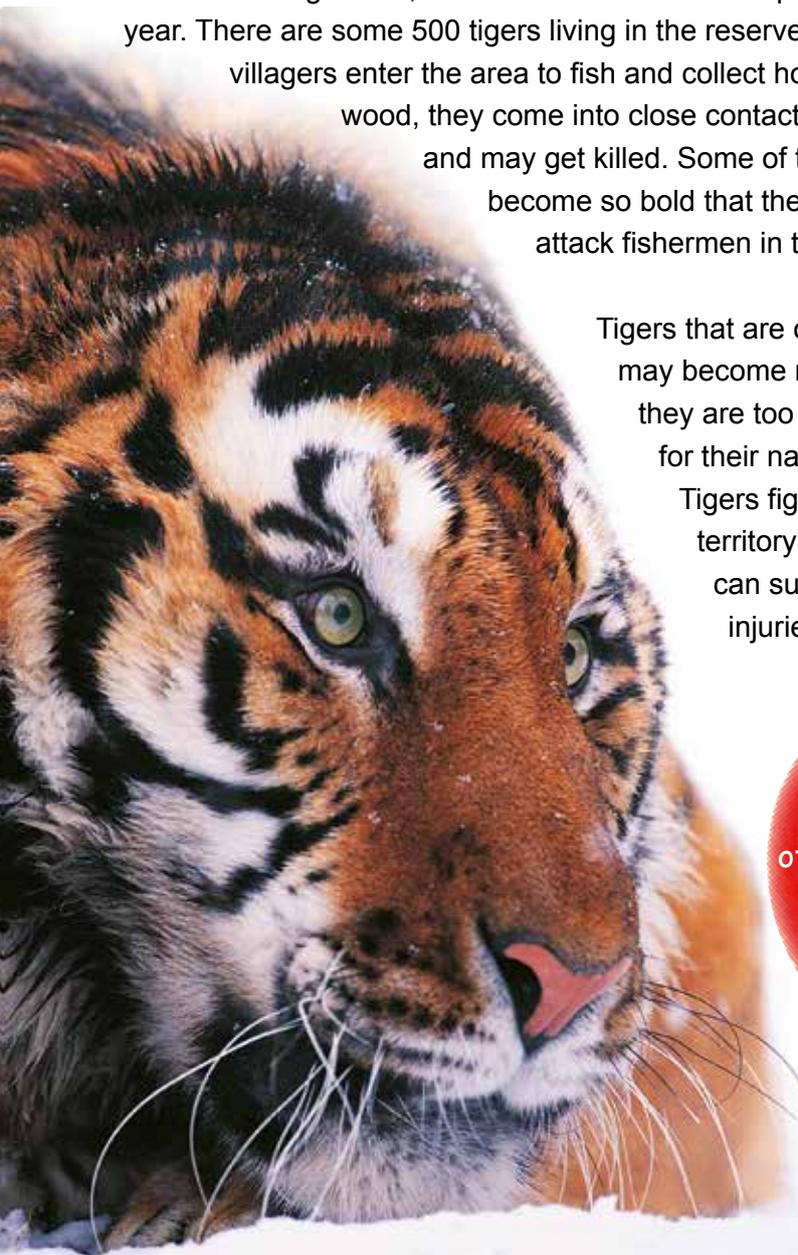
Tigers that are old or injured may become man-eaters as they are too weak to hunt for their natural prey.

Tigers fight over food, territory or mates and can sustain serious injuries.



As tigers always attack from behind, Sundarban villagers wear facemasks on the back of their head to confuse them. This helps to reduce the number of tiger attacks.

Porcupine quills can be deadly to tigers. If embedded in their skin, the quills get in the way and reduce the successful rate of a hunt. The affected tiger may also die from wound infection.



**DID YOU KNOW**  
Tigers use their tail to communicate their moods to other tigers: a wagging upright tail conveys friendliness; a lowered tail that twitches from side to side means 'stay away'.







Tigers are one of the few cats that love water. They are often found cooling off or frolicking in streams and rivers.

As excellent swimmers, tigers readily enter the water to chase prey. At times, they hide near a pond or river and wait for potential prey to come and drink. They then chase the animal into the water where they hold their victim until it drowns.

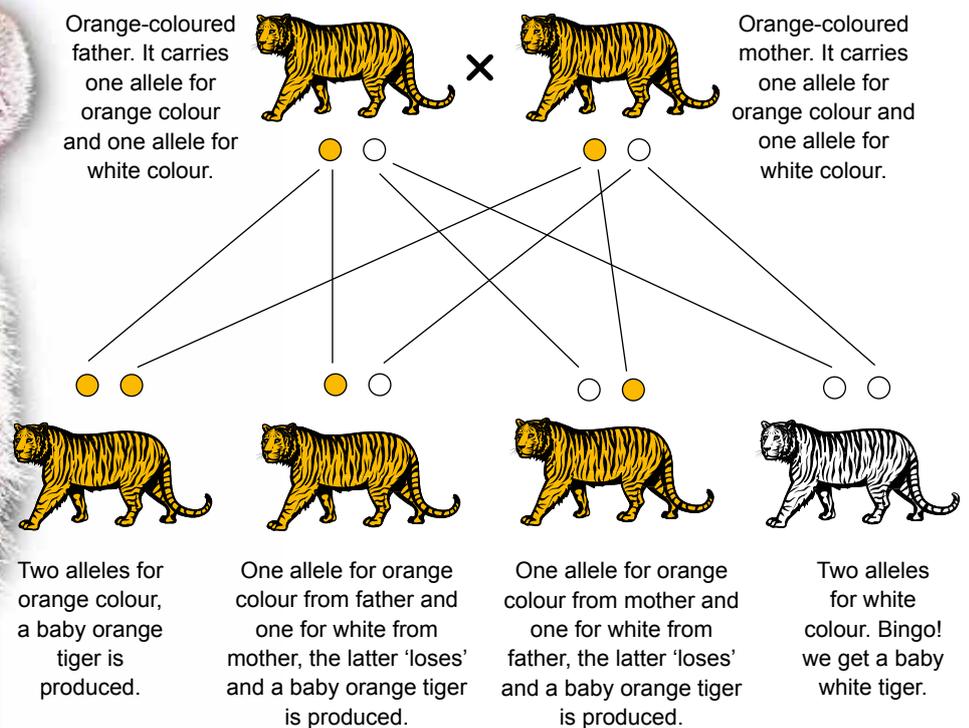
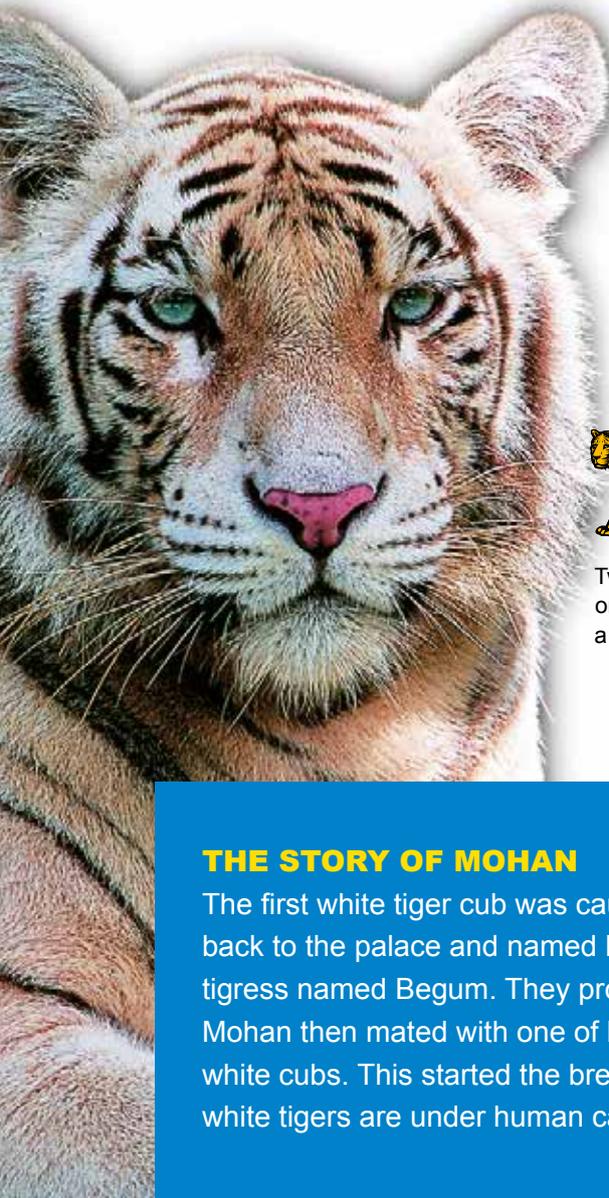
# White TIGERS AND THE 'LOSER' GENE

White tigers are not albinos or a different species from the orange coloured tigers. They have a white fur coat, ash brown stripes and icy blue eyes. Their unusual coloration is the result of a gene that has undergone mutation, which simply means change.

For a white tiger to be produced, it must receive two copies (alleles) of the mutant gene – one from the mother and one from its father. The mutant gene is a recessive gene

because two copies are needed to show the effect. White tigers are extremely rare. No one has sighted a white tiger in the wild for a long time; the last was shot in 1958.

If a tiger carries one allele of gene for orange colour and one allele for white colour, the copy that controls orange colour wins. This 'winner' allele needs only one copy to show the effect. It is a dominant gene. The tiger, therefore, has orange coloration.



## THE STORY OF MOHAN

The first white tiger cub was caught in the forest in Rewa of India. It was brought back to the palace and named Mohan. He mated with an orange coloured tigress named Begum. They produced ten cubs, all of which were orange. Mohan then mated with one of his daughters and she gave birth to four white cubs. This started the breeding of white tigers in captivity. Today, all white tigers are under human care, and they are the descendants of Mohan.



# Baby TIGERS

A female tiger needs a safe place to give birth and hide her cubs. In the wild, she usually does so in a cave or a dense bamboo thicket. A litter of 2 to 4 cubs is born after a short gestation period of about 15 weeks. Newborn cubs are blind. They weigh about 1.2kg (much smaller than newborn humans).

Female tigers are loving mothers. They nurse the cubs for 6 months. They also hunt and bring food back to the cubs when they start to eat at the age of two months.

The mother takes the cubs on hunting trips at about four months when their canine teeth appear. For the next two years, she shows the young tigers where and how to hunt.



Animals such as leopards, red dholes and striped hyenas often kill inexperienced, young tigers that have just left their mothers.

Once the tigers are about two years old, they leave their mother and lead a solitary life. However, recent studies have shown with habitat destruction and smaller areas to roam, young adult tigers are staying within their mothers' territories for a longer period of time.

**DID YOU KNOW**  
A healthy adult tiger can drag large animals of up to 1,000kg. Its strength is said to be equivalent to approximately 30 adult men.



# Vanishing

## STRIPES

Humans are the tiger's greatest enemy. In the past, as many as 100,000 tigers may have lived in the forest, swamps and tundra of Asia, but now there are only 2,100 to 3,900 left in the wild. Of the nine subspecies of tigers, three have become extinct.

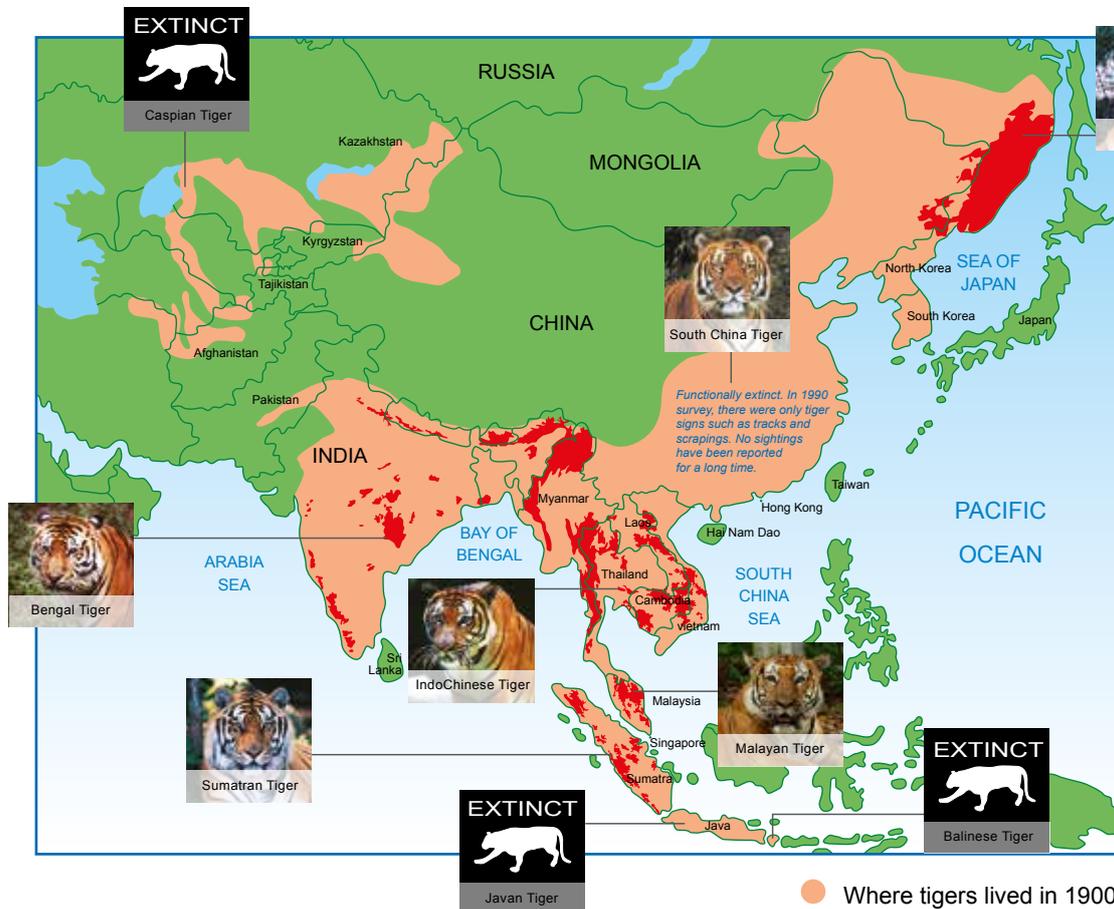
Over the last 100 years or so, we have almost wiped out the tigers in the wild. Today, we still poach them for their body parts and destroy their habitat. Tigers need a large area to hunt enough food to survive. Habitat destruction means smaller hunting areas and fewer prey for tigers. Loss of familiar hunting grounds is a major factor that causes the death of young tigers when they leave home. About 35% of the young tigers die in their first year after they leave their mothers.



Photo courtesy of Tan Tuan Khoon



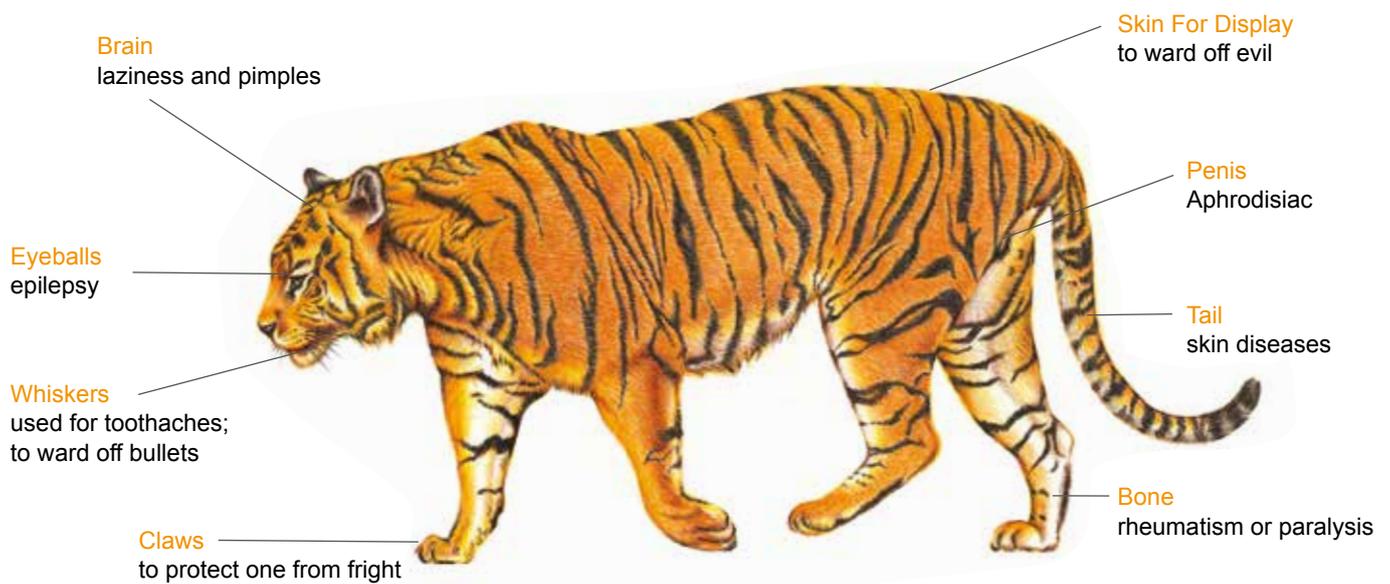
**DID YOU KNOW**  
The last wild tiger in Singapore was shot dead in 1930 in Chua Chu Kang village.



# TIGERS FOR *Sale*

It is illegal to trade tigers and tiger parts. It is also against the law to trade medicines that claim to be made from tiger parts. Unfortunately, many parts of the tiger are believed to be effective cures for various

ailments. The demand for traditional medicines made from tiger bone is particularly high, and the smuggling of tiger bone medicine is a big problem.



All the 'remedies' indicated above have NEVER been scientifically proven effective.

Despite being a protected species, tigers continue to be poached throughout their range in Asia.

Apart from poaching, human-tiger conflict poses another problem for tiger conservation. More incidents of tiger attack have been reported as human settlements move closer and closer to tiger habitats.



**DID YOU KNOW**  
Tigers can walk  
between 13 and 24 km  
in a night.



# THE *Death* OF THE HUNTER

This tiger was once a majestic hunter. One gunshot and it is reduced to a lifeless piece of hide.

During the 20th century, the tiger population has declined by about 95%, a rate faster than any other cat.

Of the nine subspecies of tigers, three are extinct. The South China tiger is now regarded as functionally extinct as it has not been sighted for a long time. Can we act fast enough to save the remaining tigers from extinction? Humans, as a species, have the incredible strength and capability to achieve goals and change things – we travel to space, clone human cells, build structures that last for thousands of years... So, there's hope, if we put our minds to saving the world's largest cat.



**DID YOU KNOW**  
A group of tigers is called a streak.



# Fun ON TIGER TREK

Try the activities here to discover more about the majestic tiger. Visit Singapore Zoo and Night Safari or the websites to learn how we care for our tigers and what we do to help save tigers in the wild.

- 1** The tiger is hailed as the 'King of the Forest'. It is said that this majestic cat wears the title on its forehead. Look closely at stripe pattern on the forehead of this tiger. Can you figure out the Chinese character it symbolises?



Answer: 王 meaning 'king' in Chinese

- 2** Tigers are formidable hunters but they have enemies too. Who are they?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

- 3** Sundarbun villagers wear face masks on the back of their head to confuse the tiger. Apart from offering protection, masks play a big role in many cultures around the world. Research on them and design your own mask.



**4**

Find out how far a tiger can leap.

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How far can you leap?

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**5**

Why do you think it is important for us to save the tiger?

What do you think will happen to the forest ecosystem if tigers go extinct?

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**6**

What can you do to help tigers and ensure their future survival?

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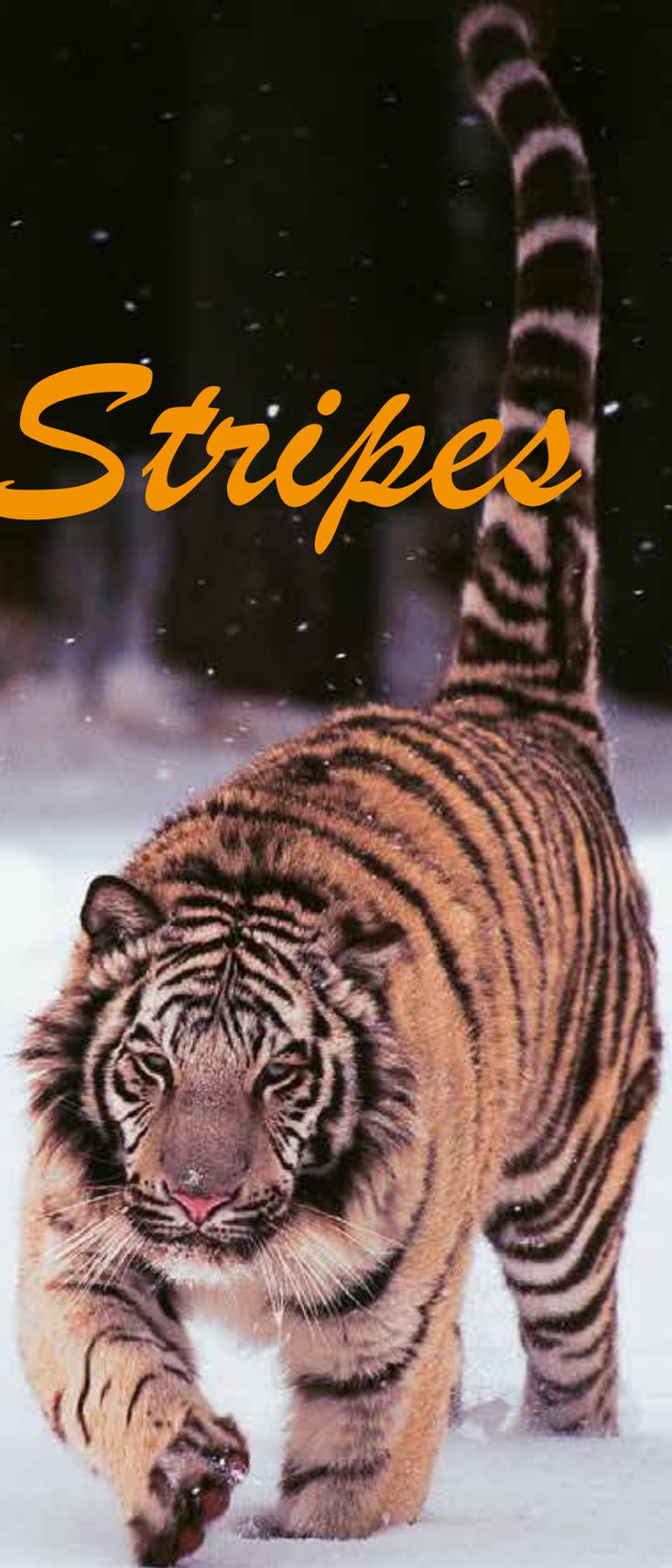
# SAVING THE *Last Stripes*

There are very few tigers left in the wild compared to a decade ago. As you can see, it did not take us long to almost wipe out one of the most majestic animals on Earth. But, all's not lost.

Wild tigers are protected by law. Tiger sanctuaries have also been established in some countries. However, most of these protected areas are very much in need of funding to operate and engage rangers to keep poachers away and to clear snares. Visit <https://bit.ly/MalayanTigerBN> to find how we are helping to save the Malayan tigers by supporting The Malaysian Conservation Alliance for Tigers (MYCATS).

As individuals, we can help by not buying products that contain tiger parts. Spread the message to your relatives and friends. Support TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, which ensures that the trade in wild plants and animals is not a threat to the conservation of nature.

When you visit our parks, your admission helps us fund conservation projects in the region to save the tiger and other highly threatened species.



You can learn more about tigers by visiting these websites :

<https://bit.ly/WhiteTigerBN>

[www.traffic.org](http://www.traffic.org)



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