

0. Cecil's Story: The Lion Who Died as a Trophy - Story
Preface

1. Cecil's Story: The Lion Who Died as a Trophy

2. The Killing of Cecil

3. Interesting facts about lions.



As a cub, Cecil weighed about four pounds and probably was one of three or four born to a lioness (female lion). Cecil was big and active and a survivor. He was well aware that if his father died all the young cubs could be killed by the pride's new male lion.

His mother and the rest of the females in the pride did their best to protect Cecil from new males. They would meet any intruding male with their ears back and their mouths open—showing their large teeth that can bite with a force of 690 pounds.

What is most impressive about a lion's teeth? Their four canines can be nearly three inches long! This helps them kill their prey.

Their tongue is very rough, and they use it to lick the meat off of bones. Like all cats, they have the shortest digestive tracts of all animals.

Cecil grew rapidly and was very muscular. Lions have little bone mass compared to other animals their size and that makes them graceful and stealthy. Cecil quickly learned how to kill using powerful front legs that are twisted to give lions a significant range of motion. One swipe, of a lion's front leg, can break a zebra's back.

Cecil's paws featured soft pads, as all lions do, and that makes their movements quieter. Lions actually walk on their toes with their weight on the pads.

Cecil's paws were very sharp and are protractible. This means that the claw is sheathed, or covered, until a muscle unsheathes them in dangerous situations. The claws grow in layers and may exceed three inches in length on the front paws and two inches on the rear paws.

Cecil had a brown coat, like all males, and a large mane that covered his shoulders. Some manes can extend down the body, stomach area and legs. Cecil had a beautiful mane. As he aged, his mane changed and the stiff hair darkened. His mane was said to protect him in fights as well as to attract potential female mates.

Cecil's eyes were large, and he could see well in low-light conditions, making it possible for him to hunt using starlight illumination. Lions also have white circles below their eyes that reflect light into their retinas. Lions cannot move their eyes well, so they have to turn their heads to change their view. Cecil's eyes were six times more sensitive to light than human eyes.

As Cecil grew older, his sense of smell became more developed. Lions mark their territory with scent, and this acute sense of smell helps them to find kills. The Jacobson organ in his mouth helped him to detect smells. He sometimes made a face while using this organ as he sniffed the air. That facial expression is called a "Flehman."

A lion's sense of hearing is a little above average, and he can swivel his ears when listening to distant sounds to detect their direction.

Lions also use clues when communicating. All lions can roar, as can the tiger, jaguar and leopard. It is said that their roar, which may be to alert others to their presence, can be heard up to five miles thanks to a two-piece hyoid bone in their throat.

Lions also have a tassel at the tip of their tails that can be used to signal the pack (and for balance when running). The tail is usually between 26 and 40 inches long.

Although Cecil's mother took care of him well, other females in the pride also accepted him. He was also very lucky as only one-in-eight cubs usually survive. This is because the mother might neglect them or she might become injured. Some cubs have terrible trouble teething, and there is always the chance a new male will kill them.

When food is scarce cubs can starve, although a male lion may share his food while the female makes the cub wait.

Cecil was a quick learner, and when he was one-year-old he joined his pride on a hunt. By the second year, he could bring down an animal by himself.

As his mane started to grow it was a sign that he had to move on, and he was driven from the pride. However, his sisters could stay.

Separated from the pride, Cecil could have worked with a brother, Jerico, to hunt their food. There is also a chance that they may have taken over a pride of their own.

Cecil's pride probably had between four and twenty females and two or three males. The more males, the stronger the pride, but most prides usually have just two or three males. They form a strong family unit, greeting each other by rubbing—sometimes very hard—as a sign of affection (and also to scent the other lion). The females do most of the hunting as the males, in turn, mark their territory. Because they work together, it helps them survive as they aren't the best hunters—being successful only about 50 percent of the time. Cecil usually killed about two large animals a month. He mainly hunted at night to take advantage of the darkness. Although lions can run at 50 mph for short distances, and leap well over 30 feet, they aren't as nimble as other cats such as the Cheetah, which is a much-better hunter with more stamina. When a male lion has his own pride, the younger members would drive the prey animal into a trap where the more experienced lions would be waiting. After the kill, the adults would eat about 40 pounds of meat and later sleep, sometimes for 24 hours. Such was Cecil's life before an eventful day in 2015.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Cecil-s-Story-The-Lion-Who-Died-as-a-Trophy-Cecil-The-Lion-who-Died-for-a-Wall>

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Cecil-s-Story-The-Lion-Who-Died-as-a-Trophy-Cecil-The-Lion-who-Died-for-a-Wall>

Questions 2 Ponder

Does Fighting a Lion Show One Is Brave?

From the time of the ancient Greeks, we learn a story about Alexander the Great and Craterus (one of Alexander's generals). Working together, they fought a lion.

How hard, do you think it would be, to fight a lion? What would it take to overcome the odds against prevailing in that endeavor?

Does fighting a lion, in the manner of Alexander the Great and Craterus, demonstrate courage and bravery? How does that compare with killing a lion in the 21st-century, using a weapon (like a bow-and-arrow or a rifle)?

How Fast Do Animals Run?

Let's think about the speed of animals. [This website](#) provides the speed of various animals.

Research which animals live in Africa. After completing that research, create a graph of these animals and their speed. You need to convert the miles per hour that they move into kilometers per hour, for the graph you will create, using this formula: 1 mile equals 0.62137119 kilometers. Ten miles, for example, equals 16.09344 kilometers. ([Common Core Standard for Measurement and Data.](#))

Media Stream



African Lion

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