

Expository
Text

African Cats

by Vanessa York



Mc
Graw
Hill

PAIRED
READ

How Leopard Got His Spots

STRATEGIES & SKILLS

Comprehension

Strategy: Reread

Skill: Compare and Contrast

Vocabulary Strategy

Paragraph Clues

Vocabulary

endangered, fascinating,
illegal, inhabit,
requirements, respected,
unaware, wildlife

Content Standards

Science

Life Science

Word count: 978**

Photography Credit: Cover Graeme Purdy/Vetta/Getty Images.

**The total word count is based on words in the running text and headings only. Numerals and words in captions, labels, diagrams, charts, and sidebars are not included.



Essential Question

How can learning about animals help you respect them?

African Cats

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**PAIRED
READ**

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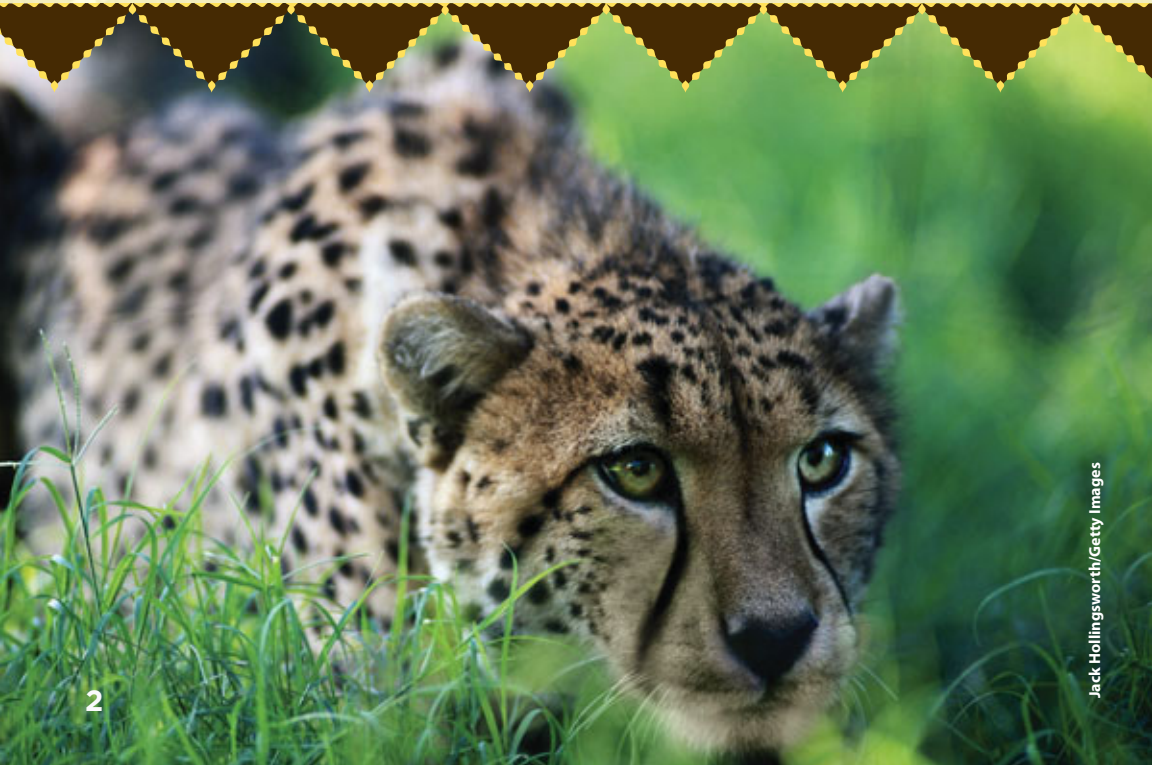
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Introduction

You can find members of the cat family all over the world. Whatever the **species**, cats are remarkable.

Cats have special features that make them excellent hunters. They nearly all have **retractable** claws. They have sharp eyesight. They have muscles that help run in short bursts of speed. They are powerful jumpers and climbers.

All species of cats are excellent hunters.



Perhaps the most fascinating cats are found in Africa. It is home to lions, leopards, and cheetahs. There are also smaller cats, such as servals, caracals, and golden cats.

A ranger watches a lion family sleeping in the shade.



African Cat Territory



Where lions, leopards, cheetahs, servals, caracals, and golden cats live

Chapter 1

Cats, Cats, Cats

Lions and leopards are big African cats. Big cats look and behave a lot like most other cats. However, only big cats can roar.

Lions

A lion's roar is very loud. It can be heard almost five miles away! Lions live in family groups. These groups are called prides. Female cubs usually stay with their family for their whole lives. Young males, however, leave the family group. They may take over another pride by overcoming another male in a fight. Or they may live in small groups with other males.

There are usually about 15 lions in a pride.





Lions usually hunt zebras and other big animals.

Lions usually live on the **savannah**. A pride's **territory** may be as large as 100 square miles. It is the males' job to defend this territory. The females' job is to get food for the pride.

Lionesses work together to catch **prey**. One lioness leads the hunt. She gets as close as possible before attacking. The others follow. Hunting is hard work, however. Lions only catch one in five of the animals they stalk. Lions also steal kills from other animals.

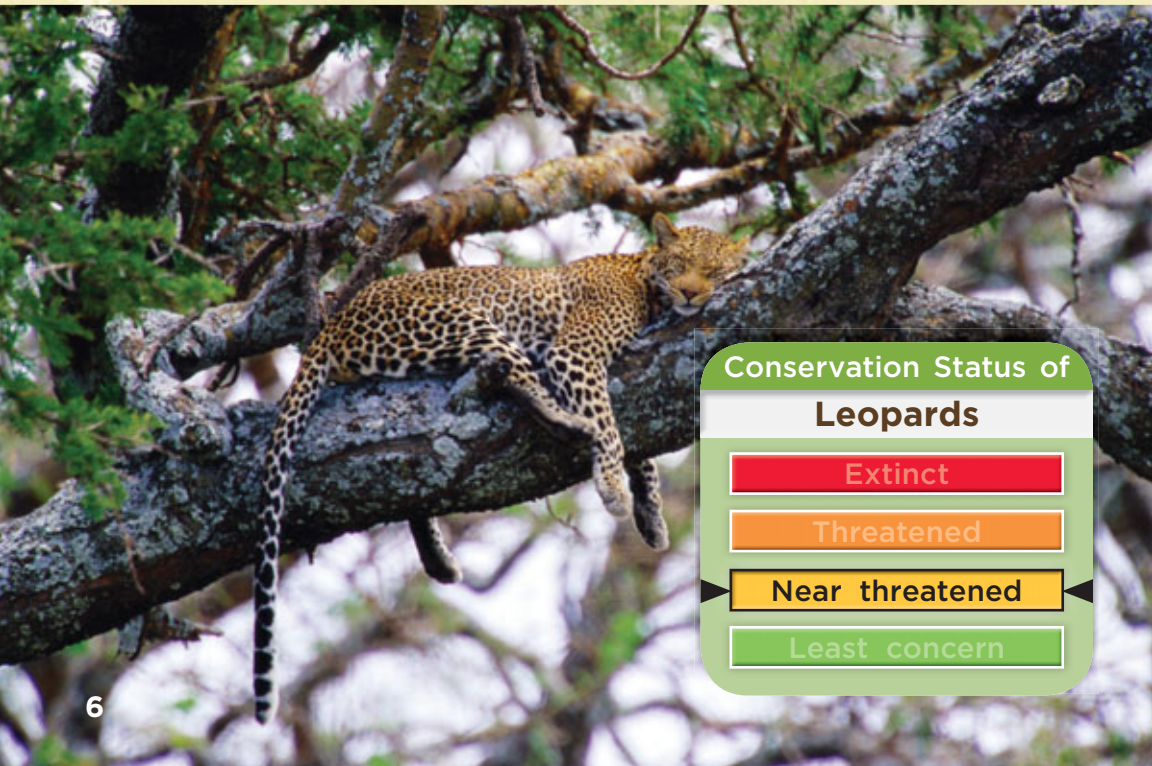
Leopards

Leopards are the smallest of the big cats. They usually live in forests and near rivers. Leopards live alone and they usually hunt at night. Their spots let them blend in with leaves or long grass. This makes them very good at catching prey unaware.

Leopards are great climbers. They are also good swimmers. They sometimes catch fish and crabs to eat.

Leopards like to sleep in trees.

Brand X Pictures/PunchStock



Conservation Status of

Leopards

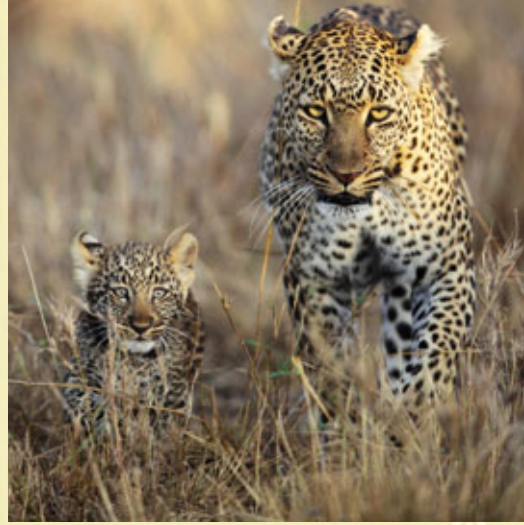
Extinct

Threatened

Near threatened

Least concern

Leopards never stay still for long, unless a female has cubs. Female leopards raise their young alone. The cubs stay with their mother for up to two years.



A leopard's spots are called rosettes.

Leopard Body Language

Body language is one way that cats communicate. You can tell what a leopard is thinking by look at its tail.

normal stance



stalking



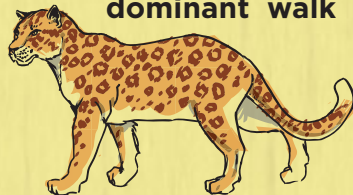
frustration



submission



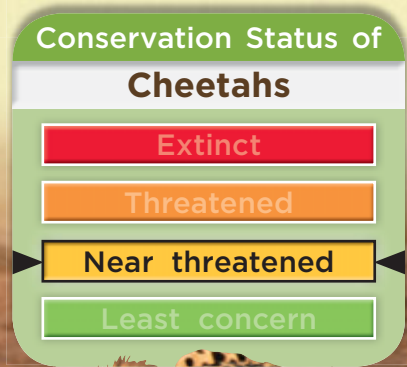
dominant walk



Cheetahs

Cheetahs are fast. They can go from 0 to 60 miles per hour in just three seconds. This makes them the fastest land mammals. They can run faster than a lot of cars! Cheetahs have small heads and long legs. This helps them to run fast. Their claws are only partly retractable. This gives them good traction when they run.

Cheetahs only need to drink every two or three days.



Cheetahs stalk prey such as gazelles. When their prey is about 60 feet away, they sprint to catch it. Cheetahs can only run for a short time. If a cheetah doesn't catch its prey quickly, it gives up.

A cheetah's power is speed, not strength.



STOP AND CHECK

Which big cat lives in large family groups?

Adapted for Speed

long tail

flexible spine

small head



long legs

slim body

paws with semi-retractable claws

Chapter 2

Little Big Cats

Little big cats are much smaller than lions and leopards. But they are still a lot bigger than the cats we keep at home!

Servals

Servals are medium-sized spotted cats. They have small heads with huge ears. They have very sharp hearing, which helps them find prey. Rats are their main prey. But they also hunt hares, reptiles, insects, and fish.

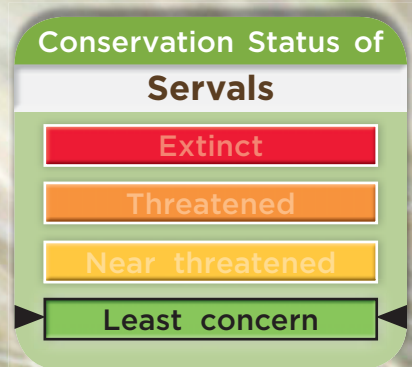


The servals' big ears helps it hear its prey.

Servals can leap up to 12 feet from a standstill. They pounce on their prey. They also leap up to catch birds in the air.

Serval kittens are raised by their mother. She meets all their requirements until they are about one year old. Servals prefer to live on the savannah. But they also inhabit rocky areas and forests.

The serval lands on its prey with great force.



African Golden Cats

African golden cats are very shy. They live in thick forests. Scientists find it hard to study them in the wild.



African golden cats are not often seen in the wild.



Caracals are amazing hunters.

Caracals

Caracals are medium-sized cats. They usually live in a dry, desert-like **habitat**. But they also live on the savannah and in forests. Caracals are respected for their skill at hunting birds.

STOP AND CHECK

How do servals catch their prey?

Conservation Status of

Caracals

Extinct

Threatened

Near threatened

Least concern



Conclusion

African cats are threatened. The biggest threat is the loss of their habitat. Roads and farms leave less space for wildlife. Illegal hunting is also a problem in some places. Big cats may soon be endangered.

There are protected areas in many parts of Africa. But outside those places, lions, leopards, servals, and cheetahs are in danger. Hunters kill them for their fur or for sport. Sometimes farmers kill them to protect their animals.

Many people are working to protect African cats. They are working to save their habitats. They are also trying to teach people about how important these animals are. African cats have many amazing features that deserve our respect. We need to make sure these fascinating animals survive.

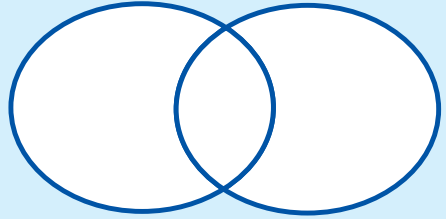
A ranger checks a young cheetah's heartbeat.



Respond to Reading

Summarize

Summarize what you have learned about African cats. Use a Venn diagram to help you.



Text Evidence

1. How do you know that *African Cats* is a nonfiction text? What kind of nonfiction is it? How do you know? **GENRE**
2. What are two differences between lions and leopards? **COMPARE AND CONTRAST**
3. What is the meaning of the word *overcoming* on page 4? **CONTEXT CLUES**
4. Write a paragraph that compares servals with leopards. How are they alike? How are they different? **WRITE ABOUT READING**

Compare Texts

Read how Leopard became an even better hunter than he was already.

How Leopard Got His Spots

Long ago, Leopard was plain yellow, like the savannah where he lived. When he went hunting, he could hide in the grass.

Giraffe and Zebra were Leopard's favorite prey. They didn't know how to avoid Leopard.





They thought hard about what to do. At last, they decided to move to the forest.

Zebra trotted off into the shadows of the trees. Giraffe followed more slowly. They felt safe.

But they did not feel safe for long. Leopard followed them to the forest. But his yellowness made him stand out like a sunflower in the shadows. Zebra and Giraffe saw him coming every time, and ran away. Leopard grew very hungry indeed.

At last, Leopard asked a man to help him. He explained his problem, and the man had an idea. The man dipped his fingers into black ink. Then he painted spots all over Leopard's yellow fur.

Now Leopard blended into the forest shadows and the savannah, too. He was a better hunter than ever. And he was soon feeling very well fed.



Illustration: Natalia Vasquez



Make Connections

What do you admire or respect about the cats that you read about? **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**

From what you read in *African Cats*, which parts of *How Leopard Got His Spots* are facts? **TEXT TO TEXT**

Glossary

habitat (*HAH-buh-tat*) the area where an animal normally lives (**page 12**)

prey (*PRAY*) an animal that is hunted by another animal for food (**page 5**)

retractable (*RE-trak-tibl*) able to be extended and pulled back, like a cat's claws (**page 2**)

savannah (*SUH-vahnnna*) grassy plains (**page 5**)

species (*SPEE-sheez*) a group of living things that are the same (**page 2**)

territory (*TERR-it-ory*) an area that an animal claims as its own (**page 5**)

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caracals, 3, 12 lions, 3–5, 10, 13
cheetahs, 3, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14 prey, 5, 6, 9, 10
habitats, 12, 13 servals, 3, 10, 11, 13

Focus on Science

Purpose To understand that living things need the right requirements to thrive.

What to Do

Step 1 Fill three small containers with soil.

.....

Step 2 Plant seeds, such as pumpkin, sunflower, or lima beans, in each container.

.....

Step 3 Put one container somewhere warm and sunny; one where it gets a little bit of sun; one in a cupboard.

.....

Step 4 Water the seeds each day. Record which seeds grow best.

	Warm and sunny	A little bit of sun	In a cupboard
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			

Conclusion What did you learn about seeds?

Thinkmark

The Topic

What is *African Cats* mostly about?

Sequence of Information

In what order does the author give us the information?

Big Idea and Details

What is the big idea in *African Cats*?
What are the details?

Conclusions

What are the most important things you learned from *African Cats*?

Author's Purpose

What is the author's purpose in writing *African Cats* and *How Leopard Got His Spots*?