MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

WHITE LION

Panthera leo melanochaita

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal (cat family, Felidae)
NATIVE REGION	Southern Africa (Timbavati and Kruger region)
COLOR	White to pale blond; eyes gold to blue
ALBINO?	No. White lions are leucistic
DIET	Carnivore
LENGTH	5½ to 7 feet
WEIGHT	260 to 390 lb
LIFESPAN	About 10 to 14 years in the wild
STATUS	African lions are Vulnerable
OUR LIONS	Kimba and Jaala



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- White lions are not albinos and not a separate species. They are African lions with a rare color trait.
- A white lion keeps color in its eyes, nose, lips and paw pads.
- Two tawny lions can both carry a hidden copy of the white gene and have a white cub.
- For generations, many people outside southern Africa thought white lions were only a myth.
- Plumpton Park Zoo's contacts in the Kruger region believe only about 10 to 12 white lions are living in the wild.

Words to know

Leucism: A trait that reduces the color in an animal's fur or skin.
Albino: An animal with no pigment at all, usually with pink or red eyes.
Recessive: A trait that only shows when a cub gets the gene from both parents.
Vulnerable: At risk of becoming endangered.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. How can you tell a white lion from an albino animal?
2. How can two normal, tawny lions have a white cub?
3. When did most of the world finally accept that white lions are real, and why?
4. Where do white lions occur naturally in the wild?
5. What are the biggest threats to lions in the wild?

Draw it

Draw a white lion. Label its pale coat, its colored eyes, its dark nose and its paw pads. Then draw a tawny lion beside it.

STANDARDS · GRADES 1–3 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **3-LS3-1 · 1-LS3-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.3.C · 3.1.1.C**

Draw here

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/white-lions/ · **Sources:** Plumpton Park Zoo contacts in the Kruger National Park region; Plumpton Park Zoo records.
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 3-LS3-1 (3.1.3.C) · 1-LS3-1 (3.1.1.C)
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo

WHITE LION

Before and after your visit

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Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the white lion live?

Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Leucism ☐ Albino ☐ Recessive ☐ Vulnerable

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the white lion.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: Southern Africa (Timbavati and Kruger region). Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Carnivore. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• How can two normal, tawny lions have a white cub?

_____

_____

• When did most of the world finally accept that white lions are real, and why?

_____

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/white-lions/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.

Grades 1–3 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **3-LS3-1 · 1-LS3-1** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.3.C · 3.1.1.C**