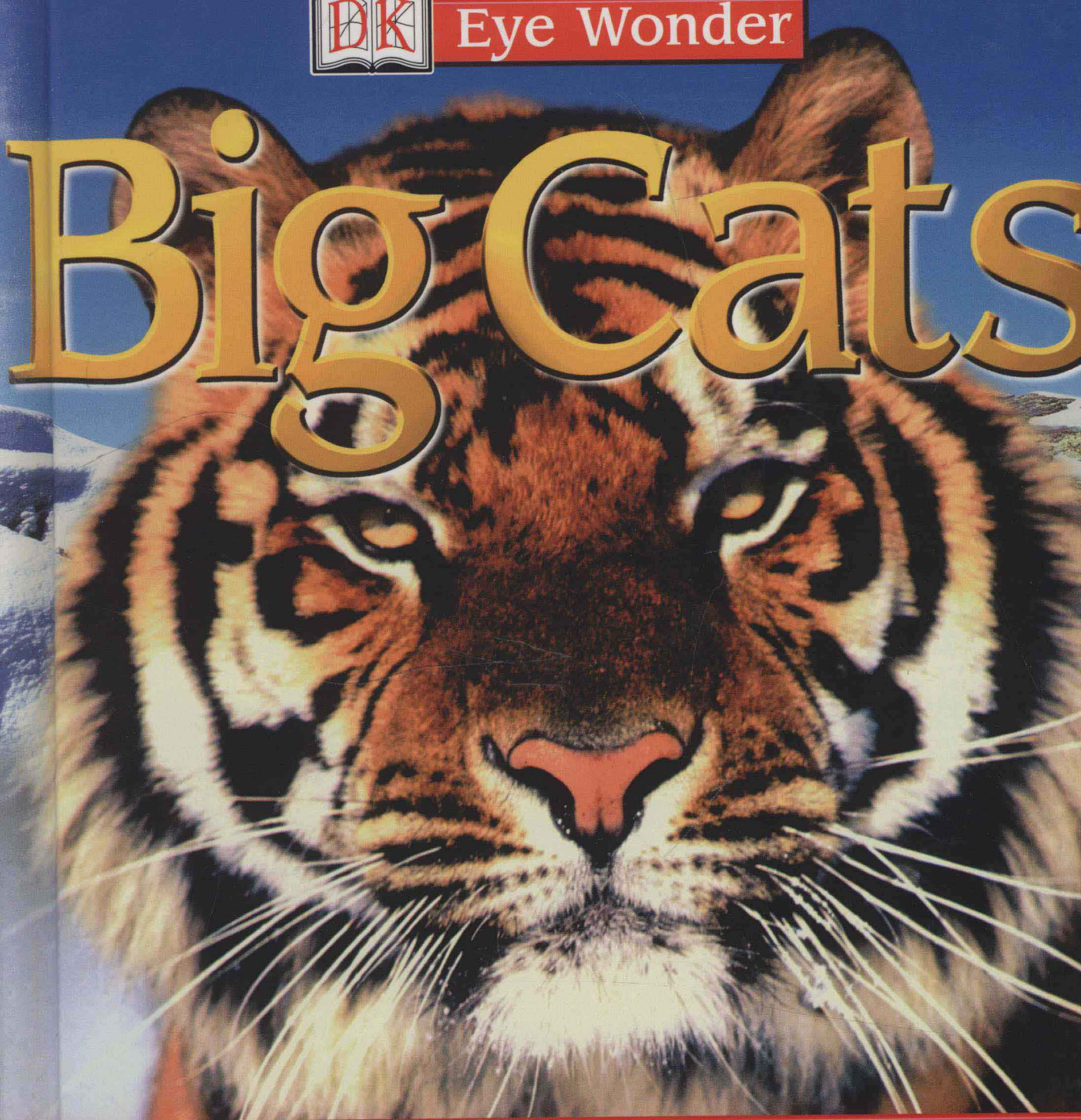


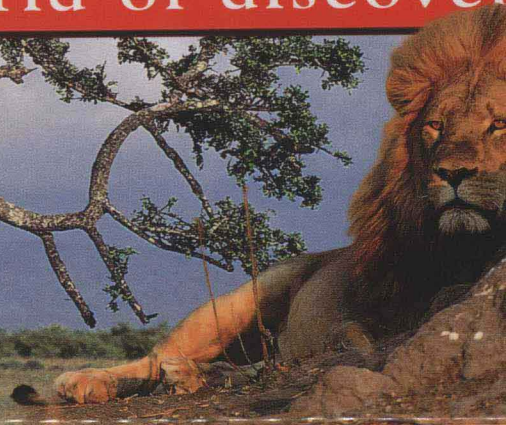
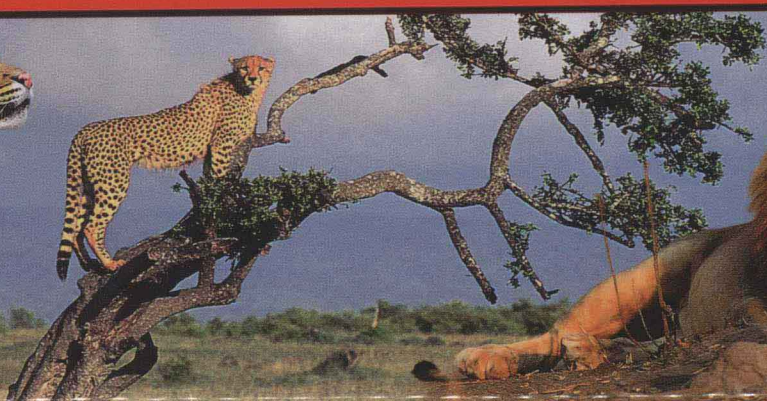


Eye Wonder

Big Cats



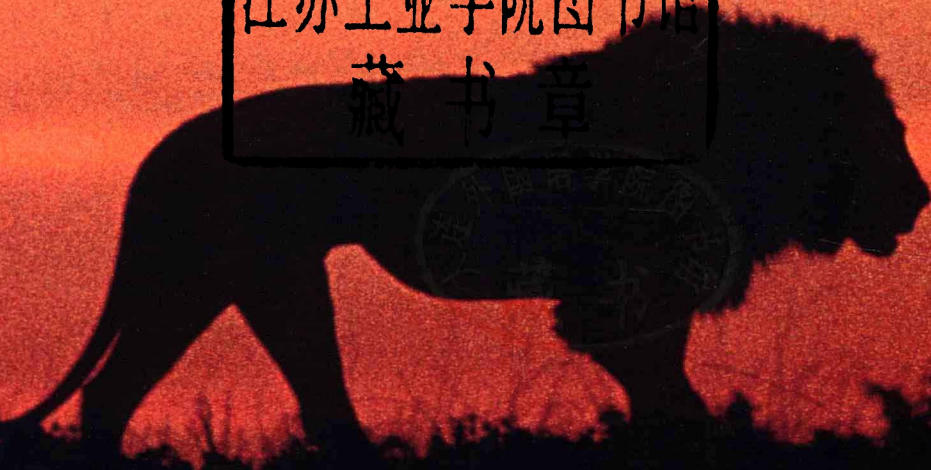
Open your eyes to a world of discovery



DK Eye Wonder

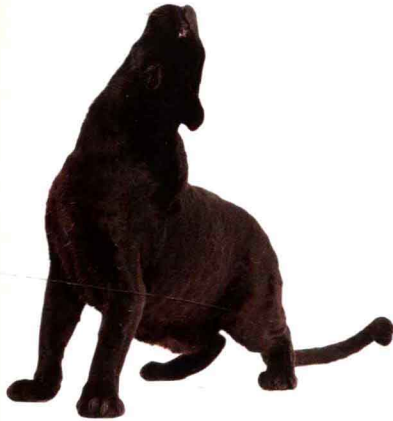
Big Cats

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Introducing cats

Fossils show that cat-like creatures have existed for many millions of years. All cats belong to the same family group called the *Felidae*. In size order, the seven biggest cats in the world are the tiger, lion, jaguar, leopard, snow leopard, puma, and the cheetah.

The largest cat in the world is the Amur tiger. It can be up to 4 m (13 ft) long, from head to tail.

Cat facts

- Cats kill other animals for their food, which makes them carnivores (meat eaters).
- Cats are mammals, which means that females produce milk to feed their young.

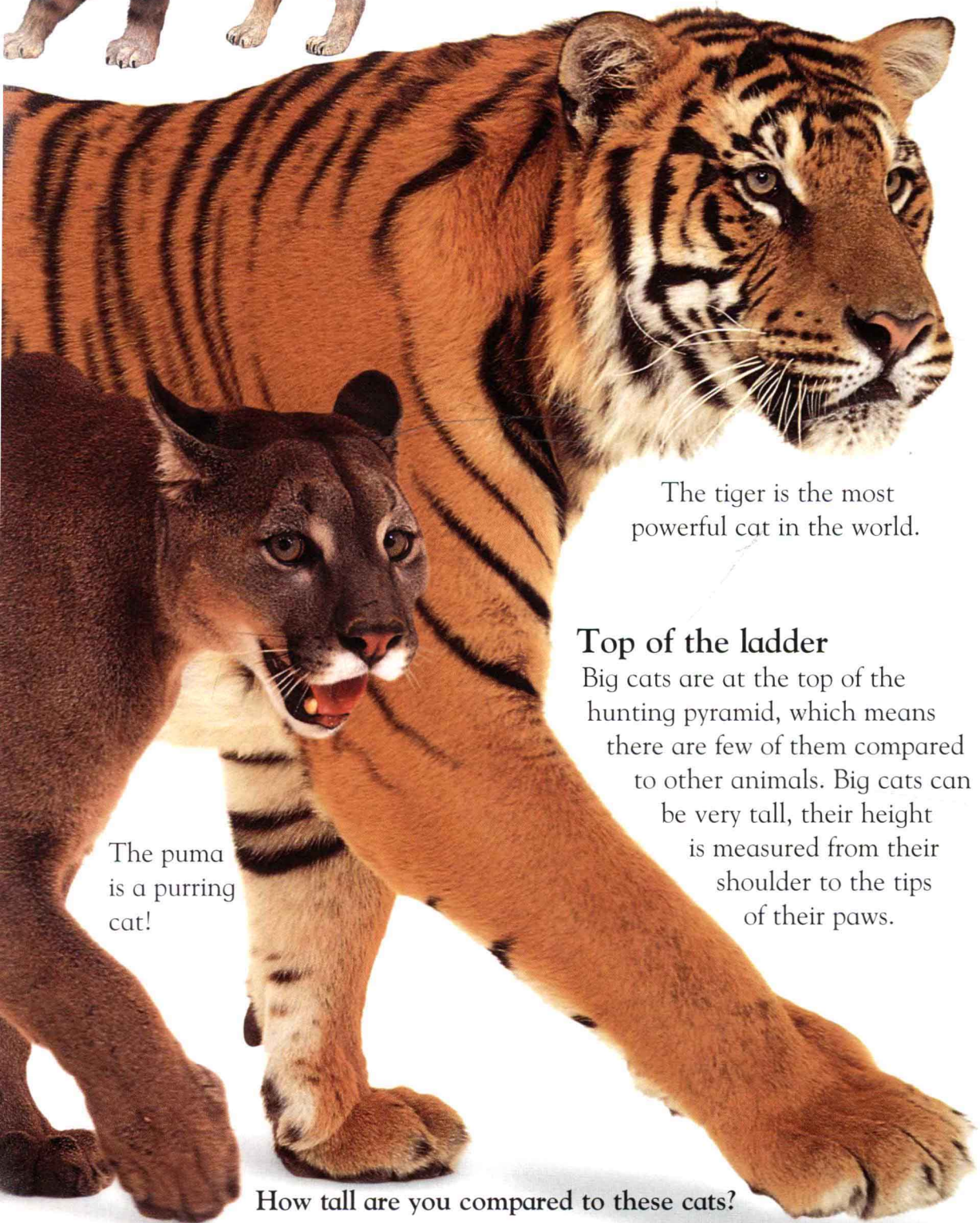
Domestic cats are popular pets.

The bobcat is one of the smaller cats.



Ancient ancestor

Smilodon, a huge, sabre-toothed cat, lived in open grasslands about 11,000 years ago. Fossil evidence shows that it lived in family groups, similar to modern-day lions.



The tiger is the most powerful cat in the world.

Top of the ladder

Big cats are at the top of the hunting pyramid, which means there are few of them compared to other animals. Big cats can be very tall, their height is measured from their shoulder to the tips of their paws.

The puma is a purring cat!

How tall are you compared to these cats?

120 cm
(3ft 9in)

100 cm
(3ft 3in)

75 cm
(2ft 5in)

50 cm
(1ft 8in)

25 cm
(10in)

0 cm

Cat habitats

There are 37 species of wild cats in the world. From snow-capped mountains to deserts, and grasslands to tropical rainforests, cats of all shapes and sizes roam the Earth.

KEY MAP GUIDE

-  Rainforest
-  Forest (Coniferous)
-  Grassland
-  Forest (Broadleaf)
-  Desert
-  Mountains
-  Tundra

Cats around the world

The map below shows where the seven biggest cat species live. Most are found between the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn, where the weather is warm all year round, and there are wet and dry seasons.



Rainforests

Tropical rainforests provide a home for jaguars, leopards, pumas, and tigers. Rainforests only cover a small area of the world (7%), yet a huge number of animals live in them.



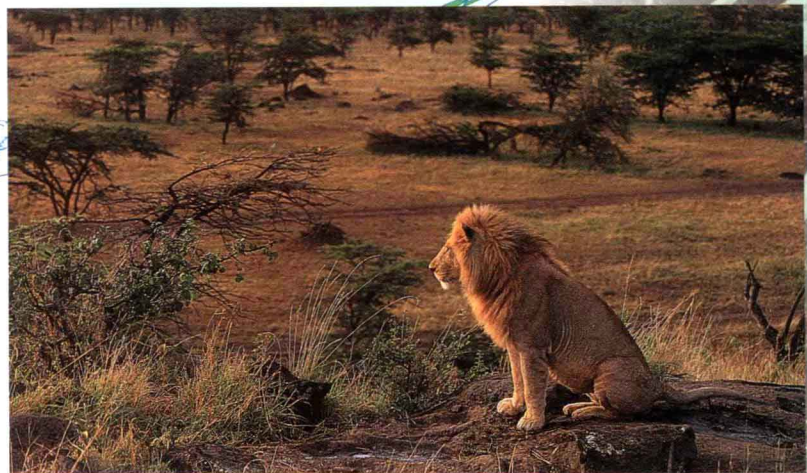
An icy home
 Few cats live in harsh mountain areas. Only the snow leopard lives high-up in the freezing Asian mountains.

DISAPPEARING WORLD

It is a sad fact that today more than two-thirds of the world's wild cats are now rare or endangered. This is largely because their habitats are disappearing as humans move into and develop the natural world.

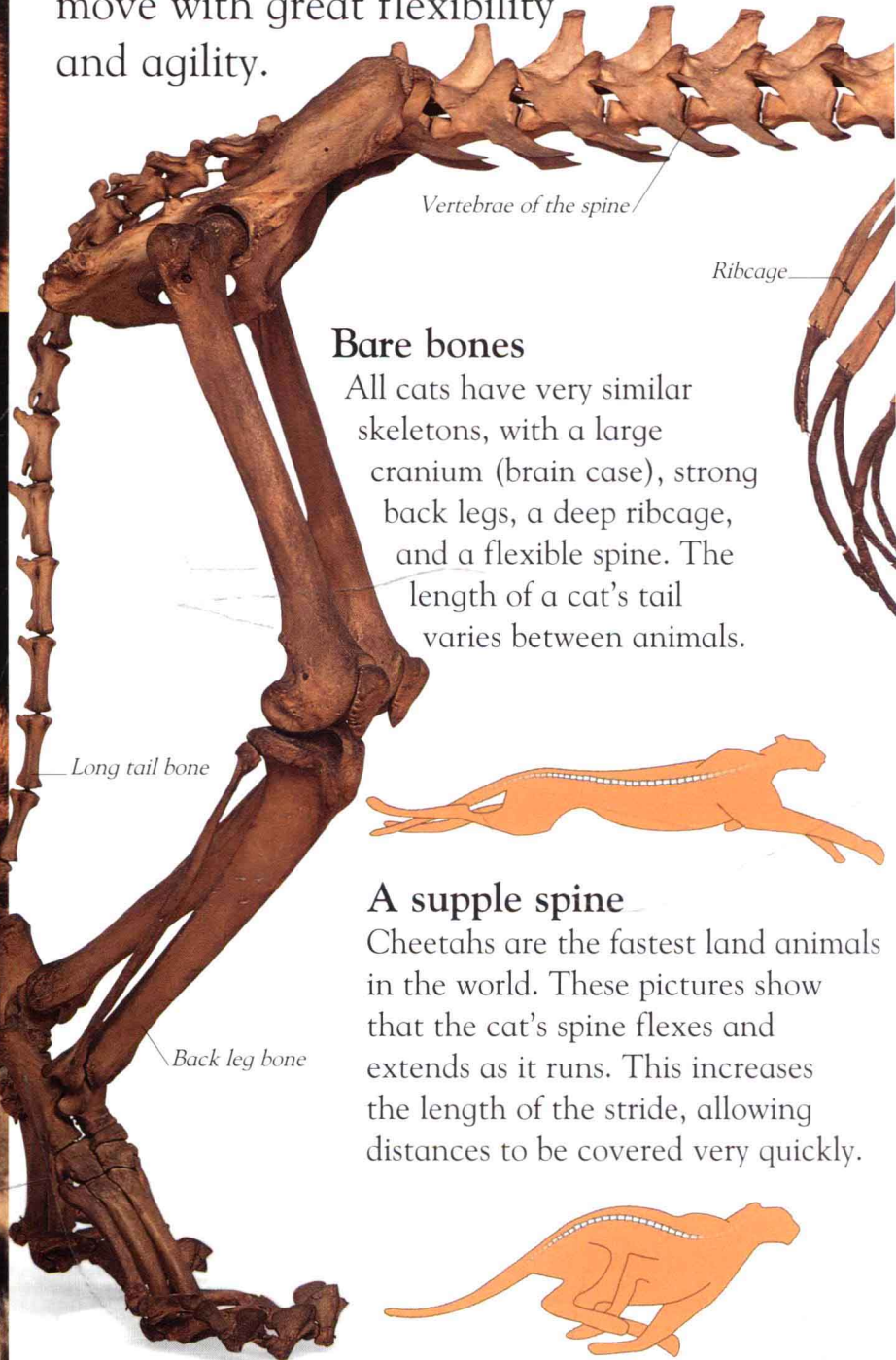


Glorious grasslands
 The rich grasslands of Africa are home to several of the big cats. During the wet season the land is green and partially flooded, yet barren in the dry season.



Inside and out

Designed to be superb hunters, big cats are a strong species. A fur coat covers a tough skeleton, which protects the internal body parts. Powerful muscles allow each cat to move with great flexibility and agility.

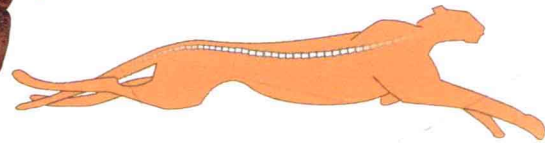


Fantastic fur

A fur coat protects each cat from the weather and helps to camouflage them. It also allows them to transfer their scent. All wild cats have two layers of fur. Only the top coat is patterned.

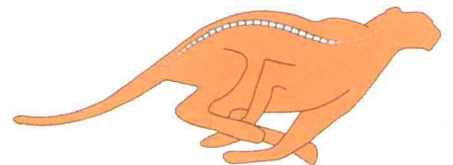
Bare bones

All cats have very similar skeletons, with a large cranium (brain case), strong back legs, a deep ribcage, and a flexible spine. The length of a cat's tail varies between animals.



A supple spine

Cheetahs are the fastest land animals in the world. These pictures show that the cat's spine flexes and extends as it runs. This increases the length of the stride, allowing distances to be covered very quickly.

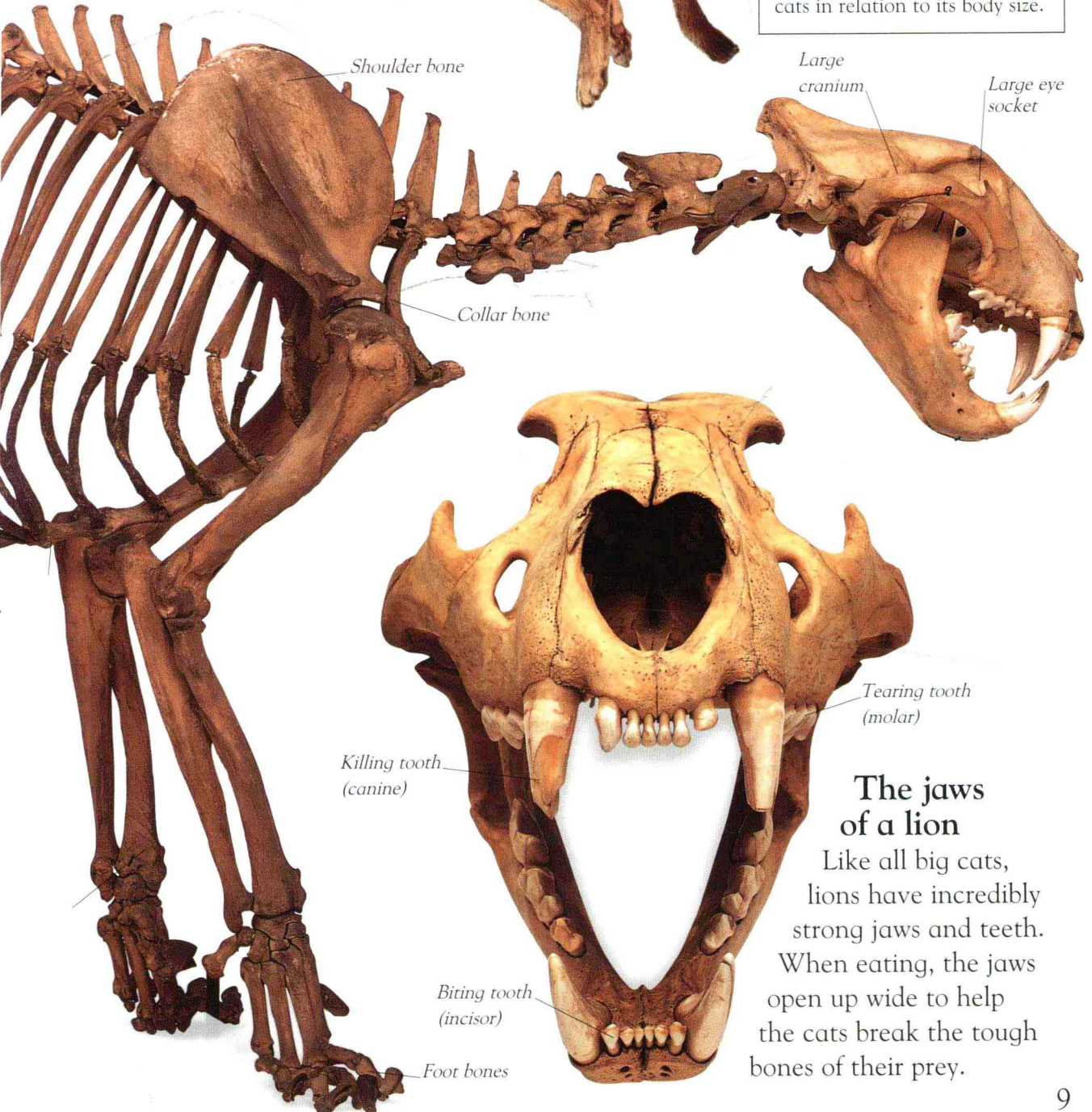
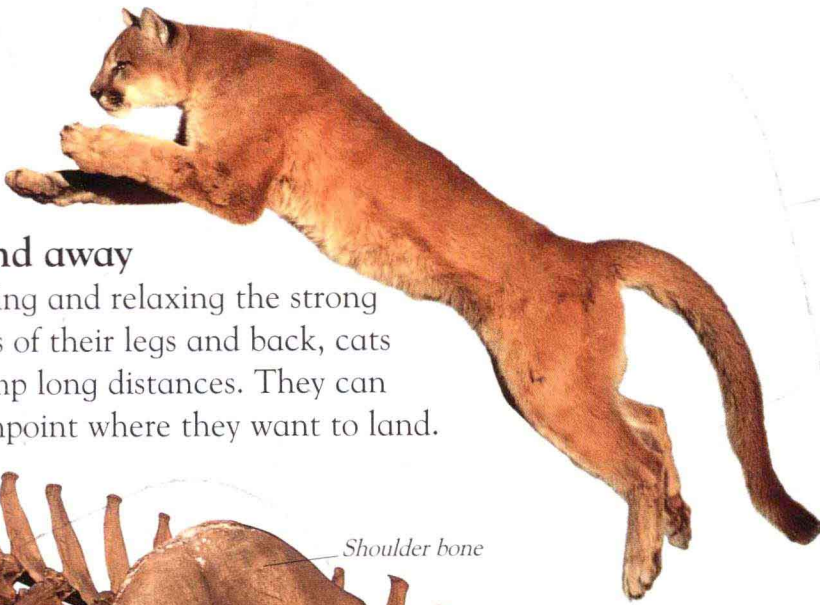


Cat facts

- Unlike lots of other meat-eaters, all cats have collar bones. These prevent the cats from injuring their shoulders when jumping.
- Cats have evolved so they walk on the toes of their feet.
- The clouded leopard has the longest canine teeth of all cats in relation to its body size.

Jump and away

By flexing and relaxing the strong muscles of their legs and back, cats can jump long distances. They can also pinpoint where they want to land.



The jaws of a lion

Like all big cats, lions have incredibly strong jaws and teeth. When eating, the jaws open up wide to help the cats break the tough bones of their prey.

A cat's life

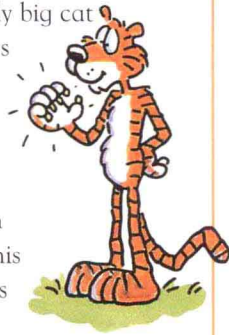
All cats, big or small, spend their time engaged in the same sort of activities. Hunting, eating, sleeping, cleaning, and playing are all regular events in the lives of cats.

Clean cats

Cats are very clean creatures, and spend a lot of time grooming. Members of the same cat family often wash each other to strengthen bonds and spread their scents around.

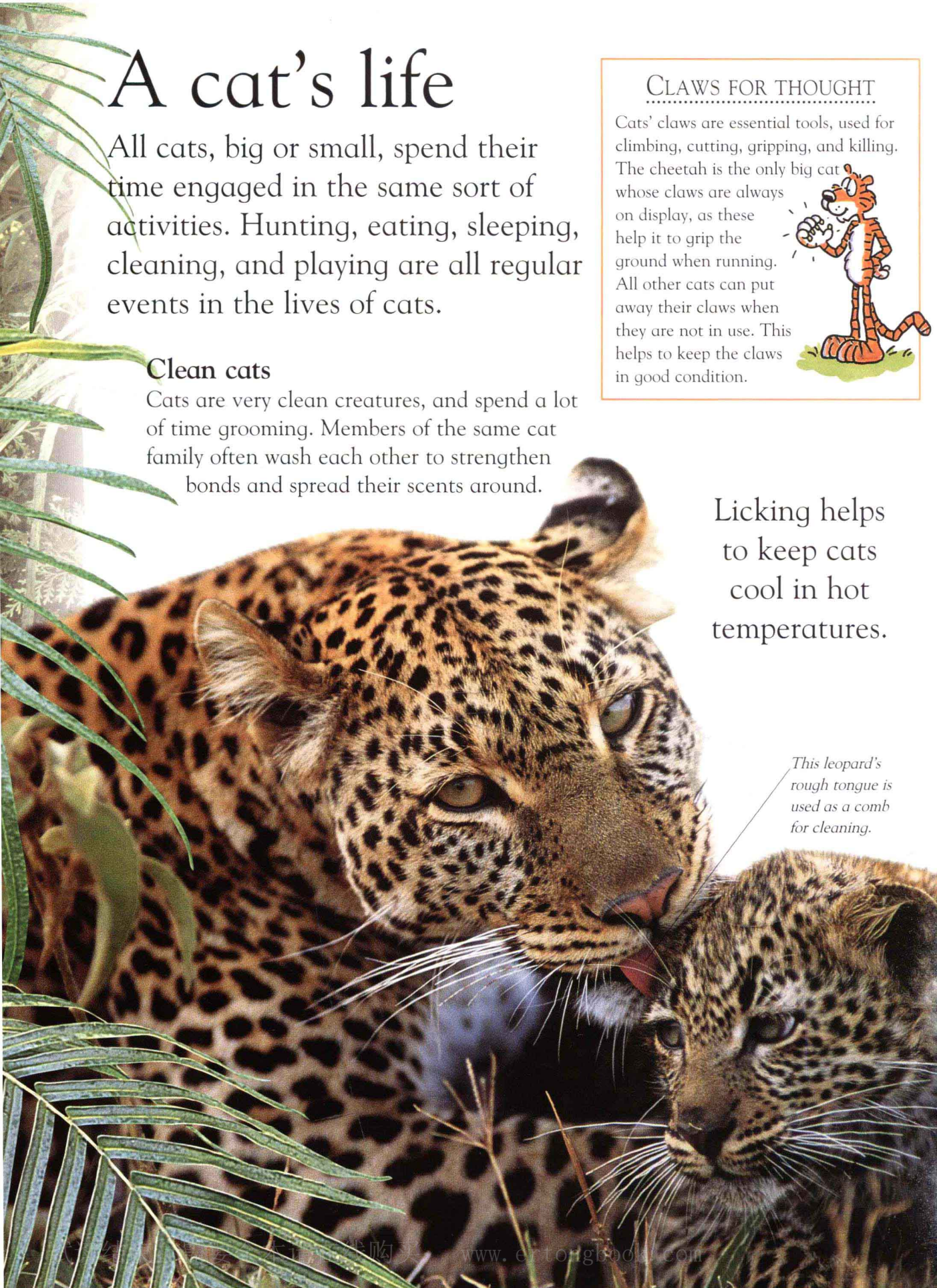
CLAWS FOR THOUGHT

Cats' claws are essential tools, used for climbing, cutting, gripping, and killing. The cheetah is the only big cat whose claws are always on display, as these help it to grip the ground when running. All other cats can put away their claws when they are not in use. This helps to keep the claws in good condition.



Licking helps to keep cats cool in hot temperatures.

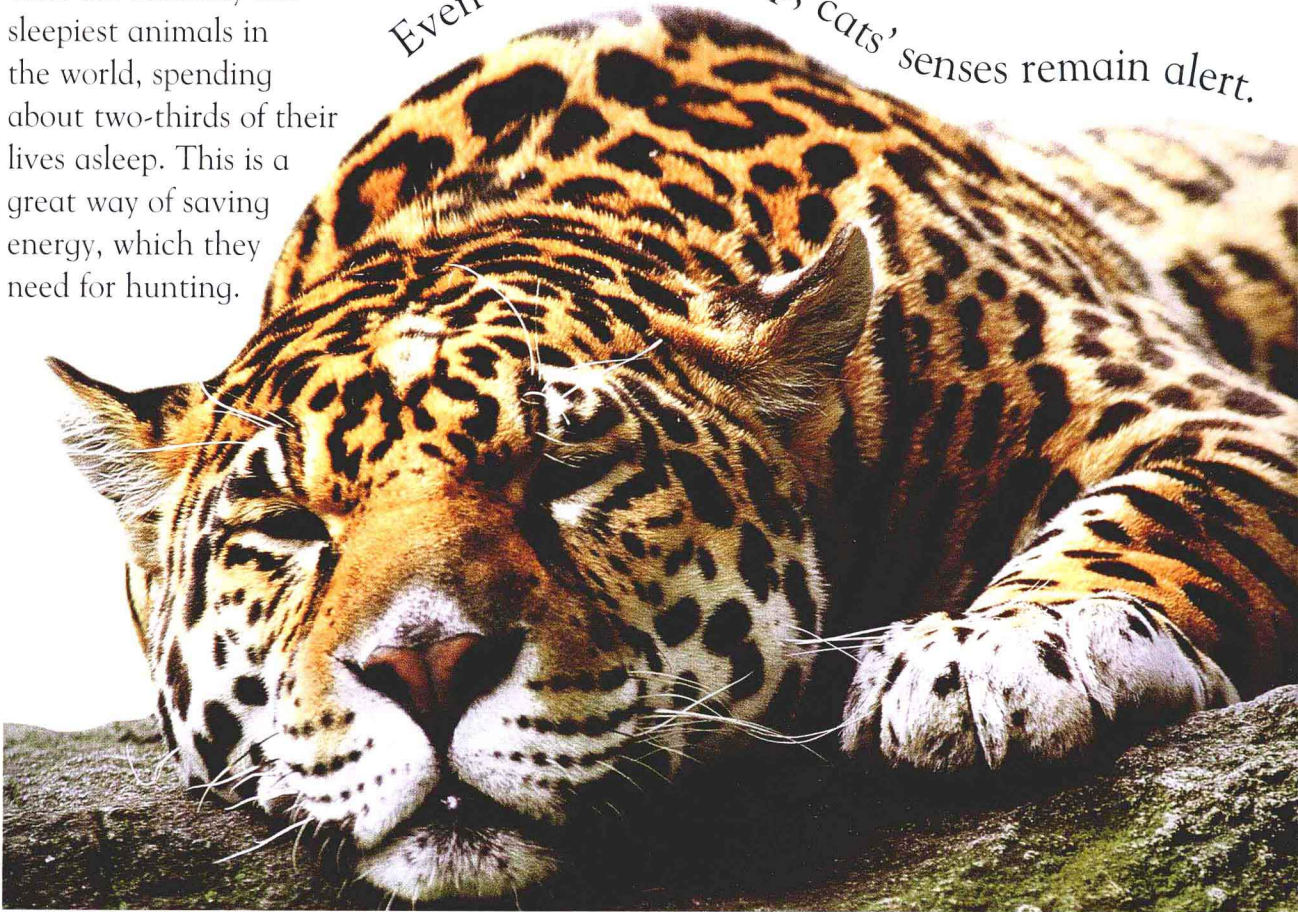
This leopard's rough tongue is used as a comb for cleaning.



Cat napping

Cats are officially the sleepest animals in the world, spending about two-thirds of their lives asleep. This is a great way of saving energy, which they need for hunting.

Even when fast asleep, cats' senses remain alert.



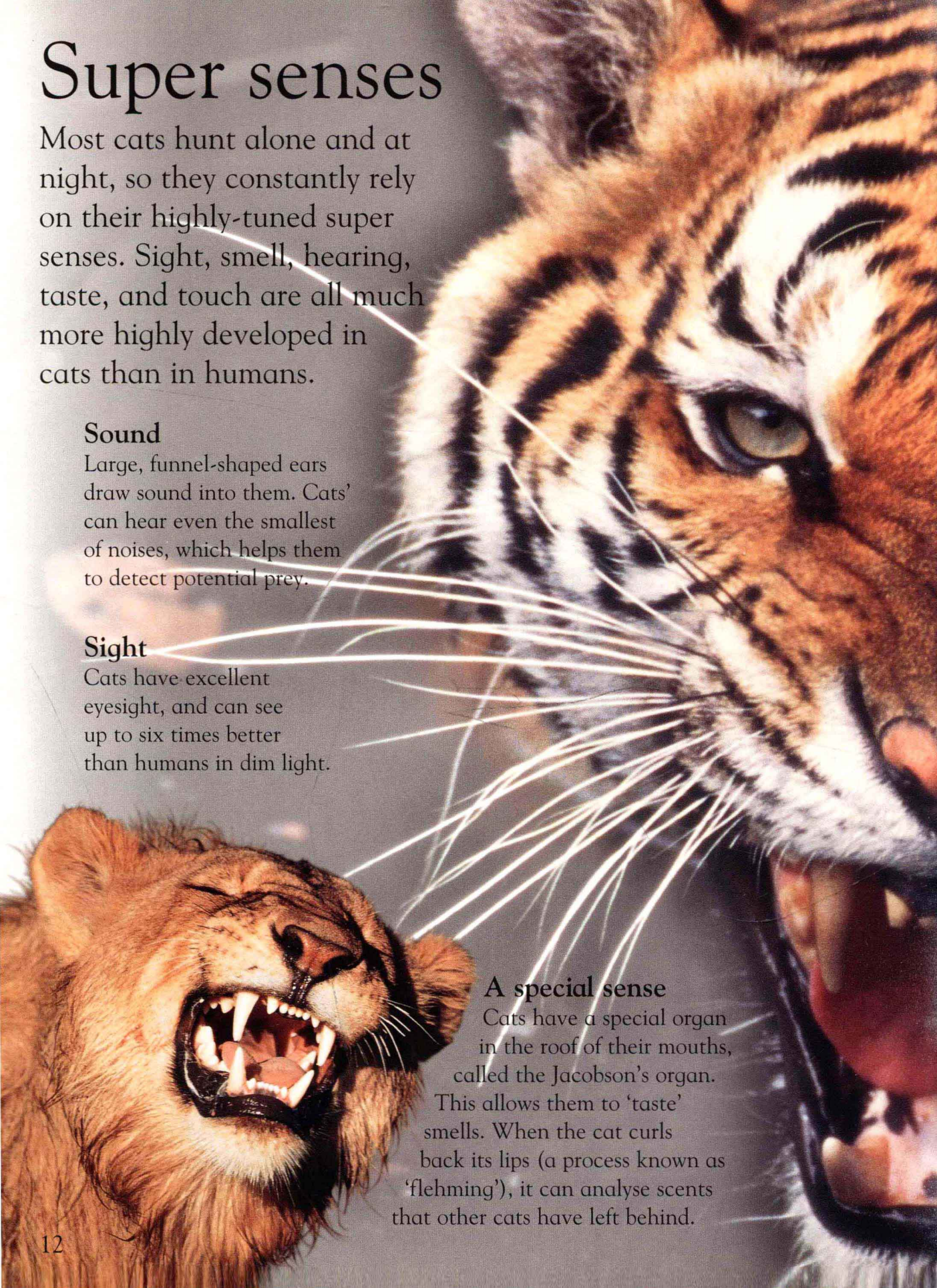
All cats spend about 19–20 hours of the day resting.



Burst of energy

Cats hunt to survive, and this uses up a lot of energy. Generally, cats hunt in similar ways, slowly stalking, then quickly and expertly ambushing their prey. A hunt may or may not be successful!

Super senses



Most cats hunt alone and at night, so they constantly rely on their highly-tuned super senses. Sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch are all much more highly developed in cats than in humans.

Sound

Large, funnel-shaped ears draw sound into them. Cats' can hear even the smallest of noises, which helps them to detect potential prey.

Sight

Cats have excellent eyesight, and can see up to six times better than humans in dim light.

A special sense

Cats have a special organ in the roof of their mouths, called the Jacobson's organ. This allows them to 'taste' smells. When the cat curls back its lips (a process known as 'flehming'), it can analyse scents that other cats have left behind.



Bright eyes

Cats are known for their brilliant eyesight, and eyes that glow in the darkness. When it is dark, cats' pupils expand to let in lots of light so the cats can see. The pupils then narrow again when it is brighter.



Narrow pupils in the light.



Expanded pupils in the dark.

Touch

Whiskers are long, stiff hairs with nerve endings at the roots. Framing the cat's face, these hairs help it to feel its way around, by providing the cat with information about its environment.

Smell

A sensitive nose helps each cat to recognise its home, mate, family, and food. A cat's nose has about 19 million nerve endings in it.

Taste

A large, rough tongue is used for grooming, licking meat from bones, and lapping up water.

SENSITIVE SENSES

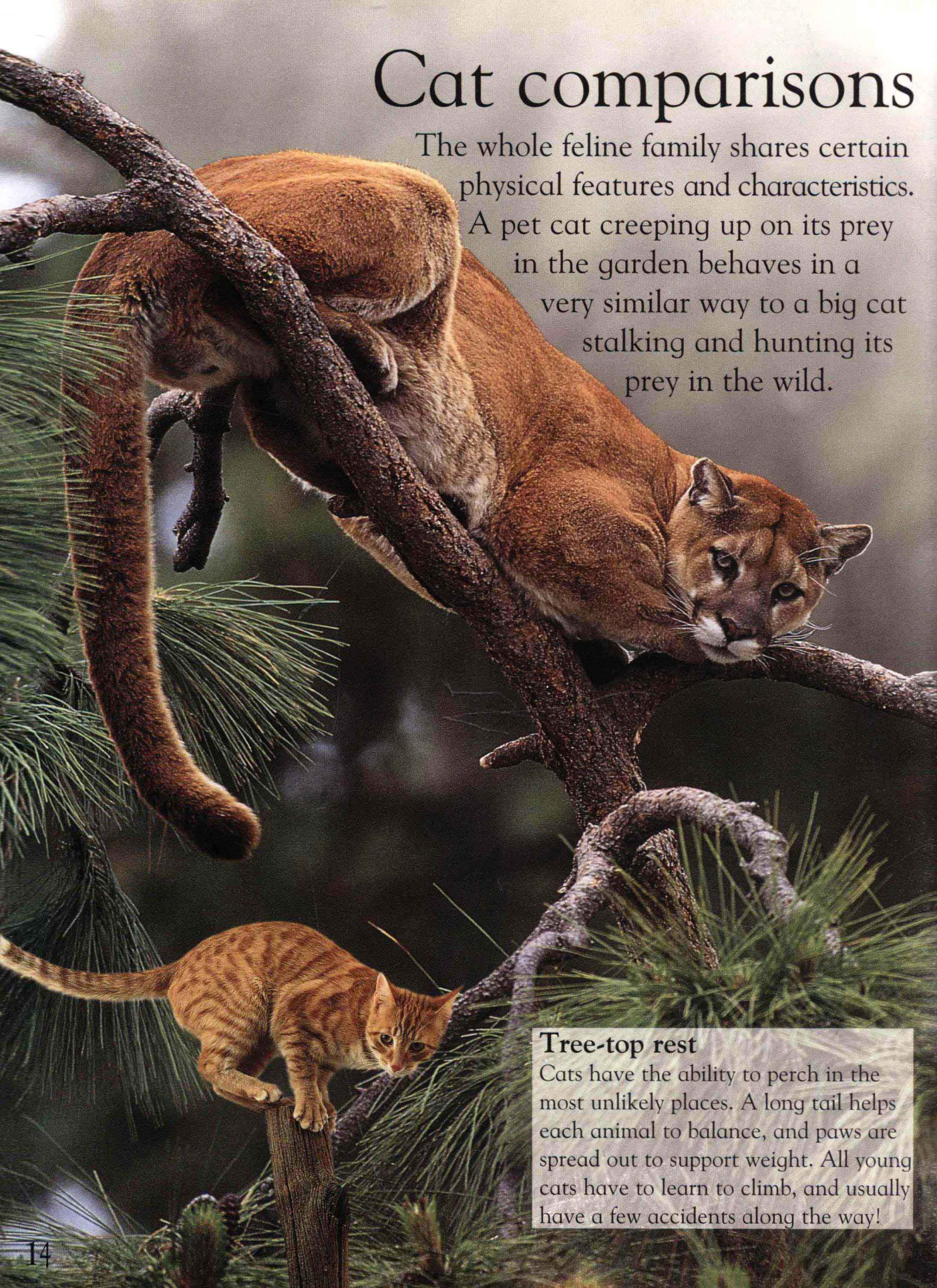
All cats are extremely sensitive to vibrations in the air. Some may even sense earthquake tremors and volcano eruptions before they occur. People living on the slopes of Mount Etna, an active volcano in Italy, often keep pet cats as early warning devices.

When the cats run away in terror, their owners follow quickly!



Cat comparisons

The whole feline family shares certain physical features and characteristics. A pet cat creeping up on its prey in the garden behaves in a very similar way to a big cat stalking and hunting its prey in the wild.



Tree-top rest

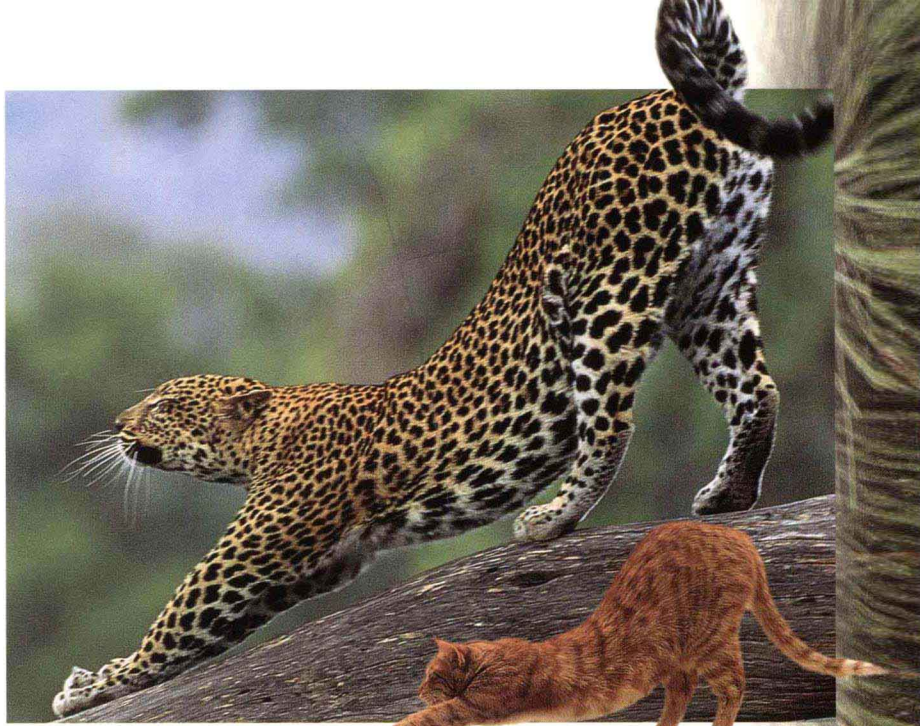
Cats have the ability to perch in the most unlikely places. A long tail helps each animal to balance, and paws are spread out to support weight. All young cats have to learn to climb, and usually have a few accidents along the way!

Fit as a feline

Cats don't need to exercise to stay fit. When they stretch and roll, all of their muscles receive a thorough work-out.

Cat facts

- A cat's tail clearly shows what mood it is in. It will be lashed around when angry, or raised high when greeting or exploring new places.
- Cats swallow their food without chewing, as they don't have any grinding teeth.



On the prowl

All cats have a strong hunting instinct, and wild cats must kill in order to survive. Well-fed domestic cats have food provided, but the urge to hunt is not easily forgotten.



Cat calls

The leopard is one of the four roaring cats, along with the tiger, lion, and jaguar. The other big cats can growl and make chirruping noises. Cats' noises communicate their feelings, and miaowing, purring, growling, or roaring indicate a wide range of emotions.



King of the beasts

African lions are found on the grassy plains of southern and eastern Africa, living in groups called prides. Prides can have as few as five lions in them, or as many as 40. With its crowning mane and regal looks, the male lion is often associated with royalty.



Male lions are so big it is difficult for them to hunt.

Land of the lion

One of the male lion's roles is to protect his pride and territory from rival males.

Each dawn he roars loudly, announcing to the world that it is his kingdom, so intruders beware!