

MOUNTAIN LION

CARD 78

GROUP 1: MAMMALS



ORDER
Carnivora

FAMILY
Felidae

GENUS & SPECIES
Felis concolor



Known also as the puma, cougar, and panther, the mountain lion is a highly adaptable wildcat. It lives in habitats ranging from snow-covered mountains to tropical rainforests.

KEY FACTS



SIZES

Height: To shoulder, 24-28 in.
Length: Head and body, 5-6 ft.
Tail length: 26-30 in.
Weight: 80-230 lb.



BREEDING

Sexual maturity: Males, at least 3 years. Females, 2 years.
Mating: Year-round. Females usually breed once every 2 years.
Gestation: 90-96 days.
Litter size: 2-6, usually 3-4.



LIFESTYLE

Habit: Solitary, generally hunt at dawn and dusk, but active by day in areas undisturbed by man.
Diet: Mainly deer, most wild animals.
Lifespan: Up to 18 years.



RELATED SPECIES

Several subspecies, two endangered: *Felis concolor coryi* (Florida) and *F.c. cougar* (northeastern North America).



Range of the mountain lion.

DISTRIBUTION

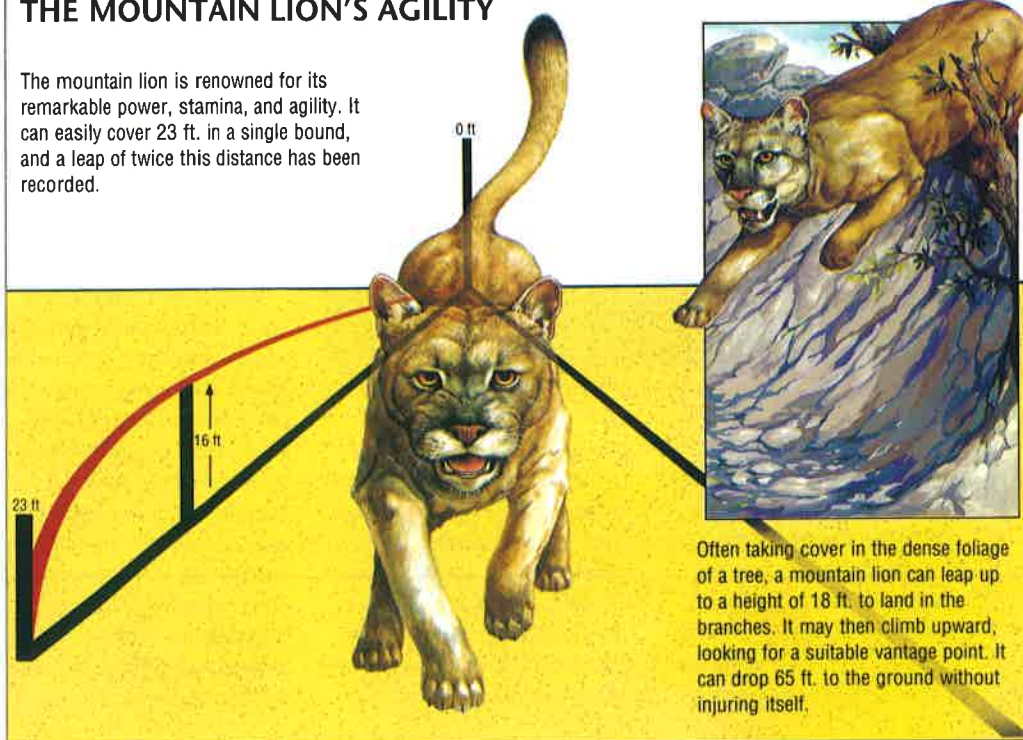
Throughout North and South America from southern Canada to Patagonia.

CONSERVATION

The mountain lion is a protected species, but most farmers and cattle ranchers object to its presence. Many animals are shot to safeguard herds, in spite of evidence that mountain lions rarely attack domestic stock.

THE MOUNTAIN LION'S AGILITY

The mountain lion is renowned for its remarkable power, stamina, and agility. It can easily cover 23 ft. in a single bound, and a leap of twice this distance has been recorded.



Often taking cover in the dense foliage of a tree, a mountain lion can leap up to a height of 18 ft. to land in the branches. It may then climb upward, looking for a suitable vantage point. It can drop 65 ft. to the ground without injuring itself.

Long and lean, the mountain lion is immensely powerful and capable of killing prey such as a bear or bison with a single bite. Although it is usually red or brown, its coloration varies. In Patagonia, where mountain lions are particularly large, their coats are often red-gray or silver-gray.



HABITAT

Mountain lions are found in habitats as diverse as the cold, northern woods of Canada, the rocky, western country of the United States, and the tropical rainforests of Brazil. In Argentina, they live in the pampas, and their range extends to the southernmost

tip of South America. Instead of occupying a permanent den, mountain lions rest and find shelter in caves, among rocky outcrops, and in dense vegetation. They generally migrate from the mountains in winter to follow deer and other prey.

FOOD & HUNTING

Mountain lions are *carnivores* (meat eaters) and generally hunt at dawn and dusk. Still, they are active by day in areas undisturbed by man.

Like other cats, the mountain lion stalks its prey, sprinting after it if it attempts to flee. Then, pouncing on the animal's back with a powerful leap that knocks it to the ground, the mountain lion kills its prey with a single bite to the nape of the neck.

Mountain lions have large hunting territories, and they eat most kinds of animals. Through-

out their range, however, deer is their principal food. In the absence of deer, they eat anything available, including cattle and other domestic livestock.

Mountain lions can run very fast over short distances, but they tire quickly. If an animal survives a mountain lion's first attack, it generally escapes. Mountain lions rarely share hunting territories and usually avoid each other, but they make no attempt to defend their own territories or take over those of others.

Right: In wooded country, mountain lions do much of their hunting in the trees, moving with great agility and speed through the branches. This one has trapped a raccoon up a tree. Mountain lions stalk and eat large and small animals.



BREEDING

The territories of male mountain lions may overlap those of females, enabling the males to detect when the females are ready to mate.

During a 14-day period of mating, a male and female will break their normally solitary habits to hunt together and sleep next to each other. The female later gives birth to two to six kittens in a carefully hidden den, located between rocks or in a cave.

Blind at birth, the kittens have spotted coats until they are six months old. They begin to take meat provided by their mother at six weeks, while they are still suckling. Although they can hunt for themselves after nine months, they usually remain with their mother for two years. The cubs then leave her and may stay together for several months before wandering off to establish territories of their own.

Right: Mountain lions mate during a 14-day period.



Below: At two weeks, this baby mountain lion is covered with soft, dark spots that will later fade.



MOUNTAIN LION & MAN

Once common across the western hemisphere, the mountain lion has been eradicated in many areas, and its survival is threatened.

In some areas, mountain lions were wiped out in an attempt to protect deer populations. But eliminating a natural predator disrupted the balance of the environment. Consequently, the deer multiplied rapidly, and their habitat was unable to support the large population.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The mountain lion is found over a wider range than any other mammal in the western hemisphere, except for man.
- Mountain lions vary greatly in size.
- A mountain lion pounces so violently that it can drag its prey 20 feet along the ground.

ROCK WALLABY

CARD 79

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER
Marsupialia

FAMILY
Macropodidae

GENUS
Petrogale



The rock wallaby is one of the most distinctive animals in the Australian outback. It has many similarities to the kangaroo but lives exclusively on rocky terrain.

KEY FACTS



SIZES
Length: Head and body, 20-30 in.
Tail, 15-28 in.
Weight: 6-20 lb.



BREEDING
Sexual maturity: 18 months.
Mating: Year-round when conditions are favorable.
Gestation: 1 month, then 8 months in the pouch.
No. of young: 1.



LIFESTYLE
Habit: Sociable.
Call: Communicates by thumping the ground with its feet.
Diet: Grasses, as well as leaves, bark, and roots in dry weather.
Lifespan: 14 years in captivity.



RELATED SPECIES
The ringtailed rock wallaby, *Petrogale xanthopus*, and the little rock wallaby, *Peradorcas concinna*.



Range of the rock wallaby.

DISTRIBUTION

Throughout the Australian mainland on rocky terrain from coastal ranges to inland hills.

CONSERVATION

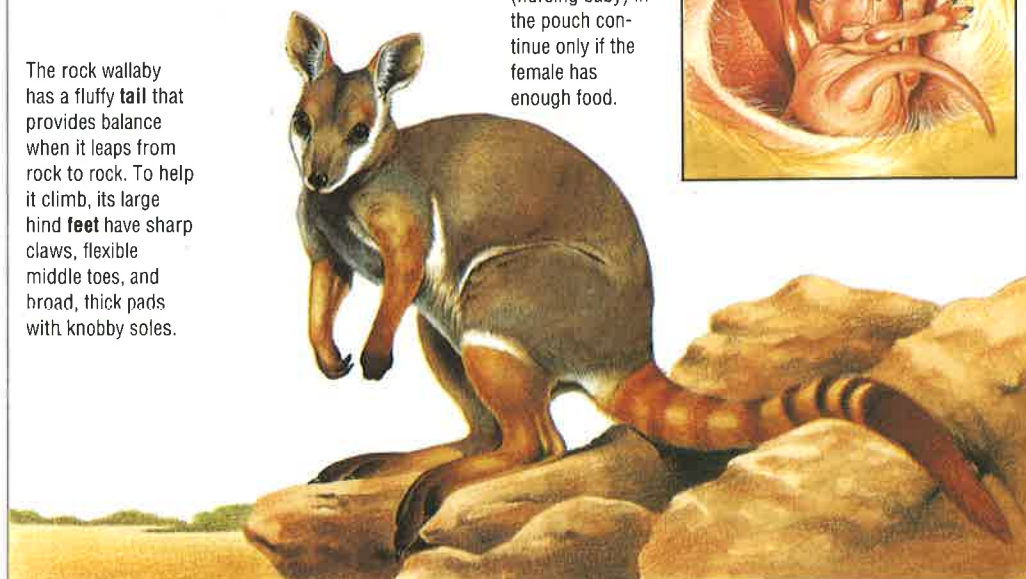
Nearly extinct over much of its range due to hunting for its pelt during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conservation measures include the establishment of protected areas and a breeding center.

FEATURES OF THE ROCK WALLABY

The rock wallaby belongs to the same marsupial family as the kangaroo: *Macropodidae*.

The rock wallaby has a fluffy tail that provides balance when it leaps from rock to rock. To help it climb, its large hind feet have sharp claws, flexible middle toes, and broad, thick pads with knobby soles.

Development of the embryo in the mother's womb and of the joey (nursing baby) in the pouch continue only if the female has enough food.





Many species of rock wallaby have thick, attractive fur that was sought by fur traders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result, the remaining species are now rare or almost extinct over most of their range.

BREEDING

The rock wallaby breeds all year when there is adequate food. During intense drought, when food supplies are scarce and the female cannot produce milk for her young, she abandons the *joey* (nursing baby).

If the female with a joey in her pouch becomes pregnant, the new embryo in her womb does not develop until her pouch is empty. The development of the embryo is also delayed in periods of drought.

When the rains return, the embryo immediately develops, the joey is born, and it makes its way into its mother's pouch. She then mates again, and another fertilized egg begins to develop.

Right: As soon as this joey leaves the pouch, another is born to take its place.



DID YOU KNOW?

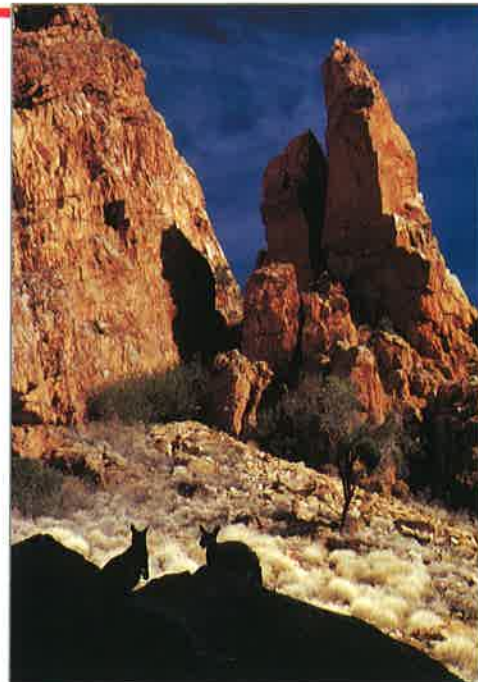
- The rock wallaby had no natural enemies in Australia until European foxes were introduced in the nineteenth century. Faster and more cunning than the native *dingoes* (wild dogs), foxes killed many wallabies.
- The first settlers in Australia thought the rock wallaby was a cat because it climbed so quickly and agilely.
- The rock wallabies that live in the northern parts of Western Australia have thin, short hair to avoid overheating in the hot, tropical climate.
- Because the brushtailed rock wallaby has dull brown fur, it is not hunted for its pelt like other species with more delicate coloration.
- The rock wallaby is not found in either Tasmania or New Guinea.

HABITAT

The rock wallaby lives in the rocky deserts and the high mountain ranges of the Australian outback.

The wallaby shelters in deep, hidden crevices in the rocks. The rocks leading to the hiding places are often worn smooth by generations of wallabies using the same trail.

The brushtailed rock wallaby lives in the mountainous region of eastern New South Wales. One species living on an island, at the eastern end of the Great Australian Bight, is at home either in the island's rocky interior or on the seashore among boulders washed by the surf.



Left: There are few places as inhospitable as the rocky regions of the Australian outback. But the rock wallaby has adapted to the harsh environment.

Right: No rock is too steep for the agile rock wallaby. But, away from the rocks, it moves slowly and awkwardly.

BEHAVIOR

During hot weather the rock wallaby spends much of the day resting in the shade. In the cooler early morning and evening hours it may travel long distances from the rocks in search of grass, which forms the major part of its

diet. On cool days the rock wallaby spends much of its time eating.

When disturbed, the rock wallaby stands rigidly, then shows its unease by beating its feet once or twice on the ground to warn other

wallabies. When it is very alarmed, the wallaby disappears among the rocks, leaping from one to another in a single bound.

Unlike its close relative, the tree kangaroo, the rock wallaby cannot climb trees.



INDIAN GRAY MONGOOSE

CARD 81



GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER
Carnivora

FAMILY
Viverridae

GENUS & SPECIES
Herpestes edwardsi



The Indian gray mongoose is one of the few animals that can survive a cobra attack, which makes it one of the deadly snake's few predators. Still, the mongoose generally prefers to eat smaller and less dangerous prey.

KEY FACTS



SIZES
Length of body: 17 in.
Tail length: 15 in.
Weight: 3 lb.



BREEDING
Sexual maturity: 2 years.
Mating: Takes place at any time of the year.
Gestation: 60 days.
No. of young: 2-4.



LIFESTYLE
Habit: Solitary *diurnal* (daytime) hunter.
Diet: Mostly small mammals like birds and lizards; also snakes and their eggs and some insects.
Lifespan: Up to 10 years.



RELATED SPECIES
The family of *viverridae* includes genets, civets, and linsangs. The dwarf mongoose of Ethiopia is only 17 in. long from head to tip of tail. The African civet is the largest, with a body 33 in. long.



Range of the Indian gray mongoose.

DISTRIBUTION

Found in India, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, the Middle East, and Nepal. Other species are found in the Far East, Africa, southern Spain, and Portugal.

CONSERVATION

Of the 31 species of mongoose, the spotted linsang is the only species in danger of extinction. Four of the Madagascan species are now threatened by destruction of their habitat.

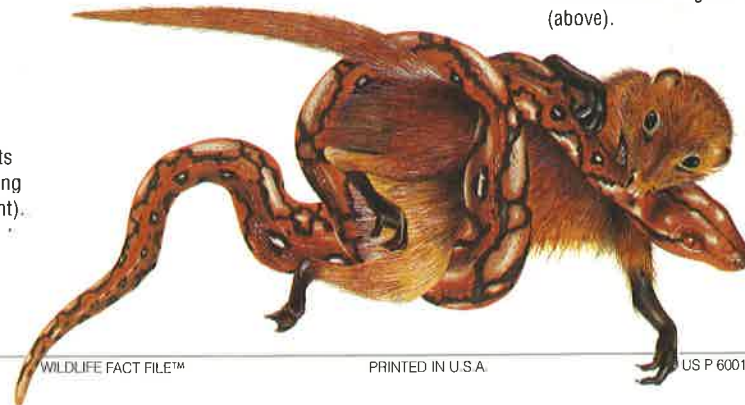
INDIAN GRAY MONGOOSE FIGHTING A COBRA

Fur: The mongoose's dense fur protects it from the cobra's venomous fangs (right).



Stamina: The mongoose overcomes the cobra with its great endurance (above).

Bite: The mongoose kills the snake by biting the back of its head. It then eats the cobra, starting at the head (right).





The Indian gray mongoose has

speckled gray fur and a long, bushy tail that it

carries behind it in a straight line when walking

on all four paws. When the mongoose confronts an

enemy such as the cobra, it sits on its haunches

and stretches its body to its full height

to look more menacing.

HABITS

Although the Indian gray mongoose spends most of its time on the ground, it can climb walls and trees as well as a monkey. The mongoose can also run backward in a straight line for short distances. By rolling into a ball and jumping up on its hind legs, it can leap high into the air.

The mongoose is active during the day, when it hunts. At night it sleeps on the ground in a termite nest or in a den that it digs itself. It is found in open country and in the lightly wooded areas of its range.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Mongooses can see colors, unlike most mammals, which have only partial color vision.
- A mongoose cracks eggs open by standing with its back to a wall and throwing the eggs under its body and between its back legs so that the eggs break against the wall.
- Indian gray mongooses are often kept as pets to keep houses free from rats and other pests.
- The mongoose closes its outer ear when hunting in soil to keep out dirt and water.

Above: The mongoose is a fast and agile hunter. It is always watchful for prey.

FOOD & HUNTING

The mongoose is a skillful hunter that actively searches for prey by using its strong senses of smell and sight. It eats anything it can catch.

The Indian gray mongoose commonly eats small mammals such as rats, as well as eggs and a variety of insects, including the scorpion. The mongoose sniffs the ground and turns over rocks and stones in its search for prey. If the animal tries to flee, the mongoose chases it. It kills its prey while they are both running by delivering a bite to the neck or head. Although the mongoose eats snakes, including the poisonous cobra (see back cover), the main part of its diet consists of small animals that live on or under the ground.

Right: A snake falls prey to a mongoose.

BREEDING

Although the gray mongoose is widespread, little is known of its breeding habits in the wild. Males and females are solitary except during the mating season. After mating, each pair separates, and the male often mates with other females.

Two months after mating, two to four young are born in a well-hidden nest on the ground. If predators or intruders threaten, the mother mongoose carries her young in her mouth to safety.

The newborn mongooses are lightly covered with hair, but they are blind for the first few days. They are suckled for several weeks. The young



develop quickly and soon accompany their mother on hunting trips, where she teaches them how to hunt for themselves. Once they

Above: A female teaches hunting skills to her young. become skillful hunters, they leave to establish their own territories.



PYGMY HIPPOPOTAMUS

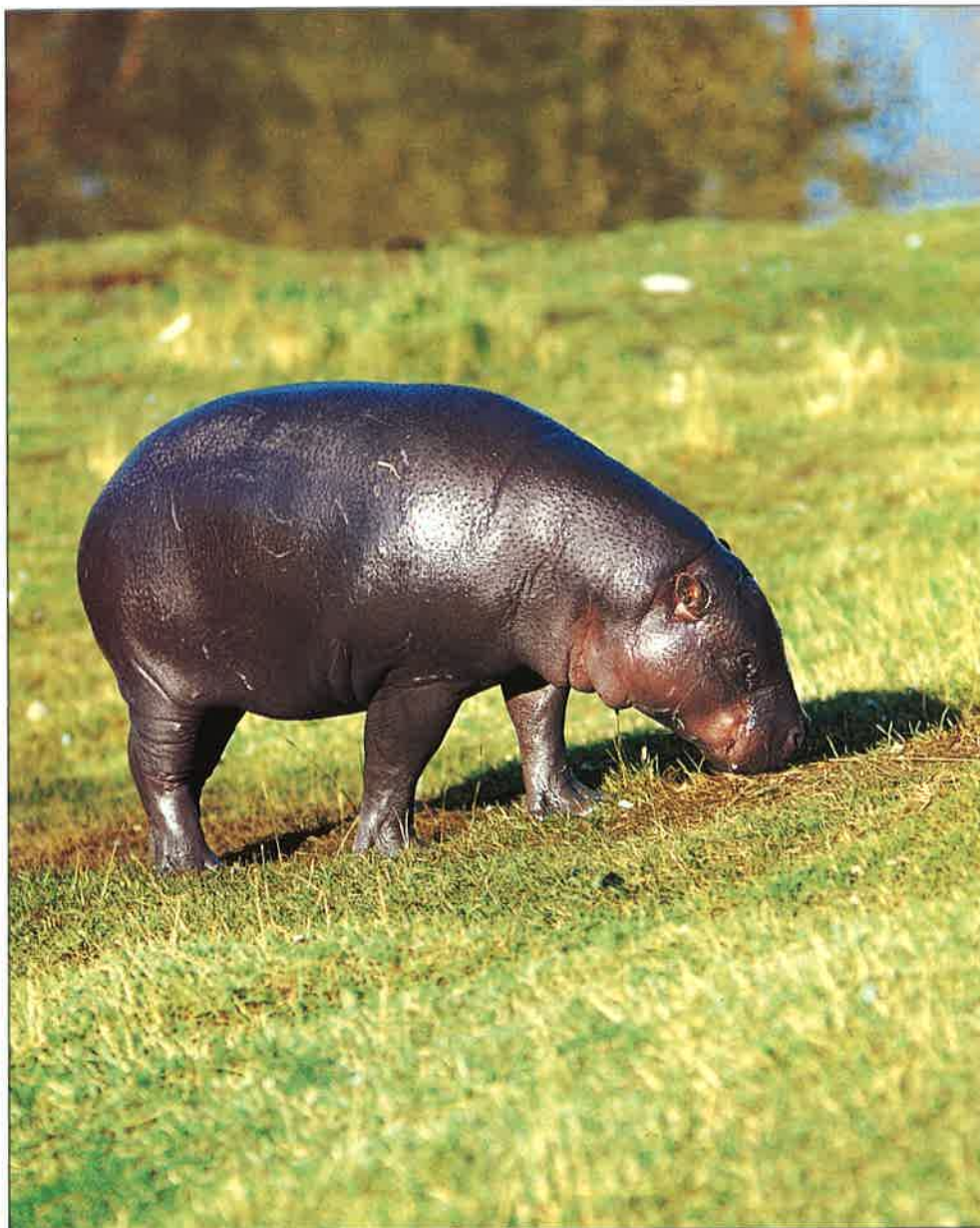
CARD 83

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER
Artiodactyla

FAMILY
Hippopotamidae

GENUS & SPECIES
Choeropsis liberiensis



The pygmy hippopotamus lives a solitary life in the rainforests of West Africa. Because of hunting and increasing loss of habitat, it is now endangered throughout most of its range.

KEY FACTS



SIZES

Height: 2 1/2-3 ft.
Length: Head and body, 5-6 ft.
Tail, 6 in.
Weight: 350-600 lb.



BREEDING

Sexual maturity: 4-5 years in captivity.
Breeding season: Not known in the wild. Captive young have been born throughout the year.
Gestation: 190-210 days.
No. of young: Usually 1.



LIFESTYLE

Habit: Solitary. May form small family groups.
Diet: Plant material such as leaves, shoots, roots, and fruit.



RELATED SPECIES

The pygmy hippo's only close relative is the great African hippopotamus, *Hippopotamus amphibius*.



Range of the pygmy hippopotamus.

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout the lowland rainforests of West Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and the Ivory Coast.

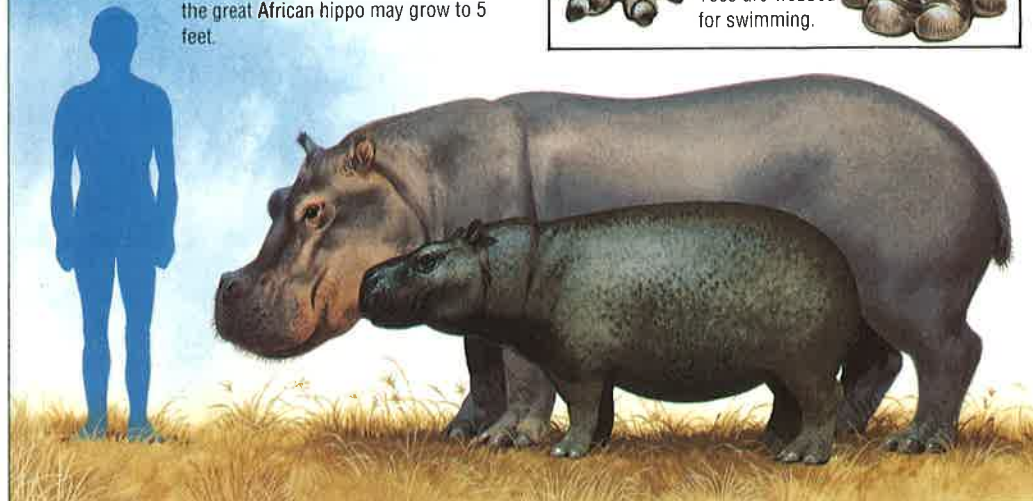
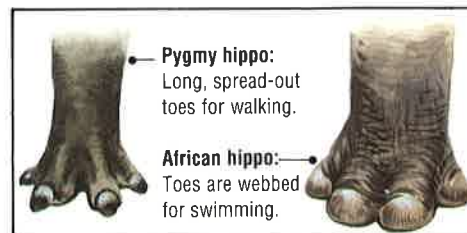
CONSERVATION

The pygmy hippo is in danger of extinction as a result of habitat loss. It is protected in some national parks, and many are kept in zoos.

FEATURES OF THE PYGMY HIPPOPOTAMUS

Length: The Great African hippo grows to a maximum length of 11 1/2 feet, but the pygmy hippo reaches only 5 3/4 feet.

Height: The average man is 5 feet 10 inches tall. The pygmy hippo can reach a height of 3 feet at the shoulders and the great African hippo may grow to 5 feet.



The pygmy hippo differs from its more familiar and more common relative, the hippopotamus. The pygmy is smaller and has thinner legs and a more rounded head. Still, like the larger hippo, the pygmy hippo emits pink fluid from its skin that protects it from the strong sun.



FEEDING

The pygmy hippo is an *herbivore*; it feeds only on plant material. It uproots swamp plants and eats them whole. The hippo also crushes hard fruit with its strong teeth and strips leaves from shrubs and young trees. It sometimes

reaches higher branches by standing on its hind legs and leaning on the tree trunk with its front legs.

The pygmy hippo feeds in the late afternoon until midnight, then returns to its resting place.



SPECIAL ADAPTATIONS

Facial features: The pygmy hippo closes its nose and ears underwater. This adaptation is common among aquatic animals. But the pygmy hippopotamus actually spends little time in the water.

Skin secretion: The hippo does not sweat. Instead, it produces pink fluid from pores in its skin to keep its body cool. This is similar to sweating. The pink fluid also protects the hippo's sensitive skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays for the short periods that the animal is in the sun.



PYGMY HIPPO & MAN

The pygmy hippo is hunted and eaten by the people who live in the area it inhabits. But a greater threat to the species' survival is the destruction of its swamp and rainforest habitats.

Fortunately several national

parks have been established in the Ivory Coast and Guinea that provide some protection for the pygmy hippo.

Above: Although it is usually timid, the pygmy hippo may bare its teeth to warn off intruders.

HABITS

The pygmy hippo is a solitary animal that lives among dense vegetation along streams and swamps and in the rainforests of West Africa. It sometimes lives in cultivated areas, but the pygmy hippo is shy: it avoids people, as well as other hippos.

Each hippo has its own territory. The male's territory is larger than the female's; both mark their territorial boundaries with their droppings.

The pygmy hippo feeds mainly when it is dark. It

spends most of the day resting within its territory. It changes resting places once or twice a week.

BREEDING

The territories of the male and female pygmy hippo often overlap; thus when a female is ready to mate, there is usually

a male nearby.

A single *calf* is born seven months after mating. It suckles two to three times a day. For the first few weeks of its life, the calf is unable to walk very far, so the mother hides it in the bushes and returns to feed it.

At five months, the calf weighs 10 times more than it did at birth. It is not known how long the calf remains with its mother, but it is sexually mature at four to five years old.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The pygmy hippo is a noisy eater. It can be heard feeding from as far away as 150 feet.
- The pygmy hippo was unknown to Western scientists until the mid-nineteenth century.

- The pygmy hippo loses water through its skin so quickly that it must live in a damp, shady habitat.
- The hippo's family name comes from the Greek phrase *potamos hippos*, meaning "river horse."

Top left: The pygmy hippo finds relief from the hot midday sun in a cool stream.

Right: The female guards her youngster fiercely. She also keeps it from straying far from the cover of trees.



MUSK OX

CARD 84



GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER
Artiodactyla

FAMILY
Ovibonini

GENUS & SPECIES
Ovibos moschatus



The musk ox's outer coat of long, coarse hair and thick layer of fine underfur, protect it from the severe Arctic cold and enable it to live farther north than any other hoofed animal.

KEY FACTS



SIZES

Length: Up to 8 ft. Female one third smaller than male.

Height: Up to 5 ft. Smaller in its northernmost range.

Weight: Up to 900 lb. in the wild, 1,400 lb. in captivity.



BREEDING

Mating: August to September.

Gestation: 8 months.

No. of young: 1.



LIFESTYLE

Habit: Forms herds that provide warmth and protection.

Diet: Grasses, lichen, sedges, herbs, dwarf birch, alder, willow.

Call: Snorts when annoyed.



RELATED SPECIES

The musk ox's nearest relative is the takin or golden-fleeced cow, *Budorcas taxicolor*, which inhabits subalpine forests in rugged areas of western China, Bhutan, and Burma.



Range of the musk ox.

DISTRIBUTION

Across northern Canada and Alaska, Greenland, and the Arctic.

CONSERVATION

Numbers were reduced drastically at the beginning of this century. Sanctuaries were set in Greenland and also in Canada, where killing has been prohibited. The musk ox is no longer considered endangered.

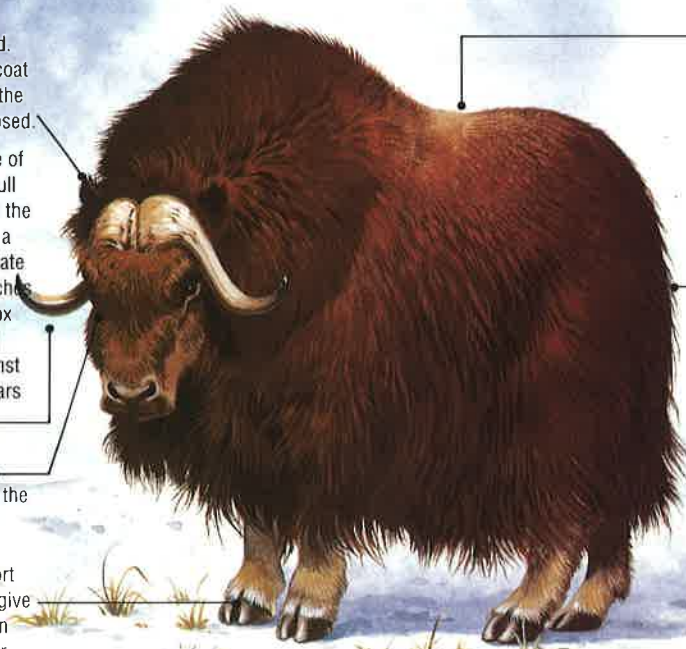
FEATURES OF THE MUSK OX

Ears: Pointed. Covered by coat so that only the tips are exposed.

Horns: Those of the mature bull spread out at the base to form a very tough plate up to four inches thick. Musk ox uses them in defense against predatory bears and wolves.

Eyes: Small. Protected by the horns.

Hooves: Short and wide to give a firm grip on rough, icy, or snowy ground.



Coat: Back hairs much shorter than those on chest, neck, and hindquarters, which can reach three feet in length. Provides extremely good insulation.

Summer coat: Dark brown from June to July (shown here).

Winter coat: Much longer and almost black. Fades to a lighter brown in spring.

The musk ox's name comes

from the musklike scent the male gives off during mating season. The glands that produce the odor are located beneath each eye, and the male stimulates them by rubbing his face on his forelegs.



HABIT

In the barren Arctic, food is very scarce, and there is little protection from the year-round blizzards. The musk oxen gather in herds as large as 100 animals. The oxen

bunch close together for warmth and shelter. The thick outer hairs of the musk ox's coat grow two to three feet long, sometimes touching the ground.

FOOD & FEEDING

In winter food is so scarce that the musk ox survives on lichens and mosses buried beneath the snow. Like other members of the cow family, the musk ox has no upper incisor (cutting teeth). It uses its tough upper lip to pull at vegetation, which it crops with its sharp lower teeth.

During the short summer, vegetation is abundant, and the musk ox travels over a wide area eating every plant it can find: willow, dwarf birch, alder, and herbs.

In September, the musk ox moves into the hills where the snowfall is lighter and food is not so deeply buried.

PREDATORS

The main natural predator of the musk ox is the wolf. When a pack of wolves attacks, the musk oxen form a tight circle with their horns pointing outward toward the predators.

Below: Few natural predators challenge a full-grown ox, which weighs as much as half a ton.

The young are protected in the center of the circle or under their mothers' shaggy coats. Some of the males, called *bulls*, rush at the wolves. The wolves usually retreat.

But this defense was useless against armed explorers, who

shot the musk ox for food. Eskimos and Indians killed huge numbers of musk oxen when they first acquired rifles.

Musk ox calves were once captured for zoos. But it was first necessary to kill the adults that protected them.

Today hunting musk oxen

is prohibited by law, and sanctuaries have been established in Canada to protect the animal.

Below: Musk oxen stand in a circle to protect their calves if they are threatened by a predator.



DID YOU KNOW?

- The thick coat of the musk ox protects it from swarms of blackflies and mosquitoes.
- The wide hooves of the musk ox have sharp edges that cut into rough and snowy terrain, enabling the animal to run at a surprisingly fast pace.
- According to Eskimo legend, if a musk ox migrates south, all the other oxen will follow. In 1898, Canadian Eskimos, fearing that their herds would follow, slaughtered five oxen captured by the trader Buffalo Jones so that he could not take them south.

BREEDING

In the summer *rutting* (mating) season, bulls fight with other males, either to keep a harem of females or for the chance to mate with a new female. Rival males charge headfirst at each other until one gives up or is gored by the other's horns.

The female or cow, gives birth the following April or May when it is still dark during most of the day. Although the calf is born with a thick, curly coat, the chance of it freezing before the birth fluid dries is great. If it survives, the calf huddles under its mother's long coat for warmth.

For the first three months of

its life the calf feeds only on its mother's rich and nourishing milk. By the time it is four months old it begins eating grass and herbs.

Because of the harsh con-

ditions a herd of 20 to 30 oxen usually has only three or four calves.

Below: A calf huddles between its shaggy parents for protection from icy arctic winds.



LEOPARD SEAL

CARD 85

GROUP 1: MAMMALS

ORDER
Pinnipedia

FAMILY
Phocidae

GENUS & SPECIES
Hydrurga leptonyx



The leopard seal is the largest seal found in Antarctica. It preys mainly on penguins, wearing down its victims until they are too exhausted to escape the seal's powerful jaws.

KEY FACTS



SIZES

Length: Female, 12 ft. Male, 10 ft.
Weight: Female, up to 900 lb. Male, up to 600 lb.



BREEDING

Sexual maturity: Female, 6 years. Male, 5 years.
Breeding season: November to January.
No. of young: Usually 1 pup.



LIFESTYLE

Habit: Solitary.
Diet: Young eat krill. Adults eat fish, squid, penguins, sea birds, shrimps, and young of other seal species.
Lifespan: 26 years.



RELATED SPECIES

The crabeater seal, *Lobodon carcinophagus*, and the grey seal, *Halichoerus grypus*.



Range of the leopard seal.

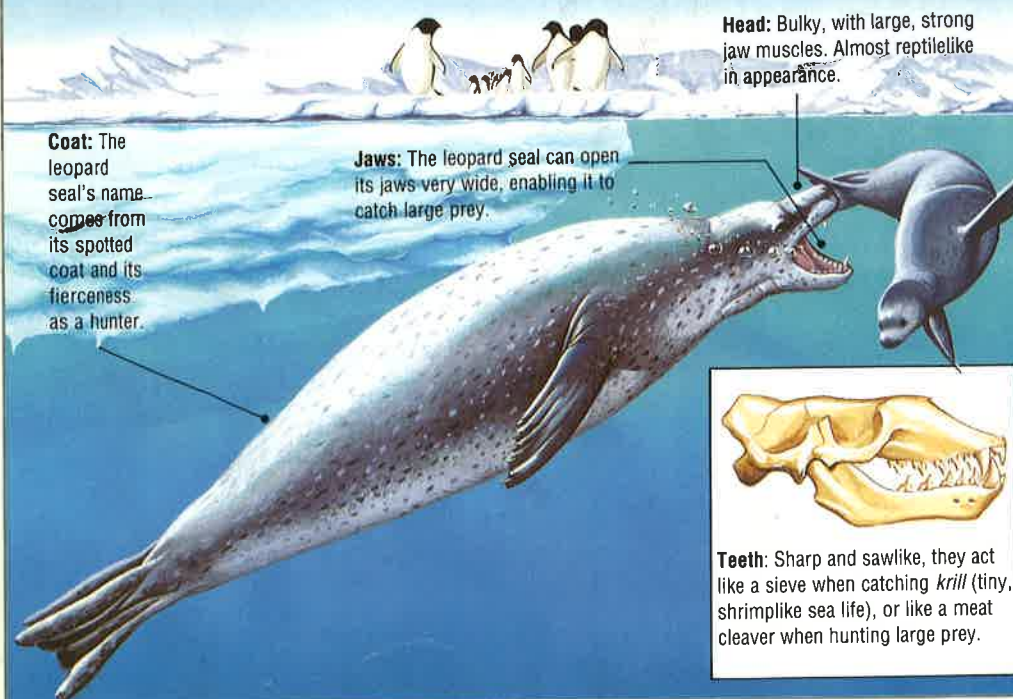
DISTRIBUTION

Around the fringes of the Antarctic ice pack; Heard, Kerguelen, and South Georgia islands. Sometimes seen in southern parts of South America, New Zealand, and Australia.

CONSERVATION

The leopard seal species is not endangered. But its natural curiosity sometimes brings it close to man, who too often responds to its fearsome looks by shooting.

FEATURES OF THE LEOPARD SEAL



Head: Bulky, with large, strong jaw muscles. Almost reptilelike in appearance.

Coat: The leopard seal's name comes from its spotted coat and its fierceness as a hunter.

Jaws: The leopard seal can open its jaws very wide, enabling it to catch large prey.

Teeth: Sharp and sawlike, they act like a sieve when catching *krill* (tiny, shrimplike sea life), or like a meat cleaver when hunting large prey.



In the water the agile leopard seal is feared by penguins, for once the seal has sighted prey, it is a relentless hunter.

But on land the seal is clumsy and poses no threat to the penguins.

It may even rest alongside them.

BEHAVIOR

The leopard seal lives in the cold waters of the Antarctic; it is sometimes found as far north as southern South America and New Zealand. It spends most of its time in the sea, but when it does haul out (leaves the sea) to rest, the seal goes onto the ice pack, rarely on land.

The leopard seal propels itself by moving its tail from side to side, and it steers with its long front flippers. These flippers enable it to change direction quickly—an asset when chasing fast-moving prey.



Left: An adult male displays his jaws, which he uses to tear off chunks of flesh from his prey.

Right: During the summer months, when the ice floes break up, the female gives birth on the ice to her pup.

BREEDING

Antarctic summers are from November to January. At this time the female leopard seal hauls out (leaves the sea) onto the ice pack to bear her pup (newborn seal). At this time she eats a greater amount of food than normal to prepare herself for the fasting after the birth. Unlike other seals that give birth in colonies, the leopard seal bears her young alone.

When the pup is born it looks like a small duplicate of its parent; it weighs about 57 pounds and is about five feet

Left: The leopard seal's respiratory system allows it to stay underwater for long periods.

long. Feeding from its mother's rich milk, the pup gains weight rapidly. After about two weeks it is ready to molt (shed) its first coat and take to the sea. Once the pup can swim it no longer feeds from its mother, who then leaves the pup to fend for itself. The pup feeds on krill (shrimplike sea life) before learning to catch fish and larger prey.

When the cow (female) returns to the sea, she mates immediately with a bull (male) seal. But the fertilized egg does not implant itself in the female's womb for about three months, nor does it develop at this time. This assures that the pup is born

during the following summer when conditions for survival are more favorable.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The leopard seal is one of the few seal species where the adult female is larger than the male.
- The leopard seal population is between 250,000 and 800,000. It is difficult to estimate accurately because the seals are solitary and live in remote places.
- Leopard seals have been described as man-eaters. This is not true; they have attacked only when provoked by man.
- Only a few leopard seals eat other seals. Those that do are fully grown. Other seals account for less than 10 percent of the leopard seal's diet.
- A leopard seal was once found with 160 pounds of penguin in its stomach.

FOOD & HUNTING

The leopard seal is called a ferocious killer because it sometimes preys on its own kind and on the young of other seals. Its somewhat reptilelike facial features also add to this undeserved reputation. Other seals form only

a small proportion of its diet.

Almost half of the leopard seal's diet is krill. It also eats fish and squid, or whatever is within reach, including seabirds. But penguins are its favorite prey. The seal waits underwater, watching the

surface for penguins, then makes its attack from below. After catching a penguin, the seal shakes it violently while tearing off chunks of flesh. But penguins are excellent swimmers themselves and often escape.

