

**RESOURCE LIBRARY**  
ACTIVITY : 45 MINS

## Big Cats in Captivity

Students watch the National Geographic video *Kobu the Lion* and explore the negative consequences of keeping big cats in captivity and the challenges sanctuaries face in trying to care for them.

**GRADES**

3 - 5

**SUBJECTS**

*Biology, Geography, Human Geography, Physical Geography*

**CONTENTS**

1 Video, 2 PDFs, 1 Link

## OVERVIEW

Students watch the National Geographic video *Kobu the Lion* and explore the negative consequences of keeping big cats in captivity and the challenges sanctuaries face in trying to care for them.

For the complete activity with media resources, visit:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.org/activity/big-cats-in-captivity/>

## Program

## DIRECTIONS

### **1. Activate students' prior knowledge about big cats and exotic pets.**

Engage students in a discussion about “big cats” or “exotic pets.” Ask: *What images come to mind? What types of big cats can you think of?* Elicit from students that big cats include lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, jaguars, ocelots, cougars, and other large predatory cats. Explain that big cat populations are in decline throughout the world. Most species are either threatened or endangered due to human actions. Ask: *What types of human activities or behaviors might threaten the survival of big cats?* Elicit from students that as human populations increase and encroach on big cat habitats, humans and cats are forced to compete for food and space. Additional conflicts include illegal poaching, hunting, and trade of big cats as exotic pets. Ask: *What is an exotic pet? What types of animals are kept as exotic pets?* Explain that exotic pets are rare or wild animals kept in captivity for human comfort. Exotic pets include reptiles, birds, monkeys, and top carnivores such as lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, and bears.

### **2. Introduce the National Geographic video, “Kobu the Lion.”**

Explain that students will view the video to learn about the story of a captive exotic pet, Kobu the lion. The video explores the negative consequences of keeping big cats in captivity and the challenges sanctuaries face in trying to care for them. Tell students that, as they view the video, they will answer a series of questions. Afterward, they will participate in a class discussion.

### **3. Have students view the video, answer questions, and discuss their responses.**

Click on the “Background & Vocabulary” tab of this activity and have a student read aloud the text. Explain that Kobu the lion was cared for at The Wild Animal Sanctuary after he was abandoned and then rescued in Mexico City. Distribute copies of the worksheet “Kobu the Lion” Comprehension Questions. Have students watch the video and work independently to answer the questions on the worksheet. After the video, use the provided answer key to discuss student responses as a class.

### **4. Have students reflect on and discuss what they learned about Kobu the lion and exotic pets.**

Using what they learned from the video and class discussion, ask students to list on the board two reasons lions raised in captivity can’t just be released into the wild. Have students list three examples of exotic pets other than lions. Ask students to discuss the challenges sanctuaries face in caring for exotic species like lions.

### **5. Explain how students can find out more about big cats in captivity and The Wild Animal Sanctuary.**

At the end of the discussion, show students The Wild Animal Sanctuary's website and encourage them to access it on their own. Explain that the site includes videos, images, and exotic pet rescue stories that will teach them more about the negative consequences of keeping big cats in captivity and the role sanctuaries play in caring for them.

## Informal Assessment

Use the provided answer key to review students' completed worksheets. Assess their comprehension of the video, issues regarding exotic pets in captivity, and the work of sanctuaries to care for the animals they rescue.

## Extending the Learning

Have students use [The Wild Animal Sanctuary](#) website to research and present information about animal rescue stories.

## OBJECTIVES

## Subjects & Disciplines

### **Biology**

### **Geography**

- [Human Geography](#)
- [Physical Geography](#)

## Learning Objectives

Students will:

- identify problems with keeping big cats in captivity
- list examples of exotic pets
- list reasons lions raised in captivity cannot be released into the wild
- discuss how sanctuaries help care for exotic animals

## Teaching Approach

- Learning-for-use

# Teaching Methods

- Discussions
- Information organization
- Multimedia instruction
- Writing

## Skills Summary

This activity targets the following skills:

- 21st Century Themes
  - Global Awareness
- Critical Thinking Skills
  - Analyzing
  - Understanding
- Geographic Skills
  - Acquiring Geographic Information

## National Standards, Principles, and Practices

### NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM STANDARDS

- Theme 3:

People, Places, and Environments

### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHY STANDARDS

- Standard 14:

How human actions modify the physical environment

- Standard 3:

How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on Earth's surface

# NATIONAL SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS

- (K-4) Standard C-3:

Organisms and environments

- (K-4) Standard F-4:

Changes in environments

## **Preparation**

## **What You'll Need**

## **MATERIALS YOU PROVIDE**

- Pencils

## **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

- Internet Access: Required
- Tech Setup: 1 computer per classroom, Projector, Speakers
- Plug-Ins: Flash

## **PHYSICAL SPACE**

- Classroom

## **GROUPING**

- Large-group instruction

## BACKGROUND & VOCABULARY

# Background Information

Big cat populations throughout the world are in decline, mostly due to human threats. Big cats like lions, tigers, and leopards are threatened by numerous factors, including their capture and sale as exotic pets. Keeping these large endangered predators in captivity can

cause harm to humans and the animals. Sanctuaries like The Wild Animal Sanctuary in Colorado are dedicated to rescuing exotic pets and working to save endangered large carnivores.

# Prior Knowledge

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## Recommended Prior Activities

- None

## Vocabulary

Term	Part of Speech	Definition
Big Cats Initiative	<i>noun</i>	National Geographic Society program that supports on-the-ground conservation projects, education, economic incentive efforts, and a global public-awareness campaign to protect big cats and their habitats.
endangered species	<i>noun</i>	organism threatened with extinction.
exotic pet	<i>noun</i>	rare or wild animal kept for human comfort.
habitat	<i>noun</i>	environment where an organism lives throughout the year or for shorter periods of time.
lion	<i>noun</i>	large cat native to sub-Saharan Africa and Gir Forest National Park, India.
sanctuary	<i>noun</i>	protected area where wildlife can live and breed without threat from hunting.

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### For Further Exploration

#### Websites

- [National Geographic Animals: Big Cats Initiative](#)
- [The Wild Animal Sanctuary: Rescue Stories](#)



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