



South Africa to End Captive Breeding of Lions

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, South Africa has decided to end **captive breeding of lions (*Panthera leo*)** due to concerns over **trophy hunting** and the use of lion **bones in traditional Chinese medicine** marks a significant shift in wildlife conservation.

What are the Key Traits of Lions?

- **Subspecies:** There are two subspecies of lions found in the wild. The **African lion (*Panthera leo leo*)** and the **Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*)**.
 - African lions used to be spread across most of the African continent, but now are only found in sub-Saharan Africa, with **80% in eastern or southern Africa**.
 - Asiatic Lions are found at [Gir National Park and Wildlife Sanctuary](#) in Gujarat, India.
 - Although both subspecies of lions look very similar, there are some differences.
 - Male Asiatic lions tend to have darker, shorter manes compared to African Lions.
 - Additionally, both male and female Asiatic lions are smaller than African lions.

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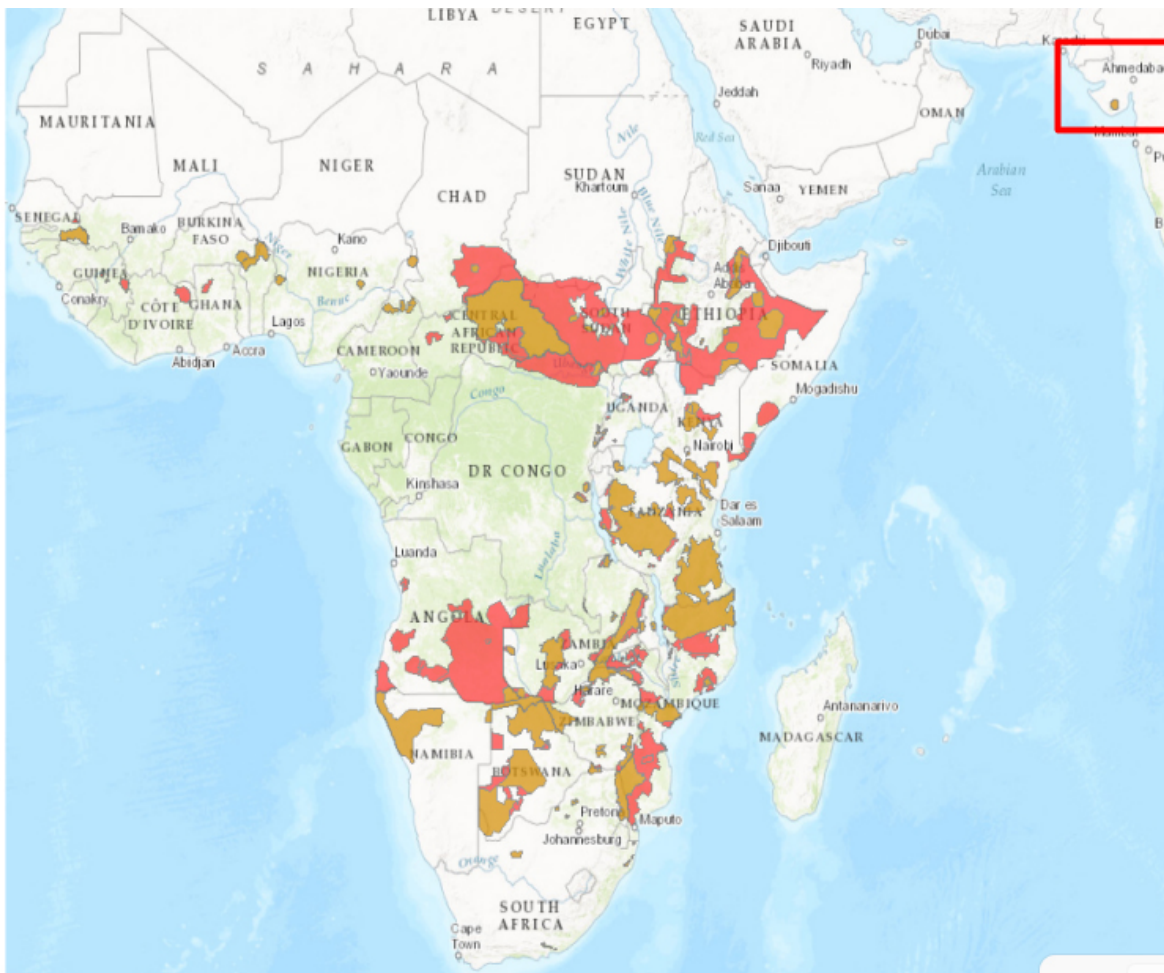


African lion



Asiatic lion

- **Habitat:** They are most active at night and live in a variety of habitats but prefer **grassland, savanna, dense scrub, and open woodland.**
- **Social Structure:** Lions are the most social big cat, living in groups called **prides.**
 - A pride typically consists of several related females, their cubs, and a few adult males (coalition).
 - **Lionesses are the primary hunters**, while dominant **males are responsible for protecting the pride's territory.**
- **Hunting and Diet:** Lions are apex predators and primarily hunt large ungulates like **wildebeest, zebra, and antelope.**
 - They typically hunt cooperatively, using their agility and teamwork to take down prey.
 - Also, lions are **opportunistic feeders** and will not hesitate to scavenge when the opportunity arises, often stealing kills from other predators.
- **Threats:**
 - They face a multitude of threats from habitat loss and fragmentation to climate change and the reduction of available prey.
 - They are also **targeted by trophy hunters.**
 - Trophy hunting is a form of hunting where the **primary goal is to kill animals for their body parts, such as horns, tusks, or skins**, which are then kept as trophies or souvenirs (and not primarily as food).
- **Conservation Status:**
 - [IUCN Red List](#): **Vulnerable**
 - [CITES](#): **Appendix I**
 - [Wildlife Protection Act 1972](#): **Schedule I**



Distribution Map Panthera Leo

Note

- In India, [Project Lion](#) envisages **landscape ecology based conservation** of the Asiatic Lion in Gujarat by integrating conservation and eco-development. The Gujarat government has planned to translocate 40 adult and sub-adult lions to the **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary** in the state, according to a 2023 report by Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question:

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. Asiatic lions are naturally found in India only.
2. Double-humped camels are naturally found in India only.
3. One-horned rhinoceros is naturally found in India only.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 only

- (c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (a)

Q.2 Recently there was a proposal to translocate some of the lions from their natural habitat in Gujarat to which one of the following sites? (2017)

- (a) Corbett National Park
(b) Kuno Palpur Wildlife Sanctuary
(c) Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary
(d) Sariska National Park

Ans: (b)

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