

Black Pine Animal Park

Animal Facts

Breed: AFRICAN LION

Names / Sex / Age:

Nala	Female	16
Kovu	Male	8

Previous Home: Nala was rescued from a private home. She was the first house pet rescue to arrive at Black Pine. Kovu was voluntarily relocated to Black Pine from Great Cats of Indiana. He had previously been rescued from Mexico where he was found locked in a shed and left to die when he was still just a cub.

Native to: Africa, primarily in the Serengeti

Weight: 350-550 pounds. (Nala weighs around 450 pounds. Kovu weighs around 400 pounds.)

Life Expectancy: 8-10 years in the wild, 15-20 in captivity.

Diet: In the wild, wildebeest, zebra, impala, antelope and gazelle. At Black Pine deer, beef, pork and poultry.

Status: Vulnerable but protected in various preserves. Asiatic lions are endangered.

Facts:

- Known as the King of Beasts, it is the largest African carnivore
- Social and territorial they live in family groups called a pride
- Young males stay with the family until about 2 years of age
- Females remain with their pride for life
- Females share responsibility of raising babies and do most of the hunting
- Lions have very good acceleration, but little stamina
- Lions will surround their prey from all angles and actually hunt with strategy
- Lions are also one of the biggest scavengers in Africa, besides the hyena
- Lions spend a majority of their day sleeping, about 20 out of the 24 hours
- Lions will communicate with other lions by roaring to establish territories
- On the plains of Africa a lion's roar can be heard as far as five miles away
- If a male lion is castrated, his mane will fall out.
- Lions communicate using the dark haired tufts of fur on the ends of their tails
- Lions greet each other by rubbing their heads and foreheads together and releasing odors from scent glands
- The biggest threat to lions is human over population and expansion
- Over 12,000 years ago, lions roamed a larger area than any other mammal besides man

Personal History:

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Nala was formerly a household pet. She lived in a private home in northwestern Indiana and reportedly bit a child in her home while playing tug-o-war. She was scheduled to be destroyed by euthanasia when the parents were divorcing sometime after the accident. Black Pine saved her, she was still just a cub, about 6-7 months old when she arrived at the park. She was acquired 3 days before she was to be put down. Nala was spayed, which is partially why she is so overweight. The hormones that normally regulate a cat's weight don't work properly anymore. Nala was also declawed as a cub to prevent injury to her owners. When a cat is declawed part of the toe bone is removed. In Nala's case she is missing the first joint on several of her toes due to the declaw, which has caused her to develop arthritis. The arthritis has made it very difficult for Nala to walk and stand for long periods of time which has also contributed to her obesity. She receives medication for her arthritis and is always on a restricted diet.

Kovu was adopted by Black Pine in August 2007 after he was observed living indoors at Great Cats of Indiana, a "sanctuary" that houses about 30 large cats and some black bears. He was originally rescued from a shed in Mexico while still just a cub. When Black Pine first met Kovu he was very ill and had been taken off exhibit. He was suffering from a lack of sunlight (vitamin D deficiency) and was later diagnosed as having suffered neurological damage, emaciation, and thyroid problems. Given proper housing, daily thyroid treatments, a nutritious diet, and the great outdoors, Kovu has recovered. His sisters, also rescued from Mexico, unfortunately did not survive and passed away before Kovu was moved to the park.

In late 2009 Great Cats of Indiana was facing serious charges of violations of the Animal Welfare Act, including lack of veterinary care, and had been summoned to federal court. Instead of appearing, the facility's director allowed his USDA license to exhibit and breed the animals to expire. No longer having a USDA license officials had no jurisdiction over the facility.

The owner sought, and was given, permits to keep the animals by the Indiana DNR, though he may no longer breed or exhibit them. With state regulations being more strict than federal on some levels, DNR officials will be inspecting the facility and watching closely to see if any more animals suffer lack of veterinary care.