

Name: _____

I Spot a Leopard!

by Guy Belleranti



Leopards are majestic wild cats with beautiful spotted coats. These spots help them blend in with plants and shadows. Since leopards are one of many wild cat species with spots, it is pretty easy to mix them up with other spotted wild cats, especially jaguars and cheetahs.

There are a couple important differences between leopards,



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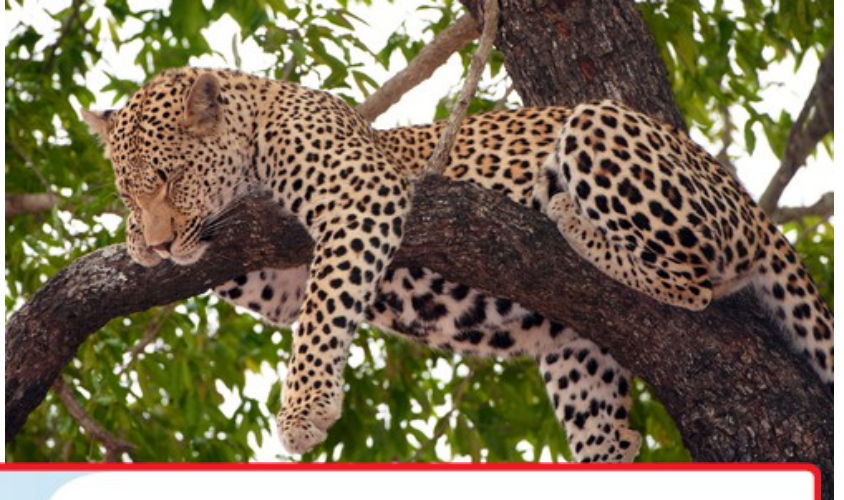
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protection. Like most wild cats, leopards are solitary animals. African leopards climb trees to avoid predators that hunt in groups, such as lions and hyenas. The many subspecies of Asian leopards climb trees to avoid tigers, which are much larger. Leopards also climb trees to wait for their prey. After catching prey, a leopard often drags it high up in a tree so other predators won't get it.

You might be surprised to know that leopards are good swimmers. They're also pretty fast runners. They can reach speeds of 36 miles per hour and make leaps as much as 20 feet long and 10 feet high. Even so, leopards rarely race after prey. They either wait in a tree, or

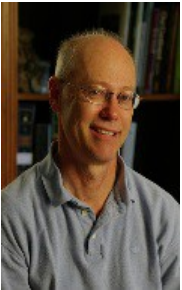
silently stalk it, pouncing when the prey is close.

Leopards only come together when mating or when a mother raises her young. A mother gives birth to two or three tiny cubs. She remains with them for the first few days. Then she hides them away while she hunts.



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About the Author

Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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1. Based on the information in the article, which of the following descriptions correctly identifies a leopard's spots?
 - a. A leopard has small, solid spots of roughly the same size and shape.
 - b. A leopard has rosette-like spots with speckles in the center.
 - c. A leopard has large, patchy spots on its back and limbs, but none on its belly.
 - d. A leopard has spots shaped like roses without dots inside them.
2. Choose the statement that best describes a leopard's habitat.



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4. Even though leopards are capable of running at high speeds, they do not chase after their prey like other wild cats do. How do leopards get their prey?

 5. If you are lucky to glimpse a leopard out in the wild, where are you most likely to see one?
 - a. in a cave
 - b. up in a tree
 - c. on a grassy plain
 - d. in the water

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. _____ endangered | a. a state of safety; being away from harm |
| 2. _____ majestic | b. gravely; seriously |
| 3. _____ stocky | c. patterns or designs shaped like roses |



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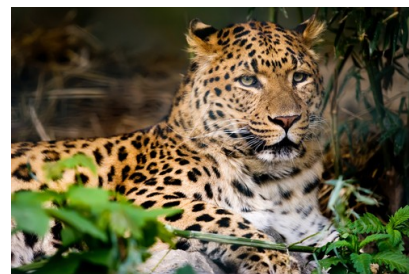
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- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 7. _____ slender | g. a smaller category of a species |
| 8. _____ critically | h. an animal's natural environment |
| 9. _____ predators | i. graceful; thin; lean |
| 10. _____ subspecies | j. having a broad and sturdy build |

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In the article, "I Spot a Leopard," you learned that leopards are often confused with jaguars and cheetahs because of their similar spots. You also learned that even though they are similar, there are subtle ways to tell these species apart.

On the lines below, choose another animal that is often confused with a similar-looking species. Describe how these species are similar. Then discuss the features that make them different from each other. You can use your science textbook or the Internet (with your



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Internet Source Used: _____

ANSWER KEY

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1. Based on the information in the article, which of the following descriptions correctly identifies a leopard's spots? **d**

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one? **b**

- a.** in a cave **b. up in a tree**
c. on a grassy plain **d.** in the water

ANSWER KEY

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The following terms are vocabulary words from the article. Match the vocabulary word with its correct definition by writing the corresponding letter on the line.

1. d endangered a. a state of safety; being away from harm

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