

Tiger (Animal)

Susie Green

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Contrary to popular belief it is the tiger, not the lion, who is the true king of the jungle: a male Siberian tiger can grow to almost three and a half metres in length and weigh more than 300 kilograms. Sleek, powerful and mysterious, the tiger is revered as a potent symbol of sexuality, ferocity and magic in many cultures around the world, yet the tiger's strength and beauty has also been its downfall: nearly every part of the tiger has a value to poachers. Live tigers are sold as exotic pets; skin is made into magical amulets and novelties, as are teeth and claws; tiger penis is an ingredient of allegedly powerful sexual tonics and traditional Asian medicine uses tiger bone in a number of different formulae. Poaching now threatens the long-term survival of the species: there are only an estimated 30 to 80 South China tigers, 150 to 200 Siberian tigers and 600 to 650 Sumatran tigers left in the wild, and there may be as few as 5,000 still alive worldwide.

In Tiger Susie Green uncovers the natural history of the tiger, showing how the decline of its natural habitat and relentless pressure from poachers and farmers have turned a naturally retiring, solitary creature into an aggressive, man-eating predator. She also explores its cultural history, describing tigers in many cultures from the White Tiger in Chinese Toaist mythology and the Chinese Zodiac, to Lord Siva in Indian Hindu mythology who is almost always pictured wearing a tiger skin. In the West, Bacchus, or Dionysos, god of wine and mystical ecstasy, was pictured riding a tiger, and tigers have been used by artists such as Salvador Dalí to symbolise sexuality and desire.

Written in a lively, approachable style, and featuring many illustrations of tigers in myth and reality from around the world, Tiger will appeal to the wide audience who admires this wonderfully vital, yet highly endangered species.



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