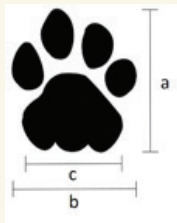


Facial Markings

By 7 years old, most male leopards have been in numerous territorial fights, and potentially suffered injuries from other animals. Older males are thus more likely to have tattered ears and noticeable scars on their faces. The fur above the muzzle often appears pock-marked in very old males. However, facial markings are a less reliable indicator of leopard age than a prominent dewlap, as younger males also fight and may bear scars.



Facial markings in male leopards. Males ≥ 7 years old often have scarred faces and tattered ears.



Tracks

Tracks cannot be used to reliably distinguish male leopards ≥ 7 years. There is considerable variation in track size among mature males, regardless of their age. Track size and shape also varies greatly depending on the substrate. However, tracks can be used to distinguish adult male leopards from subadults or females.

The sum of the length (a), breadth (b), and breadth of the plantar pad (c) of the front foot of adult male leopards is typically >10 inches (25 cm)

Teeth

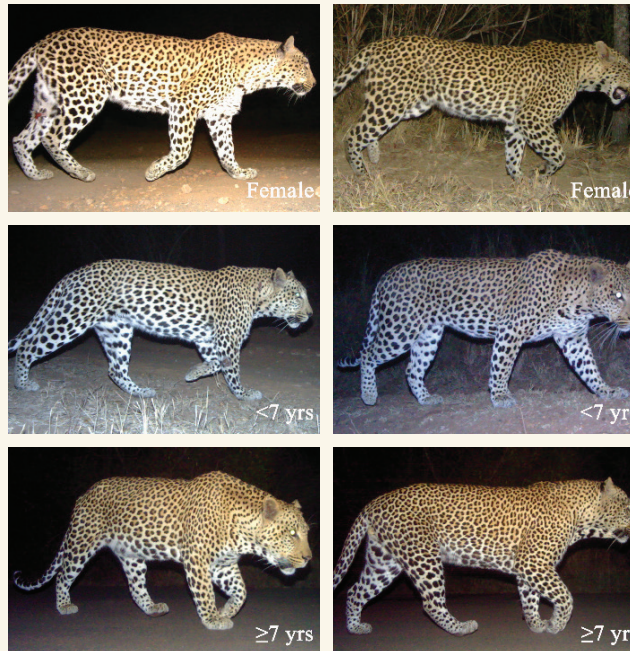
Tooth wear and colour is an accurate indicator of leopard age, although it can typically only be assessed post-mortem. Teeth of male leopards ≥ 7 years old always show some wear; with it being most obvious on the canines which are also generally yellow.



Tooth wear in male leopards. The teeth of males ≥ 7 years old always show some wear and yellowing.

Camera Traps

Camera traps are useful tools for assessing leopard age (and sex). They can be sited near baits to capture side-on photographs of leopards, enabling hunters to assess the presence and size of a dewlap.



Camera traps can be placed near baits to assess the presence or absence of a prominent dewlap in leopards.

POCKET GUIDE TO AGING LEOPARDS





SUSTAINABLE LEOPARD HUNTING

Leopard numbers have declined dramatically in recent times. Where sport hunting of leopard occurs, it is essential that it is managed sustainably following 'best practice' standards. Restricting offtakes to male leopards at least 7 years old is one of the most important mechanisms to ensure that hunting has minimal impacts on leopard populations. By 7 years old, a male leopard has sired at least one litter, and importantly held a territory for long enough to reduce the risk of his cubs being killed by other leopards. This is critical to the long-term stability of leopard populations. Limiting hunting to males ≥ 7 years also ensures that the largest leopard trophies are taken. This guide enables users to identify male leopards ≥ 7 years old.

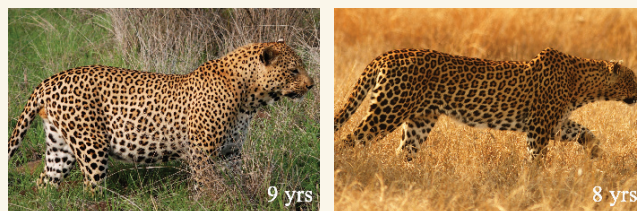
SEXING LEOPARDS

Killing female leopards has the greatest impact on population viability, undermining the sustainability of hunting. Hunters can eliminate the potential for mistakenly shooting females by targeting only males ≥ 7 years. By this age, male leopards are at least 60% larger than females. Males have longer, broader skulls and greater body length, chest girth, neck circumference and shoulder height than females. The scrotum is also obvious in male leopards ≥ 7 years.

Subadult male leopards are far more difficult to distinguish from females, as they have yet to develop the larger, heavier bodies that characterize adult males. The scrotum is also less visible in subadult males.



Mating leopards shown together to illustrate differences in size and body shape between adult males and females.



Side profile of a male (left) and female (right) leopard. Males are heavy-set, with noticeably thicker chests and necks.



Portraits of an adult male (left) and female (right) leopard. Males have much broader, heavier skulls than females.

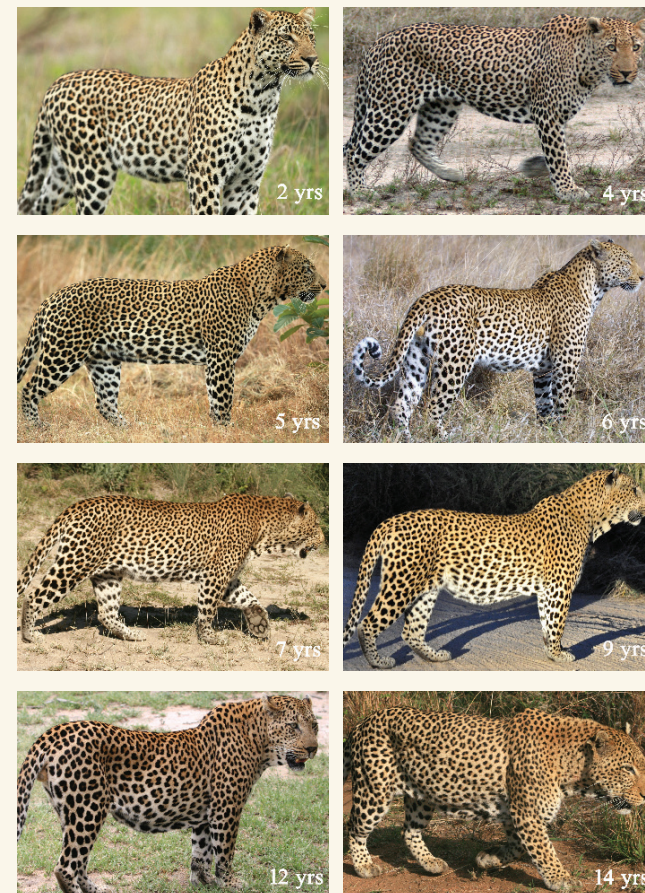
Acknowledgements

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AGING LEOPARDS

Dewlap

The dewlap is a loose fold of skin that hangs from the underside of the neck in adult male leopards. While the function of the dewlap is unknown, it is well-developed only in male leopards ≥ 7 years old. A prominent dewlap is the best way to distinguish a suitably-aged trophy leopard.



Dewlap development in male leopards. Males ≥ 7 years old exhibit prominent dewlaps.