Killer Cats

A hunting way of life not only requires great strength and killer weapons, but also cunning, practice and adaptability. The typical cat hunts alone and at night, using a mixture of stealth and patience to sneak up on victims. Cats are fascinated by their prey and spend many hours watching them, looking for weaknesses. Cats also hunt and kill for fun, while honing their skills. As they grow up most cats become expert at catching particular types of animals, but they are all opportunists, killing whatever they can eat — including humans.

The Stalk

For most cats, the hunt begins with the stalk. The goal is to creep close enough to the prey to launch as a surprise attack. Tigers use the cover of long grass to camouflage their approach. With eyes locked on the target, they inch forward only when the prey looks away. Silent footwork is crucial, so they feel the ground with their paws before shifting their weight. Soft pads on the paws muffle the footsteps.

The Pounce

A stalk generally ends with a pounce. Guided by hearing alone, a serval cat can sail 4 m through the air to land precisely on their prey’s back. The force of the landing often smashes the victim’s spine.

Teamwork

Lions use teamwork to bring down prey that is bigger than they are. By working together, they can overpower full-grown wildebeest, zebras, or buffalos. Often during the hunt, they spread out, encircling the prey to block escape routes. As soon as one member of the pride has got ahold of a victim’s neck, the others leap on its back and use their weight to bring the animal down.

Armed to the Teeth

Huge canine teeth are not for butchering meat — they are for capturing and killing. Most cats immobilize their prey with a suffocating bite to the animal’s throat. Wit a lion’s canines deeply embedded in the neck, only the strongest victim has any hope of struggling free. If the prey is small, a skillful bite will dislocate its backbone. This severs the spinal cord, paralyzing the prey’s body immediately.