The tiger (*Panthera Tigris*) is one of the largest wild cats (second only to its Siberian cousins) in the world and is mostly found in the plains of India. Its early ancestor was the saber-tooth cat, which was around during the ice age. The tiger has evolved from other cat species to form black stripes on a dark orange fur.

The camouflage

These stripes allow them to be camouflaged in the long dry grass and therefore sneak up on the prey. It also helps to break up the outline of its body making it less visible.

They also look like shadows as the tiger stalks through long grass in a day or at night. The cat’s orange fur and black stripes also help it merge into its grassland habitat. On closer examination, it has also been found that the stripes are like fingerprints and no two tigers have the same pattern. Identifying tigers by means of their stripes has proved useful for investigations into wildlife trafficking and in the monitoring of the population of tigers.

The stripes break up the outline of the tiger’s body

The stripes also help it merge into the grassland habitat
Going undetected

In the past, the pugmark technique was extensively used as the most popular way of counting tigers but the results were often inaccurate. To improve upon the accuracy, researchers have now developed a software called ExtractCompare that matches the stripes of tigers whose images were captured using camera traps, against images stored in a database. When the image with high similarity is detected in the database, it is deemed to be a successful identification which results in the removal of duplicity. The images of only those tigers are considered in population census whose stripes are found to be unique.