

Evolution of Lion's Manes

By Lilah Katz

Lion fossils first appear at around 1.87-1.7 million years ago, but they didn't have manes like today's lions do. Then, somewhere between 11,000-6,000 years ago, lions with manes evolved and replaced the lions without manes.

What happened? Do their manes help protect them in fights? Although once thought to be true, scientists found this is not the case. It's actually...

Sexual Selection!

Sexual selection is when one sex chooses to mate with the other based on a trait that indicates reproductive success. This ensures only the best genes get passed down and benefits the species as a whole.



Photo by Tambako The Jaguar on Flickr, CC BY-ND

Male with long, dark mane



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Male with short, light mane

Female lions choose males with **darker** manes. These darker manes correlate to males with longer life spans, better nutrition, and overall health. They are also better able to protect and provide food for their young.

Manes also help prevent needless fighting between males. Males avoid others with **darker or longer** manes because they correlate higher levels of testosterone and aggression as well as older and stronger lions.

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