

CHEETAHS

Acinonyx jubatus

The cheetah has a slender, long-legged body with blunt, semi-retractable claws. Its coat is tan with about 2,000 small, round, black spots, and the fur is coarse & short. It has a small head with high-set eyes with black "tear marks" which run from the corner of its eyes down the sides of the nose to its mouth. It is the fastest mammalian sprinter on earth, covering up to 9 metres in a stride at almost 4 strides per second. The cheetah can reach a top speed of 100km/h or more. The cheetah's social system of solitary females & social males is unique among cats.

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

Now only found in various countries in Africa, with a small population left in Iran. Cheetahs can be found in open plains, woodland, savannah, highlands up to 2,000m & arid regions extending to desert fringes.

DIET

Cheetahs are diurnal (active in daytime) hunting antelope, warthogs, hares & game birds.

LIFE EXPECTANCY & BREEDING

In the wild, few survive more than 8 years though they can live up to 10-12 years. In captivity they can live as long as 20 years.

Females reach sexual maturity at 20-24 months and males at



2-3 years. Gestation period is 90-95 days & litters vary from 1-9 but the average is 3-5 cubs. Cub mortality is extremely high for the species in the wild.

CONSERVATION STATUS

IUCN Red List North African Cheetah: **Critically Endangered**. IUCN sub-Saharan cheetah: **Vulnerable**. Experts now say the wild population could be as low as 7,100 Cheetahs.



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