

CHEETAH



Acinonyx jubatus

STATUS

- Vulnerable. The main threats are habitat loss and prey destruction. They are also particularly susceptible to feline diseases.
- It is estimated that fewer than 10 000 Cheetah are left in the world.
- Captive breeding programs are essential to their survival.
- Cheetah became extinct in India in the early 1950s.

ORIGIN

- The former Cheetah range was across Asia from the middle east to most of India and all of Africa except in the equatorial forest and true desert.
- It is now extinct in Asia and North Africa apart from a critically endangered population in Iran.

HABITAT

- Sub-Sahara savannas and arid zones in southern and eastern Africa.
- Cheetah prefer open country, with cover in the form of bushes, medium-height grass and trees.
- They can last up to four days between drinks (easily up to ten days in the Kalahari desert where they eat melons).

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

- Cheetah are territorial.
- Females are solitary and shy; males live in small bachelor groups called coalitions.
- Litters of 1-6, (usually 3) are born at any time of the year.
- Offspring of the same season often stay together for several months after separating from their mother.
- Cheetah are diurnal - almost all hunting is done by daylight.

- Cheetah greet each other with sniffing, face-licking, cheek rubbing and vocalising.

DESCRIPTION

- Cheetah have a long limbed, slender, greyhound-like build. Adults weigh only 40-65kg. They have a small head and extra long tail.
- Males are more robust and up to 10 kg heavier than females and with a squarer head.
- Cheetah claws are non-retractable.

POINTS OF INTEREST

- Antelope are Cheetah's main prey.
- Their main enemies are lions, leopards and humans.
- Cheetah populations suffered heavily from the fur trade.
- Cheetah are the fastest land animal – they can sprint up to 100 km/hr for short bursts and can accelerate from 0 to 80km/hr in 3 seconds.
- In Asia, Cheetah were trained by people for hunting, as long ago as 3000 B.C.

MONARTO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CHEETAH

- Monarto's original group of cheetah were imported from Hoedspruit, a breeding centre for endangered animals in South Africa, in 1999.
- Many strategies were tried to achieve successful breeding. The first litter was born in 2003 and raised to adulthood by their mother. They now live in other Australian Zoos.
- The short term aim is to continue breeding and to support captive populations in Australasian Zoos and Parks.