



CHEETAH

Acinonyx jubatus

VULNERABLE

CHEETAH AT A GLANCE	
Total length:	1.8-2.2 m
Height:	80 cm
Weight:	40-60 kg
Life-span:	8-12 years
Gestation:	90 days
Litter-size:	1-6 cubs

The world's fastest terrestrial mammal, reaching velocities of up to 110 km/h.

With its slender and lean body the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is built for speed. However, it can only maintain such a pace for a few seconds. Besides its long, white-tipped tail, which serves as a counterbalancing rudder during hunts, and solid black dots on its golden coat, this species can easily be recognized by its black facial tear marks. These are believed to absorb sunrays and thereby prevent distracting glares during hunts.

Cheetahs primarily predate on small to medium-sized antelopes but may also opportunistically take birds and hares. Because they exhaust entirely during the hunt, they cannot feed immediately after a kill and need to recover for a few minutes, leaving them vulnerable to kleptoparasitism by other large carnivores. Unlike leopards, they cannot hoist their kills up a tree to secure it and therefore often lose their quarry to hyenas or lions.

Cheetahs prefer open savannah habitat and often linger on elevated vantage points, such as termite mounds. They have excellent eyesight, enabling them to spot other animals from 5 km away. When patrolling their home-range, they will climb and mark trees.



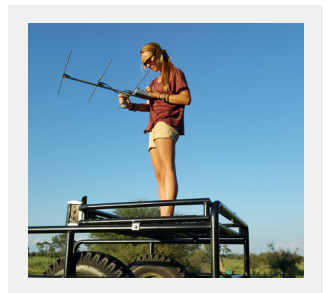
<h3>CHEETAH PREY</h3> <h3>COMPETITORS</h3>	<h3>ACTIVITY PATTERN</h3> <p>Unlike lions or leopards, cheetahs don't hunt at night. Instead, they are active during the day (durnal), particularly in the morning and evening.</p>	<h3>TAXONOMY</h3> <p>CHEETAH</p> <table border="1"> <tr><td>Class:</td><td>Mammalia</td></tr> <tr><td>Order:</td><td>Carnivora</td></tr> <tr><td>Family:</td><td>Felidae</td></tr> <tr><td>Genus:</td><td>Acinonyx</td></tr> <tr><td>Species:</td><td>jubatus</td></tr> </table>	Class:	Mammalia	Order:	Carnivora	Family:	Felidae	Genus:	Acinonyx	Species:	jubatus	<h3>SOCIAL ORGANIZATION</h3> <p>Male cheetahs form coalitions, mostly with their brothers. This allows them to take larger prey and defend territories against conspecifics. Females remain solitary, unless they have offspring to provide for.</p>
Class:	Mammalia												
Order:	Carnivora												
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Genus:	Acinonyx												
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	<h3>STATUS & CONSERVATION</h3> <p>Cheetahs used to range wide across Africa and even extended into Asia. Today, the species is in rapid decline and only occupies a small share of its former distribution. This decline can be traced back to habitat loss and human-wildlife conflict, especially in livestock areas. As almost all other large carnivores, cheetahs suffer from the loss of their prey base due to human exploitation of natural resources. The IUCN categorizes the species as vulnerable and estimates that about 6,500 free living individuals remain. Besides Namibia and Algeria, Botswana holds one of the largest remaining populations. Nevertheless, cheetahs exist at low densities everywhere they occur. This is partly due to their inferior competitive abilities among large carnivores. They often get displaced by lions or hyenas and need to settle in marginal lands between protected areas and human-dominated landscapes.</p>												



The Wild Entrust research program.

Specialised GPS collars deployed on cheetah in a collaboration between BPC and the Royal Veterinary College of London found a top speed of 92km/hour, the first record in the wild. Collars also revealed important habitats for cheetah, highlighting areas to target conservation. Our research into cheetah marking trees has highlighted their importance in cheetah sociality, and population monitoring.

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