

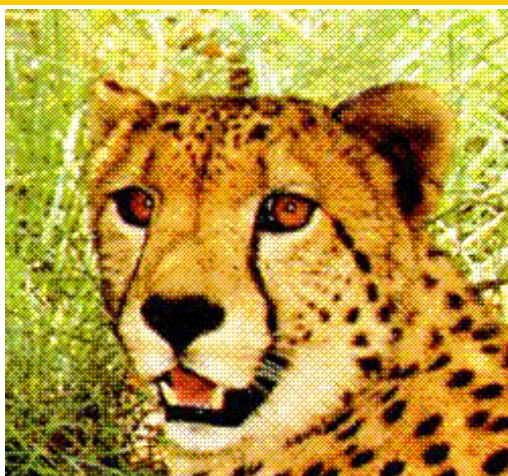
Cheetah

By Heather

Threatening or Threatened?

Cheetah Facts in Brief:

- ◆ Length: 80 inches (30 inches of this is tail!)
- ◆ Weight: 110-130 pounds
- ◆ Speed: 60 miles per hour
- ◆ Family: Usually 2-4 cubs
- ◆ Mortality: 50% of cubs die before they become adults
- ◆ Life Span: 10-12 years
- ◆ Food: Gazelle, impala, other antelope, hares, and young wildebeest
- ◆ Range (previous): Throughout Africa, Middle East, to central India
- ◆ Range (current): grasslands south of the Sahara Desert
- ◆ Population: 10,000 cheetahs remain in the wild, and another 2,000 in captivity



Spotting a Cheetah on Safari

Knowing cheetah habits and being familiar with their habitat can help you spot one hiding in plain sight. While here on Safari in Africa, you would refer to the cheetah as *Duma*. The cheetah is the only big cat that hunts by day. You are most likely to catch them hunting early in the morning and late in the afternoon.

Antelope are the most common prey of the cheetah, so where you see an antelope herd, the stealthy cheetah is likely to be stalking nearby. When it's not hunting, the cheetah is hard to see. Its spotted fur blends in with the dappled shade of the acacia tree, where it likes to rest. During midday, look for cheetahs resting under these trees.

Cheetah Survival

Cheetahs are unique to Africa! You will see how they race at incredible speeds of up to 70 mph on the African savannas to catch their prey. You will be amazed at how they use the acacia trees for their survival so they can blend in and rest or hide from their prey before they go in for the kill. Unfortunately, a cheetah's speed and its high place in the food chain can't keep it from being killed or forced from its homes by humans with guns.

Are cheetahs more threatening or more threatened?

You be the judge! As you read the facts below, the answer should be clear: Cheetahs as a species, are **NOT** a threat, only **THREATENED!**

A Threat to Livestock?

Cheetahs that wander into livestock grazing areas are at great risk of being killed by ranchers. Some ranchers and farmers believe all cheetahs kill livestock. However, such damage is usually caused by only a few problem animals, not the entire species. Relocating livestock-preying cheetahs usually solves the problem.

Threatened by Habitat Destruction?

The cheetah's habitat is quickly disappearing as more and more land is turned over to farming, housing, and industrial use. This form of habitat destruction threatens the cheetah's life. Cheetahs, like all other wild animals need land. Less land area means fewer animals can live and survive there.

Threatened by Poachers?

The cheetah has beautiful fur which puts it in great danger of being killed by poachers. Poachers are illegal hunters that sell animal pelts for a good deal of money. As long as there is a demand for animal fur, the cheetah's very life will be threatened.

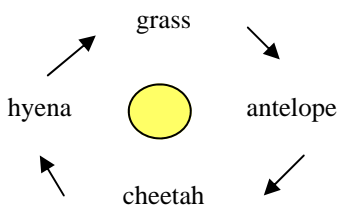
There Is No Price for Life

As you've read, cheetahs are being threatened and soon this wonderful species may be extinct. Cheetahs are worth protecting. They are an important part in the food web. They help keep the antelope population under control. Cheetahs are living things and they deserve to live a long healthy life in the wild. People who disturb their habitat and poachers who kill cheetahs for money are taking a life away and disturbing the important part of the circle of life. In my opinion, cheetahs deserve to live just as much as a human being. For more information on protecting cheetahs, go to: The Cheetah Conservation Fund at www.cheetah.org/cheetah/index.htm.

In the parks of Namibia, there are over 2,000 cheetahs, about one-sixth of the world's cheetahs.



Food Web



The food web starts with the sun. The sun gives energy to the grass to grow. The antelope is the primary consumer of the grass. It eats the grass to get its energy. The cheetah is the secondary consumer and eats the antelope to get its energy. When the cheetah is sick or dies, the hyena will eat it. It decomposes back into the earth. Then the cycle starts all over again.