

CONVENTION SUR LE COMMERCE INTERNATIONAL DES ESPECES  
DE FAUNE ET DE FLORE SAUVAGES MENACEES D'EXTINCTION



Vingt-septième session du Comité pour les animaux  
Veracruz (Mexique), 28 avril – 3 mai 2014

Interprétation et application de la Convention

Commerce d'espèces et conservation

COMMERCE ILLÉGAL DES GUÉPARDS (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*) (DÉCISION 16.72)

1. Le présent document a été préparé par le Secrétariat.
2. A sa seizième session (CoP16, Bangkok, 2013), la Conférence des Parties a adopté plusieurs décisions sur le *commerce illégal des guépards (Acinonyx jubatus)*, comme suit:

**A l'adresse du Secrétariat**

16.71 *Le Secrétariat, sous réserve de financement externe, engage des consultants indépendants pour entreprendre une étude sur le commerce légal et illégal des guépards sauvages, et pour évaluer l'impact de ce commerce sur la conservation de l'espèce dans la nature. L'étude devrait chercher à déterminer les sources des guépards faisant l'objet de commerce illégal et les voies de transit des guépards visés par ce trafic illégal et documenter les mesures prises par les Parties pour traiter ou utiliser les spécimens vivants confisqués. Tous les États de l'aire de répartition doivent être consultés en tant que parties prenantes. Le Secrétariat met les conclusions de l'étude à la disposition du Comité pour les animaux et du Comité permanent pour examen.*

**A l'adresse du Comité pour les animaux**

16.72 *Le Comité pour les animaux devrait examiner l'étude entreprise conformément à la décision 16.71 et faire des recommandations, s'il y a lieu, au Comité permanent.*

**A l'adresse du Comité permanent**

16.73 *Le Comité permanent devrait examiner les recommandations du Comité pour les animaux, énoncées conformément à la décision 16.72, et faire ses propres recommandations, s'il y a lieu, pour communication aux Parties ou pour examen à la 17e session de la Conférence des Parties.*

**À l'adresse des Parties et donateurs**

16.74 *Toutes les Parties concernées sont instamment priées d'apporter leur assistance à la réalisation de l'étude susmentionnée par tous les moyens possibles, notamment en communiquant les informations nécessaires sur le commerce légal et illégal de spécimens de guépards sauvages.*

16.75 *Les Parties et donateurs sont encouragés à fournir des fonds au Secrétariat pour financer l'étude sur le commerce des guépards.*

3. Comme suite à la décision 16.71, le Secrétariat CITES a recruté un consultant indépendant, chargé d'entreprendre une étude *sur le commerce légal et illégal des guépards sauvages, et sur l'impact de ce commerce sur la conservation de l'espèce dans le milieu naturel*. On trouvera dans les annexes au présent document le rapport dans son intégralité, ainsi qu'un résumé de l'étude. La version intégrale est publiée en anglais seulement, mais son résumé a été traduit en espagnol et en français. Le Secrétariat remercie vivement la Commission européenne pour sa contribution financière à l'appui de la mise en œuvre de la décision 16.71.
4. Le 24 janvier 2014, le Secrétariat a émis la Notification aux Parties n°2014/007 qui invite les Parties à communiquer des informations à l'appui de l'étude. Comme suite à cette Notification, l'Afrique du Sud, la Grèce, la Namibie, la Pologne et le Zimbabwe ont soumis un rapport au Secrétariat; l'Ouganda et le Soudan ont directement transmis des informations au consultant. L'Organisation mondiale des douanes (OMD) a fourni des données sur les saisies signalées par ses Etats membres depuis 2011 et plusieurs organisations de conservation impliquées dans la recherche sur le commerce des guépards ou ayant une expérience en la matière ont également fourni des documents à l'appui de l'étude.
5. Le Secrétariat appelle l'attention du Comité pour les animaux sur les conclusions suivantes de l'étude:
  - L'Afrique de l'Est est la région ayant enregistré les taux les plus élevés de commerce illicite de guépards sauvages et où ce commerce a probablement les effets les plus sévères sur les populations sauvages. Selon les conclusions de l'étude, le Moyen-Orient, en particulier les pays du Golfe persique, seraient la principale destination des guépards en provenance de l'Afrique de l'Est, qui transiteraient par la Corne de l'Afrique et le Yémen.
  - L'auteur souligne l'importance des contrôles législatifs et réglementaires dans la détection et la prévention du commerce illégal des guépards dans les pays où il existe un marché de consommation de guépards sauvages importés illégalement.
  - Le rapport préconise que les pays du Golfe adoptent des mesures de lutte contre la détention incontrôlée et le commerce illicite des grands félins à l'échelle régionale. Il encourage par ailleurs les pays Parties dans lesquels il existe une demande de guépards sauvages à veiller à ce que les politiques applicables à la possession et au commerce des grands félins favorisent la mise en œuvre efficace de la Convention.
  - D'après les conclusions de l'étude, il serait utile de mettre au point et d'adopter une stratégie commune à la région de l'Afrique de l'Est en faveur d'une gestion plus rigoureuse des spécimens vivants confisqués et visant en priorité les régions dans lesquelles les saisies sont opérées et qui ne disposent pas de capacités d'accueil suffisantes. Le Secrétariat note que des institutions et organisations spécialisées, telles que la communauté internationale des zoos, pourraient contribuer à l'élaboration de cette stratégie.
  - Il ressort de l'étude que le commerce légal de trophées d'espèces inscrites à l'Annexe I de la CITES en provenance de Namibie et du Zimbabwe est généralement perçu comme un appui à la conservation des guépards dans ces pays et que le système de quotas de la CITES semble fonctionner de façon satisfaisante.
  - Selon le rapport, il est aujourd'hui difficile de déterminer si les autorités sud-africaines sont en mesure de confirmer avec certitude que toutes les exportations de guépards vivants exportés en tant que spécimens élevés en captivité respectent les dispositions de la Convention concernant l'élevage en captivité.
  - Le rapport indique que l'organe de gestion CITES de l'Afrique du Sud a récemment annoncé qu'il mettrait en place un contrôle accru des systèmes provinciaux d'enregistrement des guépards afin de garantir l'application uniforme des réglementations relatives aux espèces protégées.
  - L'auteur préconise que l'Afrique du Sud mette en place et maintienne un système national de surveillance rigoureux de l'élevage en captivité et de l'exportation de guépards vivants.
  - On dispose de peu d'informations sur le commerce de guépards, de peaux de guépards et d'autres produits de cette espèce en Afrique du Nord, en Afrique de l'Ouest, en Afrique centrale et en République islamique d'Iran, qui abrite la dernière population de guépards sauvages en Asie. Le rapport évoque par ailleurs la possibilité que l'état de conservation des guépards dans ces régions se

serait tellement détérioré que tout échange commercial pourrait avoir des conséquences très graves sur l'espèce. Les informations disponibles sur le commerce illégal des guépards dans ces régions laissent penser que les parties et produits de grands félins, y compris de guépards, sont utilisés en médecine traditionnelle et que l'on a recours à des imitations pour satisfaire la demande.

6. Le Secrétariat est d'avis qu'il est nécessaire d'entreprendre des recherches supplémentaires pour documenter l'état de conservation des guépards en Afrique du Nord, en Afrique de l'Ouest, en Afrique centrale et en République islamique d'Iran, et pour mieux cerner les effets du commerce illégal sur l'espèce. Il faudrait peut-être également entreprendre des actions internationales coordonnées de lutte contre la fraude axées sur le commerce illicite de cette espèce.

#### Recommandation

7. Le Comité pour les animaux est invité à examiner l'étude réalisée conformément à la décision 16.71, qui figure dans l'annexe au présent document, et à émettre les recommandations qu'il jugera utile à l'intention du Comité permanent.

## EVALUATION DE L'IMPACT DU COMMERCE LEGAL ET ILLÉGAL SUR LA CONSERVATION DES GUEPARDS (*ACINONYX JUBATUS*)

Rapport soumis à la vingt-septième session du Comité pour les animaux de la CITES

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### RESUME

**Introduction.** Le guépard (*Acinonyx jubatus*), félin le plus rapide au monde, est inscrit à l'Annexe I de la CITES depuis 1975, avec l'annotation ci-après, incluse en 1992: « *Les quotas d'exportation annuels pour les spécimens vivants et les trophées de chasse sont approuvés comme suit: Botswana: 5; Namibie: 150; Zimbabwe: 50. Le commerce de ces spécimens est soumis aux dispositions de l'article III de la Convention* ». L'espèce est inscrite dans la catégorie des espèces vulnérables dans la Liste rouge de l'UICN en raison du déclin de la population à moins de 10 000 individus, essentiellement présents dans les savanes africaines et, dans une moindre mesure, en Iran, où il reste une très petite population asiatique en danger critique.

Les guépards présentent une caractéristique assez inhabituelle chez les grands félins qui est celle de pouvoir être apprivoisés relativement facilement, surtout quand ils sont jeunes. Il existe d'ailleurs dans le sud-ouest de l'Afrique et en Afrique centrale une ancienne tradition selon laquelle les guépards sont dressés pour la chasse royale, facteur qui peut expliquer la demande actuelle de guépards domestiqués et le commerce de spécimens vivants.

La survie des guépards à l'état sauvage est confrontée à toute une série de menaces, dont le commerce international illégal. La seizième session de la Conférence des Parties à la CITES [CoP16, Bangkok, 2013; voir document CoP16 Doc 51 (Rev 1)] a examiné cette question et a adopté la décision 16.71, qui demande que soit entreprise *une étude sur le commerce légal et illégal des guépards sauvages et sur l'impact de ce commerce sur la conservation de l'espèce dans la nature*. Le commerce de guépards vivants suscite, en particulier, de vives inquiétudes. L'étude devrait chercher à déterminer les sources de ce commerce et les voies de transit, et documenter les mesures prises par les Parties pour traiter ou utiliser les spécimens vivants confisqués. Le rapport doit être soumis au Comité pour les animaux et au Comité permanent, ce dernier étant chargé de formuler des recommandations relatives au commerce des guépards, pour examen par la dix-septième session de la Conférence des Parties, qui se tiendra en 2016.

**Méthodes.** Le 24 janvier 2014, le Secrétariat a émis la Notification aux Parties n°2014/007 qui invite les Parties à communiquer des informations à l'appui de l'étude. Comme suite à cette Notification, l'Afrique du Sud, la Grèce, la Namibie, la Pologne et le Zimbabwe ont présenté un rapport, et l'Ouganda et le Soudan ont également transmis des informations, cités dans le présent document sous la référence « *in litt* ». Plusieurs organisations de conservation qui ont mené des recherches sur le commerce des guépards ont également fourni des documents publiés ou non publiés à l'appui de l'étude. Une analyse documentaire et des recherches sur Internet, axées sur les articles de presse, les sites Web des gouvernements et les médias sociaux, ont été menées en anglais, en arabe et en français.

**Aperçu du commerce des guépards.** Entre 2002 et 2011, la quantité annuelle moyenne de guépards sauvages faisant l'objet d'un commerce légal s'est élevée à 153 spécimens (principalement des trophées de chasse en provenance de Namibie) et le commerce de guépards élevés en captivité s'est établi à 88 individus par an en moyenne (essentiellement en provenance d'Afrique du Sud). Si les Parties ne sont pas tenues d'indiquer les confiscations réalisées dans leur rapport annuel à la CITES, trois confiscations par an ont toutefois été signalées en moyenne. Les recherches ont permis de recueillir un grand nombre de dossiers et rapports indiquant une augmentation du commerce illicite, qui pourrait affecter et menacer la plupart des populations sauvages. En raison des différences constatées au niveau de l'état des populations sauvages, de la nature du commerce, et de la réglementation applicable au commerce légal et illégal, le rapport comprend deux **évaluations régionales du commerce**.

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\* Les appellations géographiques employées dans ce document n'impliquent de la part du Secrétariat CITES ou du Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement aucune prise de position quant au statut juridique des pays, territoires ou zones, ni quant à leurs frontières ou limites. La responsabilité du contenu du document incombe exclusivement à son auteur.

La première évaluation concerne l'**Afrique de l'Est**, région où le commerce illégal de guépards vivants est étayé par le plus grand nombre de données et où ses effets sur les populations sauvages sont probablement les plus graves. La plupart des pays d'Afrique de l'Est ont inscrit le commerce illégal au nombre des questions préoccupantes dans leur plan d'action national pour la conservation du guépard et ont réitéré leurs inquiétudes lors de l'Atelier sur le commerce illégal d'espèces sauvages dans la Corne de l'Afrique, organisé en 2012 à l'intention de la CITES et des agents de lutte contre la fraude. Les données obtenues par les organisations non gouvernementales travaillant dans la région indiquent que plus de 40 jeunes guépards ont été confisqués par les pouvoirs publics entre 2011 et 2013, principalement dans la région semi-autonome du Somaliland, et on a observé ou entendu dire qu'il existait des cas de commerce de petits. Selon les données connues, le taux de mortalité des spécimens confisqués au Somaliland et en Ethiopie est élevé (70%). Les survivants sont placés dans des centres de réhabilitation ou dans des zoos. Bien que l'on ne connaisse pas exactement l'origine ou les méthodes de capture des petits, les interdictions en vigueur et les entretiens avec les négociants laissent penser que les animaux sont prélevés de manière opportune dans les régions ethniques du Somali, y compris dans des zones d'Ethiopie et du Kenya, et peut-être au-delà. La population de guépards recensés en Afrique de l'Est s'élève à environ 2 500 individus (répartis entre l'Ethiopie, le Kenya, le Soudan du Sud, l'Ouganda et la Tanzanie), mais le nombre réel d'individus et l'état de la population dans la Corne de l'Afrique sont largement méconnus.

Sur la base de multiples confirmations et sources de données, il apparaît que les Etats du Golfe persique sont la principale destination des guépards de cette région et qu'une grande majorité des spécimens sont acheminés par bateau vers les côtes yéménites, puis transportés à bord de véhicules pour passer les frontières du Yémen. Ce commerce existe depuis un certain temps déjà (39 bébés guépards exportés clandestinement, de Somalie pour la plupart, ont été confisqués par les services des douanes des Emirats arabes unis entre 1998 et 2002, et transférés vers un refuge pour animaux sauvages). Des douzaines d'articles de presse récents et des centaines de photos et vidéos publiées sur les médias sociaux montrent à quel point il est apprécié de posséder un guépard (ou une autre espèce de grand félin) dans la région du Golfe. Des guépards ont été filmés dans des lieux publics assis sur le siège de voitures ou marchant en laisse. Dans des résidences privées, on les voit arpenter les salons ou jouer avec leur maître, ou avec de jeunes enfants parfois. Des sommes atteignant 10 000 USD seraient payées pour ces animaux et il apparaît de façon évidente que les propriétaires les adorent et s'efforcent de leur donner les meilleurs soins possibles (allant jusqu'à acheter des tapis de course pour que leur animal reste en forme). Cependant, d'après les conclusions des analyses scientifiques et les témoignages de vétérinaires, le taux de survie des guépards qui ne vivent pas dans des conditions appropriées reste en général faible. Les informations semblent indiquer qu'à plusieurs reprises des guépards se sont échappés (situation fréquente si l'on inclut d'autres espèces telles que les lions et les babouins), et ont causé des dommages matériels et corporels. La détention de grands félins dans des quartiers résidentiels un peu partout sur la péninsule arabique pose de sérieux risques pour l'environnement et la sécurité des personnes, comme des félins.

Le commerce illégal menace les sous-espèces de guépards de la Corne de l'Afrique (*A. j. soemmeringii*) et risque également d'affecter la dernière population de guépards asiatiques (*A. j. venaticus*), présente en Iran (40 à 100 individus), pays tout aussi proche du Golfe persique. L'élevage de guépards en captivité s'est développé aux Emirats arabes unis ces dernières années; cela pourrait conduire à une diminution du nombre de guépards vivants importés dans ce pays. Les autorités ont pourtant saisi plus de 20 petits depuis 2010. Les pays consommateurs de la Péninsule arabique (Arabie saoudite, Bahreïn, Emirats arabes unis, Koweït, Oman et Qatar) sont Parties à la CITES et interdisent l'importation de guépards sauvages (sauf à des fins non commerciales conformément à l'article III de la Convention). Il n'a pas été possible d'obtenir des informations détaillées sur la réglementation applicable aux guépards ou autres grands félins élevés en captivité, sur le commerce intérieur et sur la détention d'animaux en dehors des établissements zoologiques agréés dans les pays du Golfe. Les informations publiques (notamment les déclarations de responsables officiels aux journalistes) semblent toutefois indiquer que la possession d'animaux sauvages domestiqués est illégale ou sur le point de le devenir. La municipalité d'Ajman, qui est l'un des sept émirats des Emirats arabes unis, a interdit de façon définitive la possession d'animaux sauvages (non domestiqués) et de reptiles dans les résidences privées (maisons et appartements) et les hôtels. Un article de presse sur une loi relative au bien-être des animaux, promulguée en Arabie saoudite en 2013, évoque un certain nombre de déclarations officielles indiquant que les pays du Golfe s'engageaient sur la voie de la coopération dans ce domaine et que plusieurs d'entre eux envisageaient de suivre l'exemple de l'Arabie saoudite. Cette approche collaborative pourrait également être envisagée pour faire face de façon plus efficace au problème de la détention et du commerce incontrôlés de grands félins à l'échelle régionale, sachant que les politiques et les pratiques mises en place n'ont pas suffi pour empêcher l'expansion du commerce illicite de jeunes guépards sauvages. Il faudrait que les autorités appliquent des mesures pour s'assurer que les politiques nationales concernant la possession et le commerce des grands félins favorisent la mise en œuvre efficace de la Convention.

En **Afrique du Nord**, en **Afrique de l'Ouest** et en **Afrique centrale**, on ne compte que cinq populations connues de guépards à l'état sauvage, comprenant environ 450 individus selon les estimations, et les Etats des aires de répartition considèrent le commerce illicite comme une menace très importante. Bien qu'aucune confiscation de guépard (vivant ou non) n'ait été signalée et que les témoignages faisant état de cas de possession ou de commerce illicites soient rares, il est probable que des guépards alimentent le marché plus vaste de peaux de grands félins utilisées à des fins rituelles et *médico-magiques*. Le lion semble être l'espèce la plus recherchée pour ses vertus médicinales, qui ont engendré une dynamique semblable à celle que l'on observe sur le marché asiatique des parties de tigre; les autres espèces, principalement le léopard et le guépard, sont utilisées comme solutions de rechange. On constate en fait très souvent que les parties et produits de grands félins utilisés sont des imitations. Un problème analogue se pose au Soudan où, malgré l'interdiction et l'abondance de produits en fausse fourrure, la demande de « markoob », chaussures traditionnelles pour hommes en fourrure tachetée, est telle que ce marché est considéré comme une menace à la conservation des populations de guépards au Soudan du Sud et dans les pays voisins. L'enthousiasme du monde de la mode pour les produits en fausse fourrure tachetée, par opposition à la véritable fourrure utilisée dans les années 1960-70, montre qu'il est tout à fait possible de remplacer les produits d'origine sauvage par des imitations. Bien que sachant probablement qu'ils achètent une imitation, les consommateurs préfèrent dans certains cas une véritable fourrure, perpétuant ainsi la demande et le commerce illicite. De plus, il convient de rappeler que, malgré les effets positifs qu'attribuent certaines personnes à l'utilisation médicale avec ou sans consommation (médecine spirituelle), de parties de grands félins, qu'il s'agisse d'imitations ou de produits d'origine sauvage, ces utilisations sont illégales et présentent, en outre, un risque lorsqu'elles se substituent à des soins médicaux appropriés.

**L'Afrique australe** abrite la plus importante population de guépards, population panmixte répartie sur six pays et comprenant environ 6 200 individus selon les estimations. La plupart des guépards vivent sur des terres privées où leurs prédateurs ont été éliminés; ils sont en général considérés comme une menace pour le bétail et le gibier, et les agriculteurs capturent les adultes, comme les petits, depuis de nombreuses années pour contrôler les prédateurs. Le commerce de trophées en provenance de Namibie et du Zimbabwe (un safari chasse coûte entre 10 000 et 20 000 USD), autorisé au titre du quota prévu à l'Annexe I de la CITES, est généralement considéré comme un appui à la conservation des guépards sur les terres privées. Globalement, le système de quota instauré par la CITES semble fonctionner de façon satisfaisante et le commerce légal de spécimens réalisé au titre des annotations à l'Annexe I aurait des effets neutres ou favorables à la conservation de cette espèce à l'état sauvage.

L'Afrique du Sud est le premier exportateur mondial de guépards vivants et le seul pays à avoir enregistré deux opérations commerciales d'élevage en captivité auprès du Secrétariat CITES, conformément à la résolution

Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) sur *l'enregistrement des établissements élevant en captivité à des fins commerciales des espèces animales inscrites à l'Annexe I*<sup>1</sup>. Dans ces deux établissements, les animaux sont élevés conformément aux conditions fixées par la CITES et peuvent être exportés à des fins commerciales puisqu'ils « sont considérés comme des spécimens d'espèces inscrites à l'Annexe II ». Néanmoins la plupart des exportations sud-africaines de guépards ont été déclarées pour des utilisations non commerciales (à destination de zoos à des fins de conservation, par exemple), et la majorité des établissements d'où sont exportés les guépards ne sont pas enregistrés auprès de la CITES. Aux termes de la réglementation sud-africaine, les spécimens d'espèces inscrites à l'Annexe I de la CITES qui sont élevés en captivité et destinés à être exportés « doivent faire l'objet d'un marquage individuel et permanent de façon à rendre toute modification ou altération par des personnes non autorisées aussi difficile que possible ». Les micropuces sont couramment utilisées, mais certains craignent qu'elles ne suffisent à elles seules pour garantir qu'un animal a été élevé en captivité car il est très facile d'implanter une micropuce sur un guépard sauvage.

Il est bien connu que les guépards sont difficiles à élever en captivité. En Amérique du Nord, par exemple, bien que les guépards affichent une excellente variation génétique et bénéficient de logements et de soins vétérinaires de la meilleure qualité, seulement 23 femelles sur 111 ont eu des petits et, en 2013, neuf établissements se sont regroupés pour créer la Coalition nationale pour la reproduction des guépards, qui s'est donné pour objectif de disposer d'une population viable de guépards dans les zoos en l'espace de dix ans. Si

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<sup>1</sup> Aux termes du paragraphe 4 de l'article VII de la CITES, « les spécimens d'une espèce animale inscrite à l'Annexe I élevés en captivité à des fins commerciales, ou d'une espèce de plante inscrite à l'Annexe I reproduite artificiellement à des fins commerciales, seront considérés comme des spécimens d'espèces inscrites à l'Annexe II ». Dans la résolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) sur l'enregistrement des établissements élevant en captivité à des fins commerciales des espèces animales inscrites à l'Annexe I, la Conférence des Parties donne l'interprétation ci-après de cette disposition : « *les Parties limitent l'importation à des fins principalement commerciales, telles que définies dans la résolution Conf. 5.10 (Rev. CoP15), de spécimens élevés en captivité appartenant à des espèces inscrites à l'Annexe I, à ceux produits par les établissements inclus dans le registre du Secrétariat, et refusent les documents délivrés au titre de l'Article VII, paragraphe 4, si les spécimens concernés ne proviennent pas de ces établissements, et si le document n'indique pas la marque d'identification spécifique appliquée à chaque spécimen* ».

certains élevages sud-africains, tels que le centre Ayn van Dyk (anciennement De Wildt), qui est l'un des deux établissements enregistrés auprès de la CITES, ont rencontré un réel succès avec la naissance de plus de 600 petits au cours des trente dernières années, les spécialistes du guépard soupçonnent certains établissements sud-africains de ne pas avoir surmonté les problèmes de reproduction en captivité et de commercialiser illégalement, sur le marché intérieur et sur le marché international, des animaux sauvages capturés vivants. Les chercheurs ont interrogé des douzaines de témoins ces dernières années – agriculteurs et responsables de la conservation – qui ont fait état de mouvements transfrontières illicites de guépards sauvages capturés vivants entre l'Afrique du Sud, le Botswana et la Namibie. Les chercheurs, comme les autorités sud-africaines, ont dû faire face à des difficultés pour obtenir les données provinciales nécessaires à la surveillance des activités d'élevage et du commerce intérieur. Il est aujourd'hui difficile de déterminer si les autorités sud-africaines sont en mesure de confirmer avec certitude que toutes les exportations de guépards vivants exportés en tant que spécimens élevés en captivité respectent les dispositions de la Convention concernant l'élevage en captivité. L'organe de gestion CITES de l'Afrique du Sud a récemment annoncé qu'il mettrait en place un contrôle accru des systèmes provinciaux d'enregistrement des guépards afin de garantir l'application uniforme des réglementations relatives aux espèces protégées.

La plupart des guépards vivants ont été saisis par les autorités gouvernementales des pays d'Afrique australe, d'Afrique de l'Est et du Moyen-Orient. Le plus souvent, les animaux vivants confisqués sont transférés, dès que possible après leur interception, vers des refuges pour animaux sauvages ou des zoos dans le pays concerné et, plus rarement, sont exportés vers d'autres pays disposant d'établissements plus adéquats. Les animaux confisqués ne semblent pas être euthanasiés, mais on constate des taux élevés de mortalité (70 % des 30 petits confisqués au Somaliland et en Ethiopie, et 48 % des 27 petits confisqués aux Emirats arabes unis, en Jordanie et au Koweït). Le transfert des guépards vers des établissements d'accueil à l'intérieur ou en dehors du pays où il a été procédé à la confiscation est une solution qui semble bien fonctionner, bien que le succès de l'opération dépende des ressources et des capacités dont disposent les établissements d'accueil. Une grande partie des guépards confisqués en Afrique de l'Est et au Moyen-Orient sont trop jeunes pour que l'on puisse envisager de les relâcher. En Afrique australe, en revanche, cela est souvent possible car de nombreux guépards adultes sont capturés sur des terres privées où ils sont perçus comme des animaux indésirables, sources éventuelles de problèmes. En Afrique australe et en Afrique de l'Est, les gouvernements peuvent compter sur un certain nombre d'organisations non gouvernementales qui, depuis longtemps, acceptent de s'occuper des guépards confisqués, les réadaptent et, souvent, les relâchent dans des zones où ils sont acceptés par les gestionnaires et les exploitants.

Il existe, semble-t-il, deux grands marchés pour le commerce illégal de guépards: l'Afrique australe (marché essentiellement approvisionné par les pays de la région) et le Moyen-Orient (marché approvisionné par les pays d'Afrique de l'Est). Ce dernier est plus important et plus lucratif. Les animaux vivants alimentant ce marché sont principalement confisqués dans les pays de transit et dans les pays consommateurs, et beaucoup plus rarement dans le pays d'origine; on dispose donc de très peu d'informations pour déterminer quelles populations sont affectées. Les jeunes guépards peuvent être prélevés dans des zones que les organisations de conservation ne connaissent pas, mais il est également possible que des individus soient prélevés dans des populations résidentes d'Afrique de l'Est connues. En Afrique australe, la plus grande population de guépards apparaît stable depuis 10-15 ans et les effets du commerce illicite ne sont pas clairement établis, d'autant que certains spécimens alimentant le commerce auraient peut-être été de toute façon capturés ou tués. Bien que les informations sur le commerce illégal de guépards vivants et de peaux de guépards en provenance d'Iran, d'Afrique du Nord, d'Afrique de l'Ouest et d'Afrique centrale soient peu nombreuses, on sait que l'état de conservation des populations dans ces régions s'est détérioré au point que le commerce illicite a probablement un effet notable sur l'état de conservation de l'espèce.

Compte tenu des conclusions de la présente étude, les considérations suivantes sont particulièrement importantes:

**Législation:** il conviendrait d'inviter les Parties qui, d'après les conclusions de l'étude, sont des marchés de destination de guépards sauvages vivants exportés illégalement (Arabie saoudite, Bahreïn, Emirats arabes unis, Koweït, Oman et Qatar) à soumettre un rapport sur les contrôles législatifs et réglementaires qui ont été mis en place ou qui le seront prochainement en ce qui concerne l'élevage de guépards en captivité, ainsi que sur les moyens déployés pour assurer leur respect. On pourrait envisager, outre la marque d'identification appliquée à chaque spécimen, de rendre l'enregistrement des espèces inscrites à l'Annexe II obligatoire.

**Lutte contre la fraude au niveau national:** en tant que principale destination des guépards sauvages exportés illégalement, les pays du Golfe devraient intensifier les efforts de lutte contre la fraude aux frontières, comme sur leur territoire. Ils devraient également apporter un appui financier et technique aux pays d'Afrique de l'Est pour les aider à lutter contre le commerce illégal des guépards et accroître leurs efforts de conservation in situ.

Il ressort de l'étude que la région du Somali dans la Corne de l'Afrique et le Yémen sont les principaux points de transit du commerce illicite d'animaux sauvages vivants (qui affecte les guépards et de nombreuses autres espèces). Les Parties devraient soutenir les autorités de ces pays et les organisations non gouvernementales qui travaillent à leur côté pour leur permettre de renforcer leurs capacités en matière de lutte contre le commerce illégal d'espèces sauvages et de lancer des opérations ciblées.

Le commerce illégal des guépards est principalement détecté aux points de transit et aux points de vente, et rarement à la source; cela est vrai pour le commerce d'animaux sauvages en général. Afin de détecter et enrayer les prélèvements à des fins commerciales, les Etats des aires de répartition devraient veiller avec plus de vigilance à l'application de la législation nationale en matière de protection et de commerce des guépards et devraient bénéficier d'un appui dans le domaine de la surveillance des populations de guépards.

L'Afrique du Sud devrait envisager de mettre en œuvre des mesures supplémentaires pour accroître la fiabilité de l'enregistrement, du marquage et du traçage des guépards élevés en captivité. Il faudrait également encourager ce pays à assurer une meilleure surveillance et des contrôles plus réguliers des établissements d'élevage de guépards, et à veiller à ce qu'ils soient enregistrés auprès du Secrétariat CITES, conformément à la résolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev CoP15), lorsqu'ils ont une vocation commerciale.

**Coordination internationale:** à l'image des efforts fournis par les organisations régionales chargées du contrôle du commerce illégal des tigres en Asie (partage d'informations au sein d'un réseau et entre les réseaux, séminaires et ateliers de renforcement des capacités), il faudrait accorder une plus grande attention au problème du commerce des guépards dans le cadre des travaux de l'Equipe spéciale de l'Accord de Lusaka (Afrique de l'Est et Afrique australe) et des réseaux de lutte contre la fraude dans la Corne de l'Afrique (HA-WEN), en Asie occidentale (WA-WEN), en Afrique australe (WENSA) et en Afrique centrale (WEN/COMIFAC).

La communauté internationale a reconnu qu'il était nécessaire de mobiliser un plus large éventail de ressources publiques pour lutter contre le commerce illégal d'espèces sauvages. Les Parties qui sont membres des équipes multinationales de sécurité maritime opérant dans le Golfe d'Aden et les eaux adjacentes devraient envisager la possibilité d'organiser des séances d'information à leur intention afin de faciliter la détection du commerce illégal d'espèces sauvages et de le décourager.

**Réduction de la demande:** les approches à suivre pour réduire la demande devraient être envisagées pour chaque type de marché identifié: animaux domestiques exotiques, chaussures traditionnelles de luxe (Soudan), et peaux de grands félins utilisées dans les cérémonies et à des fins médicales ou *médico-magiques* (Afrique de l'Ouest et Afrique centrale). La nature de la demande de guépards domestiqués dans les pays du Golfe persique est telle que les efforts visant à faire baisser la demande ont de bonnes chances de réussir. Les personnes qui achètent un petit guépard le font manifestement par amour de cet animal et, en termes de conservation des prédateurs, cela représente une bonne partie de la bataille. De plus, ces personnes ne sont pas toutes conscientes des difficultés et des dangers que comporte la possession d'un grand félin et, dans certains cas, de son illégalité.

**AN ASSESSMENT OF CONSERVATION IMPACTS OF LEGAL AND  
ILLEGAL TRADE IN CHEETAHS *ACINONYX JUBATUS***

Report to the 27<sup>th</sup> meeting of the CITES Animals Committee

Kristin Nowell, CAT and IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group\*

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## 1. Introduction

The cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* is listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, with a declining population of less than 10,000. Its Red List status will be reassessed for the 2015 Global Mammal Assessment (Durant et al., in prep.). Like the lion *Panthera leo*, the cheetah is found primarily in African savanna habitats, which are rapidly being converted to agricultural and other forms of development (Riggio et al. 2012). Cheetahs have been lost from such areas, and moreover protected savannah reserves that contain large populations of lions often have lower densities of cheetah due to interspecific competition. Southern Africa is the region with the largest cheetah population, mainly found on commercial livestock and game ranching areas where larger competing predators (lion and hyena) have been extirpated (Lindsey et al. 2013), but where many landowners still consider the cheetah a problem animal. In this region, however, and elsewhere, cheetahs are protected species and may not be taken without a permit (IUCN Cat SG *in litt.* 2014).

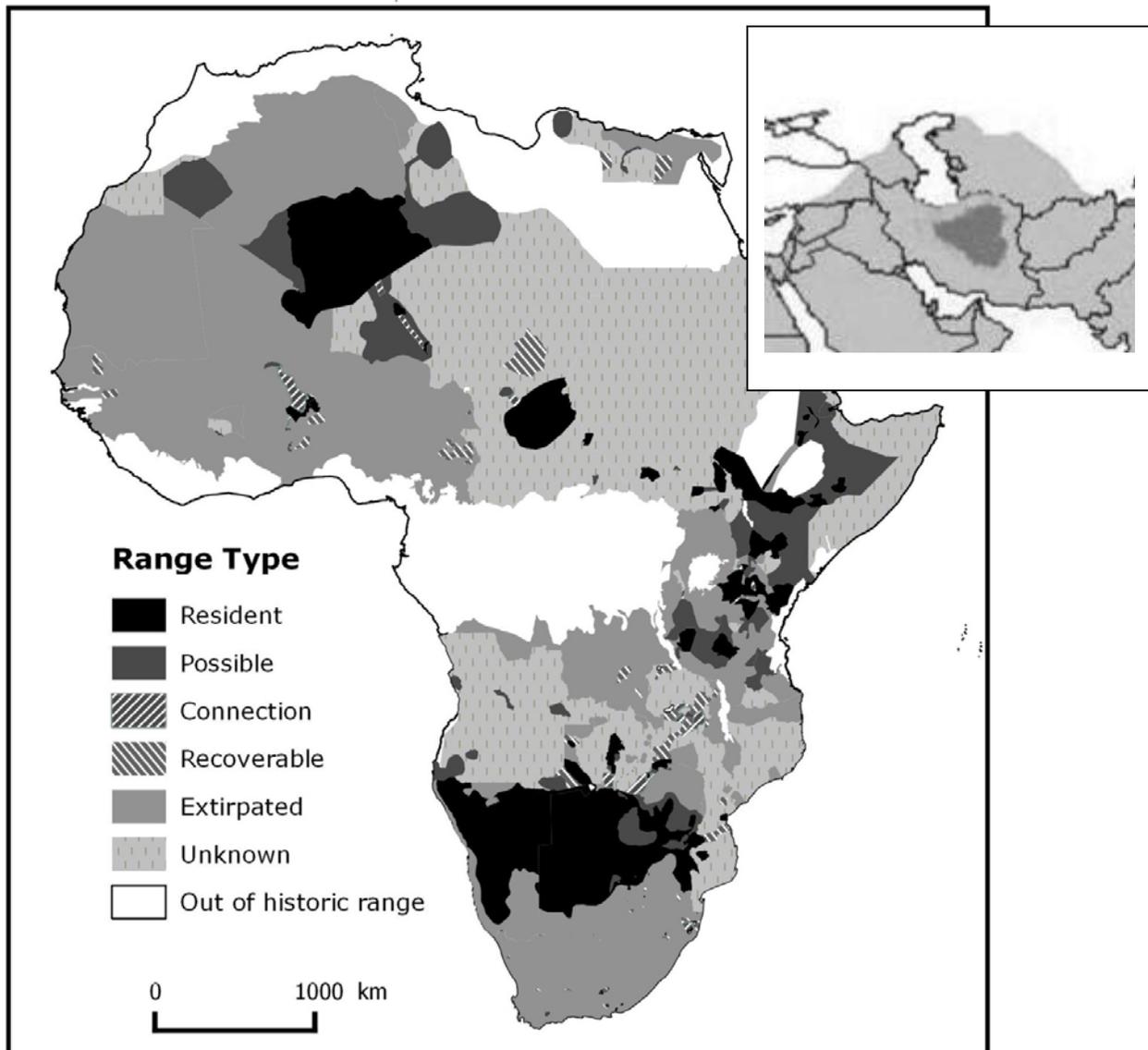
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\* The geographical designations employed in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the CITES Secretariat or the United Nations Environment Programme concerning the legal status of any country, territory, or area, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The responsibility for the contents of the document rests exclusively with its author.

Cheetah status is unknown in many African countries, but these areas of potential range are not considered likely to still hold significant populations (Figure 1). It is certain, however, that the cheetah has disappeared from large areas of its historic range, in North and West Africa and especially in Southwest Asia. It is extinct in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and on the Arabian Peninsula (Mallon and Budd, 2011); the cheetah survives today in Asia only in the deserts of eastern Iran where it is classified as Critically Endangered (subspecies *A. j. venaticus*). Paleogenetic analysis indicates that African and Asian cheetahs have been isolated from each other for millennia (Charruau et al 2011). The same analysis supports recognition of a distinct subspecies in the Horn of Africa region, *A. j. soemmerringii*, while cheetahs in East and Southern Africa are closely related. The classification and taxonomy of cheetahs in North, West and Central Africa is still being studied (IUCN 2012).

**Figure 1. Knowledge of cheetah distribution in Africa (WCS/ZSL Rangewide Program for Cheetah and African Wild Dogs *in litt.* 2014)**

**Inset: Historic (light-shaded) and current cheetah range in Asia (Eslami et al. 2010) (not to scale)**



Cheetahs face a variety of threats to their existence in the wild, including habitat loss, bushmeat hunting of their prey base, conflict with livestock owners, among others (Durant et al. in prep.). Illegal international trade was flagged as an additional important threat by all three African regional cheetah conservation strategies (IUCN 2007a,b; IUCN 2012). This subject was on the agenda at CITES CoP16 (CoP16 Doc 51 Rev 1). The CITES

Secretariat noted that illegal trade in live cheetahs and skins was highlighted as a current problem by several country representatives (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan) at a workshop on wildlife trafficking in the Horn of Africa, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in October 2012.

At CoP16, the Parties adopted Decision 16.71, engaging a study of the legal and illegal trade in wild cheetahs, and an assessment of the impact of this trade on the species' conservation in the wild. The illegal trade in live cheetahs was flagged as of particular concern at COP16, and is given emphasis in this study (Figure 2). While other live big cats have been traded and kept captive for centuries, the cheetah has an unusual history throughout Southwest Asia and into India of having been tamed and trained to hunt antelope for their owners (Divyabhanusinh, 1995) (Figure 3). Consuming meat caught by trained hunting animals finds sanction in the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an (Thapar et al. 2013).

## 2. Methods

The following methods were employed for this study.

### Analysis of the CITES Trade Database

Searches were conducted for *Acinonyx jubatus* in various combinations as shown in Table 1. Graphs and tables in this report are derived from CITES Trade Database outputs unless otherwise noted as to source.

### Consultation with CITES Party governments and governmental bodies

Parties were requested in Notification 2014/007 to contribute to this study. Information received from Parties is referenced in this document as *in litt.* (2014). The World Customs Organization provided data on seizures from their database for use in this study. With the assistance of contributing conservation organizations, selected Range State government authorities were also contacted as a follow-up.



Figure 2. A dying cheetah cub for sale in a Yemeni coastal village, probably of wild origin and smuggled by boat out of Somaliland (Sheffer and Kennedy 2013)



*Royals with their prized pet, getting ready for the hunt.*

Figure 3. It was a mark of privilege to have wild-caught cheetahs, tamed and trained to hunt antelope, in India and Southwest Asia for centuries (Thapar et al. 2013)

### **Interviews with cheetah trade researchers**

Working through the network of members and associates of the IUCN Species Survival Commission's Cat Specialist Group, organizations which have recently focused on illegal cheetah trade were identified and interviewed in late 2013-early 2014 (Table 2). Interviews included both structured and unstructured elements, and were conducted by email and telephone. These specialists also contributed published and unpublished papers and reports, and compiled information from their files, including their own interviews with veterinarians, trophy hunting managers, law enforcement personnel, land owners, other wildlife researchers, and traders. Individual cases of illegal trade were verified by photo or direct observation unless otherwise noted. Interview information is referenced in this study by the contributing organization's name or acronym as *in litt*.

### **Internet searches**

Internet searches were conducted in English, French and Arabic, focusing on news articles, government websites, and social media.

### **Geographic terminology**

Key information from this report was collected in what is referred to as Somaliland, the semi-autonomously administered region of western Somalia bordering the Gulf of Aden. No information was obtained from the neighboring semi-autonomously administered region of Puntland, nor Somalia, which is Party to CITES, but has been subject to a recommendation to suspend all trade since 2002.

## **3. Overview from the CITES trade database**

### **3.1. CITES-regulated trade**

#### **3.1.1. Wild cheetahs**

The cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* has been listed on CITES Appendix I since 1975. When Namibia acceded to the Convention in 1990 it held a reservation for the species. As the delegation explained at the Eighth Conference of the Parties in Kyoto, Japan in 1992, attaching a commercial value to their populations was considered "as a prime means for the species conservation." (Com I.8.1 (Rev)). Namibia withdrew its reservation upon Parties

agreement to an Appendix I annual quota of 150 live animals and hunting trophies. Quotas were additionally granted to Zimbabwe (50) and Botswana (5). The Appendix I annotation notes that trade in such specimens is subject to the provisions of Article III of the Convention, essentially that permits are required both for party of import and export/re-export. Since 1992, no proposals have been submitted to the Conference of the Parties to amend these annotations. The cheetah is among only a handful of Appendix I-listed species to have a quota established through an annotation in the Appendices itself (for the Appendix-I listed species *Panthera pardus* (trophies and skins), *Diceros bicornis* (trophies) and *Capra falconeri* (trophies), for example, this is provided through dedicated Resolutions).

**Table 1. CITES Trade Database Searches for *Acinonyx jubatus***

**Years: 1990-2012**

Gross Exports =total quantity (re)exported

Gross Imports =total quantity imported

Net Exports =the positive difference between total (re)exports (gross) and imports (gross)

Net Imports =the positive difference between total imports (gross) and (re)exports (gross)

Net Exports – Source: Wild

Net Exports – Term: Hunting Trophies

Net Exports – Term: Live

Net Imports – Term: Live; Source: Wild

Gross Imports – Exporter: South Africa; Term: Live

Comparative Tabulations – Exporter: South Africa; Term: Hunting Trophies

Comparative Tabulations – Exporter: South Africa; Term: Live

Comparative Tabulations – Confiscations/Seizures

**Table 2. Organizations contributing information to this study**

Action for Cheetahs – Kenya (ACK)

Breeding Centre for Endangered Arabian Wildlife (BCEAW) (UAE)

Cheetah Conservation Botswana (CCB)

Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF)

Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP) (Iran)

DeCouvrier et Aider la Nature (DECAN) (Djibouti)

Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) (South Africa)

IUCN Species Survival Commission Antelope and Cat Specialist Groups

Panthera

Rangewide Program for Cheetah and African Wild Dogs (joint project of Wildlife Conservation Society and Zoological Society of London) (RWCP)

Welthungerhilfe (Somaliland autonomous region of Somalia)

World Customs Organization (WCO)

World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

CITES annual report data from 1990-2012 was analyzed for an overview of legal trade in cheetah specimens (Table 1). The type of specimen most frequently exported is biomedical samples, demonstrating the relatively strong scientific research interest in this species, particularly in Namibia, responsible for more than 34,000 out of approximately 35,500 net exports of wild cheetah biological specimens. Animals are not generally removed from the wild for the purpose of obtaining such specimens, although to some extent trade levels do reflect such removals (e.g., trophy-hunted animals and “problem” animals live-trapped on farms: Namibia CITES MA *in litt*).

2014). This international movement of samples has helped monitor wild populations and provide a reference database with the potential to aid law enforcement through genetic determination of origin, and Parties are requested to streamline and facilitate permits for scientific research, following Namibia's example (Panthera, RWCP *in litt.* 2014).

Considering the other main forms of legal cheetah trade, total net exports have varied from over 50 to nearly 250 cheetah specimens per year (Figure 4), and averaged 153 over the decade from 2002-2011. Trophies have been the most frequently traded type of specimen (over 60% of total), followed by live animals, skins and skulls (Figure 5). The majority of trophies have been imported by member States of the European Union (82% of net imports) (Figure 6), with Germany being the main destination (CITES Trade Database; Namibia, Poland CITES MAs *in litt.* 2014). Namibia has been the major exporter, and will be discussed in more detail in the regional section on Southern Africa.

### 3.1.2. Cheetahs certified as captive-bred

The Appendix I quota for trade in live wild cheetahs was instituted in 1992 principally to give commercial value to a 'pest' species through trophy hunting, but also because cheetahs breed poorly in captivity (CITES Doc 8.22 [Rev]). Since that time, however, improved management and knowledge of cheetahs unusual mating and reproductive parameters (such as the finding that females are induced ovulators, stimulated by a specific male vocalization: Kaplan 2009) has led to greater success in captive breeding, although only in a few facilities (33 out of 241 facilities monitored by the International Cheetah Studbook) in the US, EU, UAE and South Africa (Marker 2012). The facilities that report breeding success are typically large, hold numerous animals and are not open for public viewing. They monitor reproductive parameters and have multiple large enclosures allowing for separation between the sexes and provide conditions similar to what cheetahs would experience in the wild (Bradford-Wright 2013). Probably the most successful facility has been South Africa's DeWildt (now Ayn van Dyk) Cheetah Centre, which has produced over 600 cubs in 30 years (Bertschinger et al. 2008). Still, success has been difficult to replicate: North American cheetahs have excellent genetic variation as well as housing and veterinary care, yet only 23 out of 111 females have had offspring (Leeds 2012), and in 2013 a national Cheetah Breeding Center Coalition was set up among nine facilities, with the aim of a sustainable zoo population of cheetahs within 10 years (SDZ 2013).

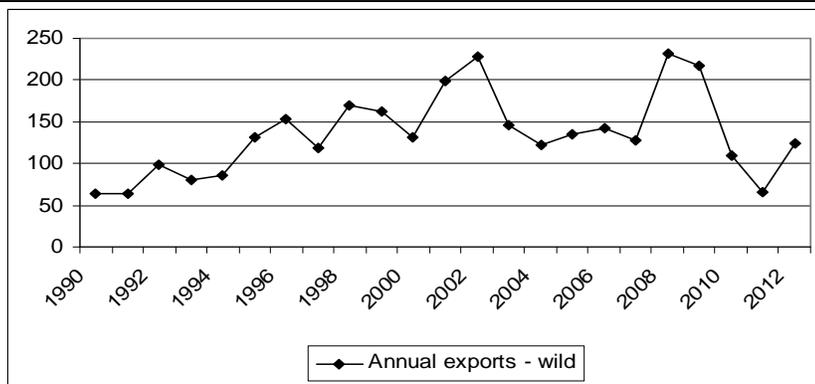
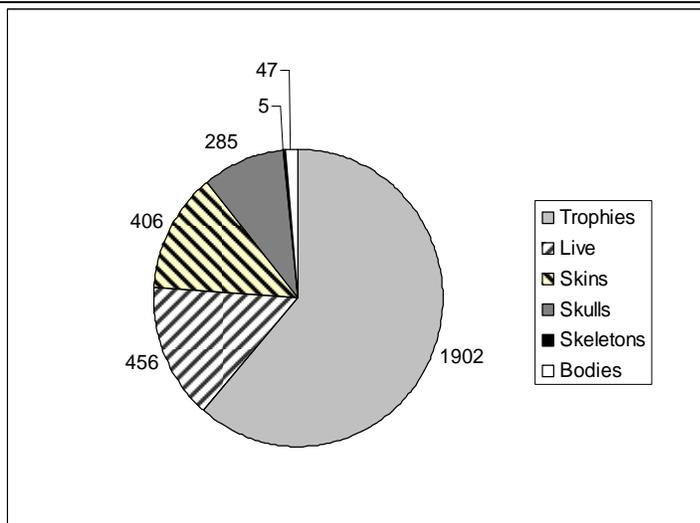
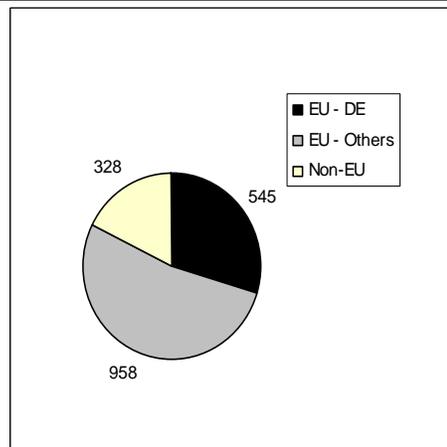


Figure 4. Annual net exports of wild cheetah specimens



**Figure 5. Total net exports of wild cheetah specimens 1990-2012**



**Figure 6. Total net imports of cheetah trophies 1993-2012**

The number of live cheetah imports recorded as captive-bred has increased markedly over the last decade to an average of 88 per year (Figure 7). Article VII, paragraph 4, of CITES states that “Specimens of an animal species included in Appendix I bred in captivity for commercial purposes, . . . , shall be deemed to be specimens of species included in Appendix II”. In Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Registration of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for commercial purposes, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention has agreed to an interpretation of the provision, as follows: “Parties shall restrict imports for primarily commercial purposes, as defined in Resolution Conf. 5.10 (Rev. CoP15), of captive-bred specimens of Appendix-I species to those produced by operations included in the Secretariat’s Register and shall reject any document granted under Article VII, paragraph 4, if the specimens concerned do not originate from such an operation and if the document does not describe the specific identifying mark applied to each specimen”.

Article VII, paragraph 5, of the Convention relates to specimens of Appendix-I species bred in captivity for non-commercial purposes, and states that:

*Where a Management Authority of the State of export is satisfied that any specimen of an animal species was bred in captivity or any specimen of a plant species was artificially propagated, or is a part of such an animal or plant or was derived therefrom, a certificate by that Management Authority to that effect shall be accepted in lieu of any of the permits or certificates required under the provisions of Article III, IV or V.*

In accordance with Article VII, paragraph 5, of the Convention, it is noted in Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev. CoP15) on Registration of operations that breed Appendix-I animal species in captivity for commercial purposes that the import of specimens of Appendix-I species bred in captivity not for commercial purposes that are covered by a certificate of captive breeding does not require the issuance of an import permit and may therefore be authorized whether or not the purpose is commercial.

South Africa has grown over the last decade to become the major exporter, but there are indications that wild-caught cheetahs may be illegally entering the captive export trade, which will be discussed in more detail in the regional section on Southern Africa.

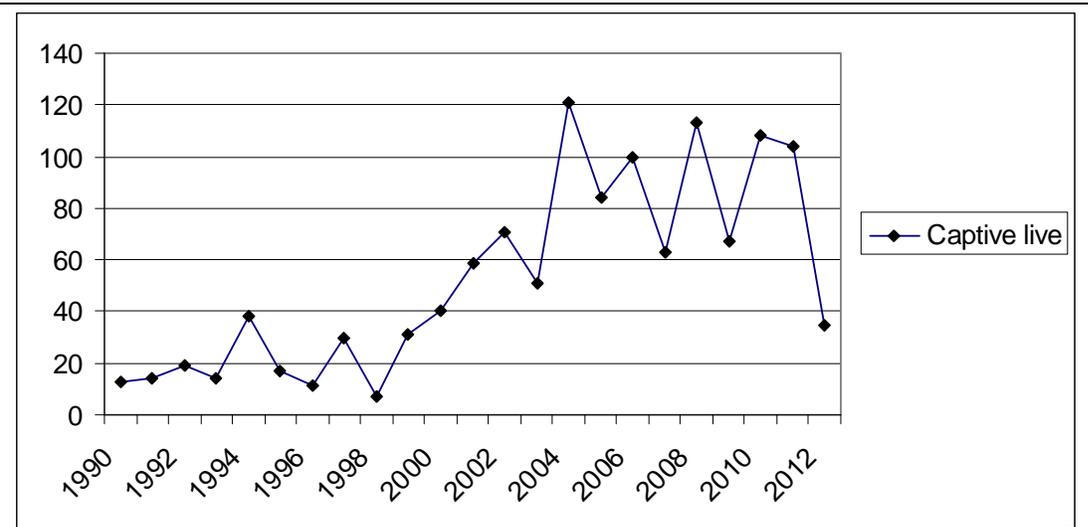


Figure 7. Net imports of live captive-bred cheetahs

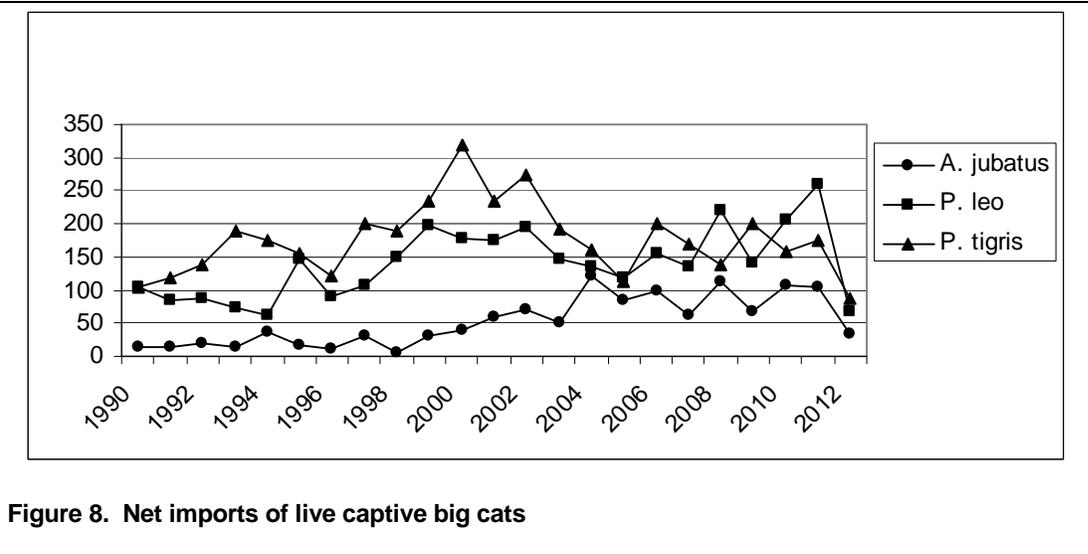
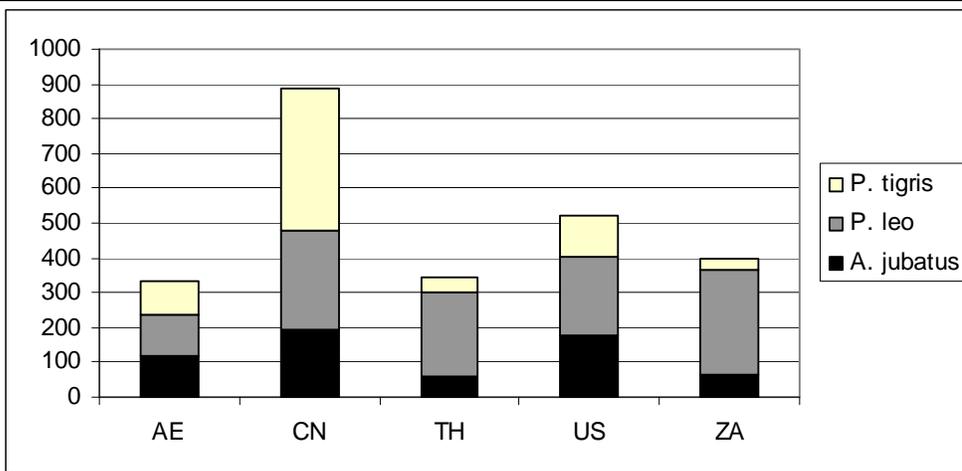
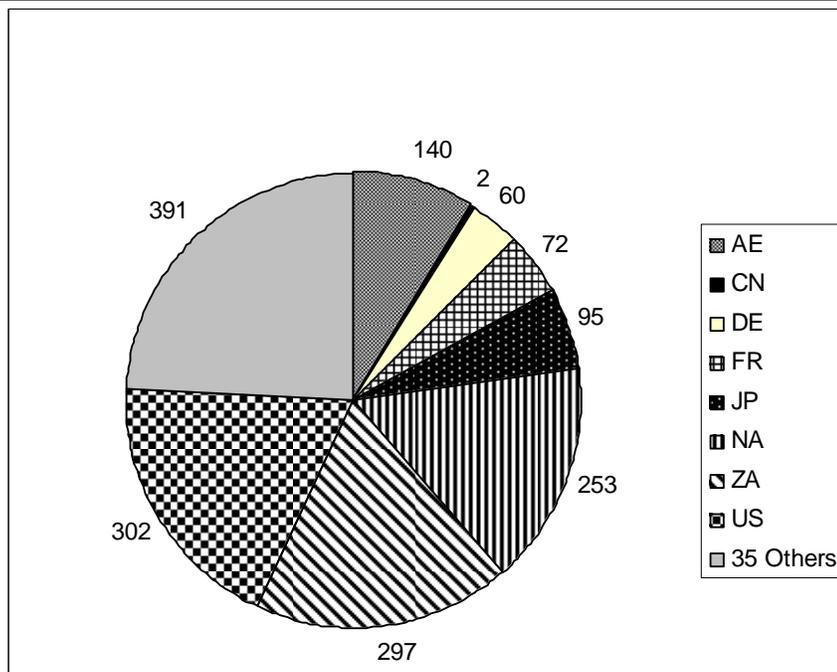


Figure 8. Net imports of live captive big cats



**Figure 9. Major importers of live big cats 1990-2012**



**Figure 10. Number of cheetahs held in captivity in different countries as reported to the 2011 International Cheetah Studbook (based on Marker 2012)**

Net imports of live captive animals are compared for three big cat species in Figure 8. Annual net imports of live captive cheetahs have risen in recent years to levels comparable with lions and tigers. Imports of the three species for five major importers are compared in Figure 9. No importer shows a strong bias for cheetahs in comparison to the other species, but the United Arab Emirates is notable for having imported roughly similar numbers since 1990.

Most major importers of live cheetahs have collections which contribute information to the International Cheetah Studbook, with the exception of China, which has a very low participation rate (Figure 10). The known global captive cheetah population (241 facilities in 43 countries) is 1,614 animals, and the total number is higher given that many captive cheetahs are not recorded. Namibia's large captive population consists mainly of cheetahs live-trapped and removed from the wild as problem animals (Marker, 2002 and 2012).

### 3.2. Illegal trade

Not all Parties include seizures and confiscations in their CITES annual reports (source code 'i'), and when they do, records are referring to illegal specimens that were confiscated upon import (rather than from domestic law enforcement action). The Standing Committee, with the assistance of its Working Group on Special Reporting Requirements, is considering appropriate means for collecting statistical information on illegal trade through the annual report. The US and UK (GB) have instituted regular reporting for a long period of time, and a selected range of their reported cheetah confiscations is shown in Table 3, along with others from a search of the CITES Trade Database. Skins and live animals were the most frequently encountered types of cheetah specimen in illegal trade.

Figure 11 shows that annual reported seizures in trade databases of skins and live animals generally amount to a fewer than five specimens per year. Few seizures of live animals have been reported until recently. Fifteen of the 20 live cheetah cubs seized by the UAE in 2010 were identified in the CITES Trade Database as originating from Somalia. Since not all seizures are reported, these figures could underestimate law enforcement effort as well as illegal trade levels.

### 4. Regional trade assessments

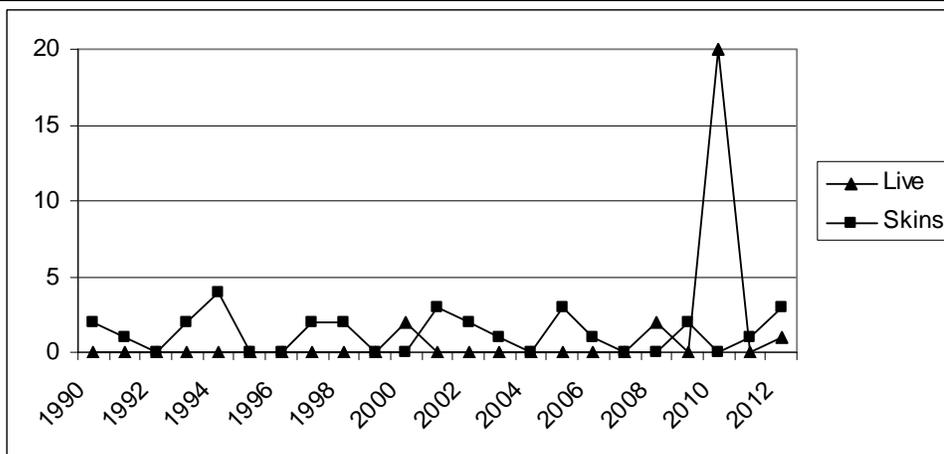
Governments and cheetah specialists have worked together to develop four regional conservation strategies and programs (IUCN 2007a;b; IUCN 2012; ICS 2013). There are regional differences in the status of wild populations, and the character and regulation of legal and illegal trade. There are regional enforcement structures in place and in development to counter illegal trade – the Lusaka Agreement Task Force linking Eastern and Southern Africa, and Wildlife Enforcement Networks in the regions of the Horn of Africa (HA-WEN), West Asia (WA-WEN), Southern Africa (WENSA) and Central Africa WEN/Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC). For each region, this study aims to determine the source of cheetahs in illegal trade, the trade routes of illegally trafficked cheetahs, and document the measures taken by Parties to deal with or dispose of live confiscated specimens. The regional assessments begin with East Africa, the region with the most evidence of illegal trade in live cheetahs.

**Table 3. Reported seizures in trade databases, 1990-2012**

Party reporting seizure	Live	Skins*	Skin Pieces	Skin products	Trophies	Derivatives	Pairs of Shoes
UK**	3	6			2		
US		13	65	5	3	6	1
UAE	20						
Kuwait	2						
Other EU**		9		3	3		
Totals	25	28	65	8	8	6	1

\*Skins: A 2000 entry from China of 146 cheetah skins seized from Hong Kong was not included as it seemed a possible recording error. \*\*UK and Other EU: includes seizure data for EU countries 2011-2013 from the Customs Enforcement Network database (WCO)

*A comparative tabulation was cleaned to indicate only seizures on import, rather than re-export, for educational or scientific purposes, of seized items. For example, live cheetahs of confiscated origin were exported from the UAE to zoological facilities in Morocco and Greece in 2011; such records are not included in the table.*



**Figure 11. Annual seizures of live cheetahs and skins reported in trade databases**

## 4.1 East Africa

### 4.1.1. Cheetah status and trade impact

The region holds 15 known cheetah populations, with an estimated total of approximately 2,500 adults, although only five populations are considered large (approx 200) (Figure 12). There are large areas where cheetah range and status are unknown (CAR, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, and parts of Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan and Tanzania), but they are considered unlikely to hold significant populations. The evidence from countries with relatively complete information (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) suggests that a marked contraction in the cheetah's geographic range has occurred (IUCN 2007a).

There is essentially no legal trade from countries in the region recorded in the CITES trade database. In the region, only South Sudan is not yet Party to CITES. Somalia has been subject to a recommendation to suspend all trade since 2002. Somaliland does not have facilities for housing confiscated animals, and has exported cheetah cubs to a rescue center in neighboring Ethiopia (Born Free 2011, 2012a-b).

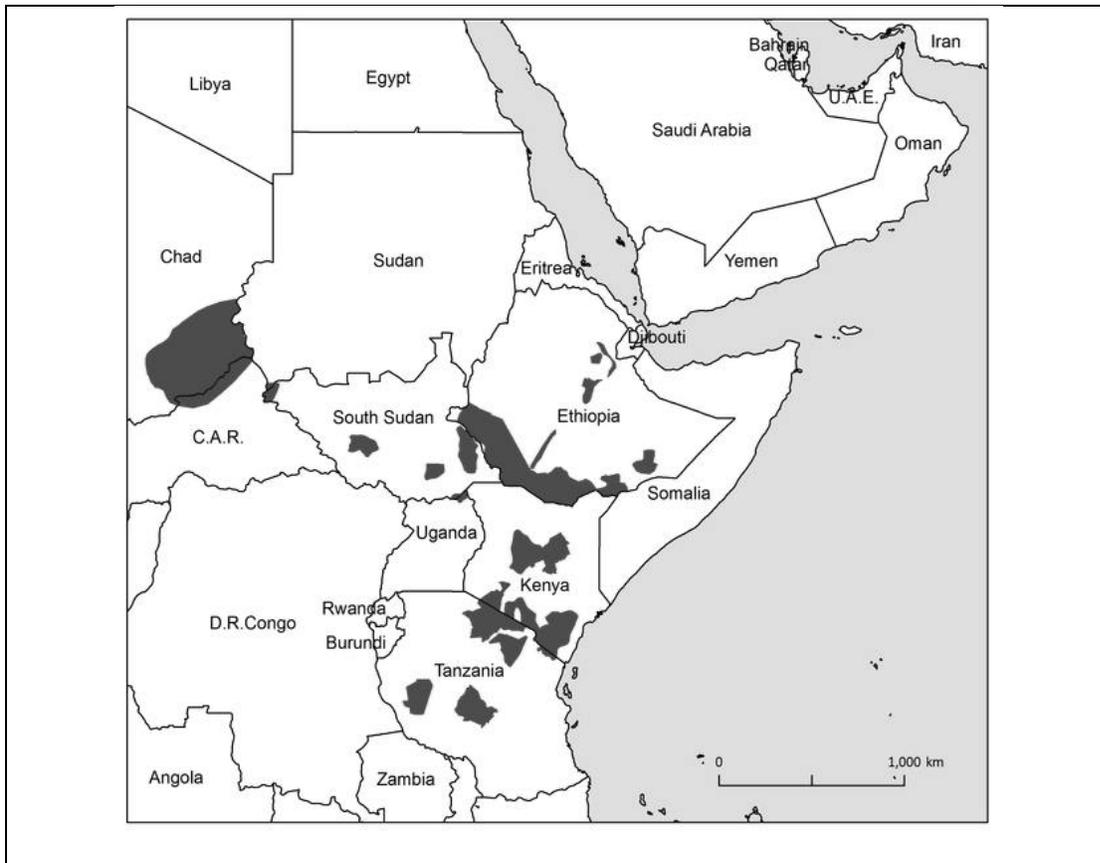
Illegal trade in live animals, as well as skins, was flagged as an important threat to the cheetah by many countries in the region during consultative conservation and law enforcement exercises (Table 4).

### 4.1.2. Illegal trade in live wild cheetahs

Illegal shipment of live wild cheetah cubs out of the Somali region by boat and by air across the Gulf of Aden to the Arabian peninsula was known to be happening in relatively large volume 10-15 years ago. Five cheetah cubs were rescued from illegal trade in Djibouti by the founder of the DECAN Cheetah Refuge in 2000-2002 (Lawrence 2011). In 2006, in one of the few reports on wildlife trade in Somalia, Amir (2006) noted that from his surveys of markets around the Mogadishu region, that live cheetahs were "particularly sought after," and reported that one cub fetched a local price of US\$1,000.

In the UAE, a six-week old cheetah cub reportedly fetched US\$3,000-\$5,000 (de Haas van Dorsser 2002, Garstecki 2006). From 1998-2002, 39 young cheetahs, identified primarily as originating from Somalia, were confiscated at the Sharjah airport by Customs and relegated to the Breeding Center for Endangered Arabian Wildlife, which has since become one of the world's foremost skilled at breeding cheetahs in captivity. The Center still receives young confiscated cheetahs annually from government authorities, but the numbers have decreased sharply over the past decade, suggesting that illegal imports to that country may have declined (BCEAW *in litt.* 2014), possibly linked to recent legal imports of captive-bred cheetahs from South Africa. Still, recent UAE seizures of cheetah cubs remain significant compared to other countries (Table 3 and Figure 17).

**Figure 12. Cheetah resident range in Eastern Africa 2010 (RWCP *in litt.* 2014), and estimated population sizes (reproduced from IUCN 2007a)**



**Table 3.2** Areas in eastern Africa considered by participants to support resident cheetah populations. Population estimates are derived from a number of different methodologies and have a very wide margin of error. Locations are shown in Figure 3.5.

Name	Country	Trans-boundary?	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )		Population estimate (adults)	
			Total	Protected	Total	Protected
Afar	Ethiopia	no	4,073	997	40*	10 <sup>‡</sup>
Blen-Afar	Ethiopia	no	7,342	6,497	70*	60 <sup>‡</sup>
Ogaden	Ethiopia	no	11,095	0	110*	0 <sup>‡</sup>
Omo Mago/Borena	Ethiopia	possibly	25,010	17,281	250*	170 <sup>‡</sup>
Yangudi Rassa	Ethiopia	no	2,768	2,768	30*	30 <sup>‡</sup>
Laikipia/Samburu	Kenya	no	47,390	2,074	450 <sup>†</sup>	20 <sup>‡</sup>
Badingilo NP	Sudan	no	7,482	1,266	70*	12 <sup>‡</sup>
Boma NP	Sudan	possibly	19,294	13,106	190*	130 <sup>‡</sup>
Kidepo-Uganda	Uganda/Sudan	yes	3,332	833	12 <sup>†</sup>	3 <sup>‡</sup>
Radom NP	Sudan	possibly	6,122	3,491	60*	30 <sup>‡</sup>
Southern NP	Sudan	no	12,973	9,629	130*	100 <sup>‡</sup>
Katavi-Ugalla	Tanzania	no	20,917	9,163	150*	90 <sup>‡</sup>
Maasai Steppe	Tanzania	no	17,743	3,222	100*	30 <sup>‡</sup>
Ruaha	Tanzania	no	26,530	20,040	200 <sup>†</sup>	150 <sup>‡</sup>
Serengeti/Mara/Tsavo	Kenya/Tanzania	yes	98,616	36,177	710 <sup>†</sup>	260 <sup>‡</sup>
<b>Grand total:</b>			<b>310,687</b>	<b>126,544</b>	<b>2,572</b>	<b>1,095</b>

\*population sizes estimated from the size of the polygon using a conservative density of 1 adult per 100km<sup>2</sup>;  
<sup>†</sup>population sizes estimated by delegates using a variety of methodologies; <sup>‡</sup>sizes of protected populations estimated by multiplying total population size by the proportion of total land area falling inside protected areas.

Moreover, recent records of illegal trade from the Somali regions indicate that the problem of cheetah cub smuggling persists, and at a level apparently higher than any other part of cheetah range, based on confiscations and observations of illegal trade. The Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) has compiled records of

confiscations (many arranged through cooperation between national authorities and conservationists) as well as of illegal trade. Earlier records are scarce, and likely to reflect an absence of active trade monitoring efforts rather than an absence of trade. Verified records are those in which NGOs observed and/or facilitated the disposition of animals (most were photographed, e.g. Figure 16), whereas reports of illegal trade were communicated by others to researchers. In recent years, particularly in the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland that borders the Gulf of Aden, there are numerous verified confiscations, totaling 43 animals in the period 2011-2013 (Figure 13), as well as many more observations and reports of illegal trade in live cheetah cubs (Figure 15). The number of reported cases of illegal trade indicates significant market interest in the species. A high mortality rate for the young animals is evident from the known outcomes of confiscations (Figures 14 and 16).

While Somaliland appears to play the most active role in the illegal export of live cubs, the source of these animals is unverified (although genetic analysis of confiscated animals could provide some insight [CCF *in litt.* 2014]). Ethiopia is most frequently mentioned as the origin, but it is probably a transit route from Kenya as well (Welthungerhilfe *in litt.* 2014). There is little cheetah breeding in the region and the animals are likely to have been collected from the wild. Cheetah mothers do not defend their cubs as some other larger predators might, and the most likely method of obtaining cubs is through opportunistic tracking or sighting the mother's movements and snatching them when they are too young to flee.

While researchers in Kenya did interview a pair of men in the ethnic Somali Garissa region of Kenya who claimed to specialize in tracking and monitoring the movements of cheetah mothers (ACK *in litt.* 2012), it is unlikely that there are many specialized hunters for live cubs, but more likely wild animal traders who have communicated their interests to pastoralist communities. Traveling around Kenya on a national cheetah survey in 2004-2007, researchers were approached by "many people" offering to collect cubs from the wild, not understanding the nature of the researchers' interest. Cheetah cubs (and other orphaned young predators) are still confiscated regularly enough in Kenya so that a specialized rehabilitation facility for them has been approved by the Kenya Wildlife Service (ACK 2012).

Confiscations in Ethiopia en route to Somaliland (Mesfin 2011), as well as information gathered by trade monitors (CCF *in litt.* 2014), indicates that many cheetah cubs leaving Africa via Somaliland did not originate there. Conveyance methods out of Ethiopia have included both vehicle and camel (CCF *in litt.* 2014). It appears that Somaliland middlemen are primarily obtaining cheetah cubs from a network of ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia and Kenya, and their contacts extend into Tanzania, although small cubs would be unlikely to survive that extended journey (Welthungerhilfe *in litt.* 2014). Three live cheetahs confiscated in Tanzania were adults, held in captivity for probable sale in the city of Arusha, and all three were later rehabilitated and released back into the wild (ZSL 2011).

Osman (2006) observed that most live animals left Somalia by air, and this continues, as evidenced from the 2010 confiscation of 15 cheetah cubs (11 of which subsequently died), from two Emirati and one Somali national at the Dubai airport (Todorova 2010). But the more common route for cheetah cubs to reach the Arabian peninsula from Somalia is also the more traditional, by boat, one common type being the dhow, a cargo-carrying vessel employed around the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea for more than 500 years.. In his paper, "The geography of present-day smuggling in the western Indian Ocean: the case of the dhow," Martin (1979) documented extensive unregulated movement of people and goods between East Africa and the Arabian peninsula. This continues today, with a wide range of boats and a wide range of cargoes (Sheffer 2013, Welthungerhilfe *in litt.* 2014).

**Table 4. Countries in East Africa which have recently flagged illegal cheetah trade as a threat**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Regional cheetah conservation strategy</b>	<b>National cheetah action plan</b>	<b>2012 Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Workshop/2013 CITES COP16</b>
Djibouti	X	N/A	X
Ethiopia	X	X	X
Kenya	X	X	X
Somaliland/Somalia	X	N/A	X
South Sudan	X	X	X
Sudan	X	N/A	X
Tanzania	X	X	N/A
Uganda	X		X

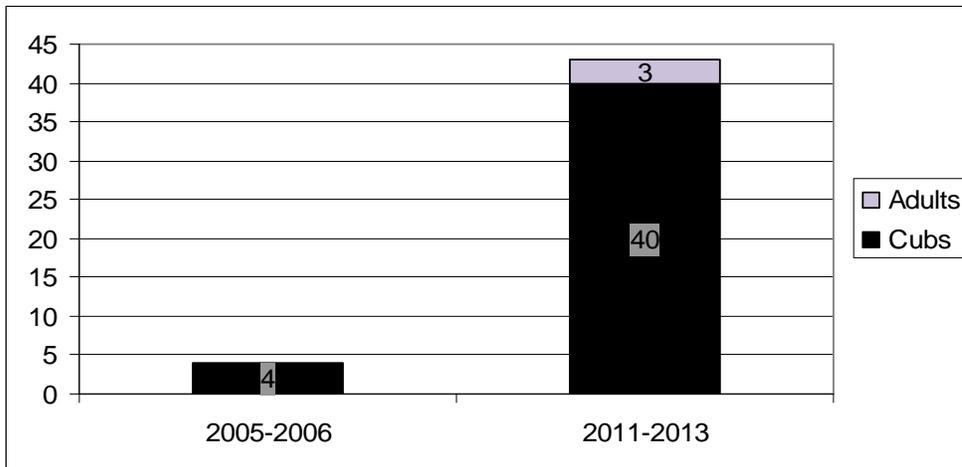


Figure 13. Verified confiscations of live cheetahs in Eastern Africa (based on CCF *in litt.* 2014)

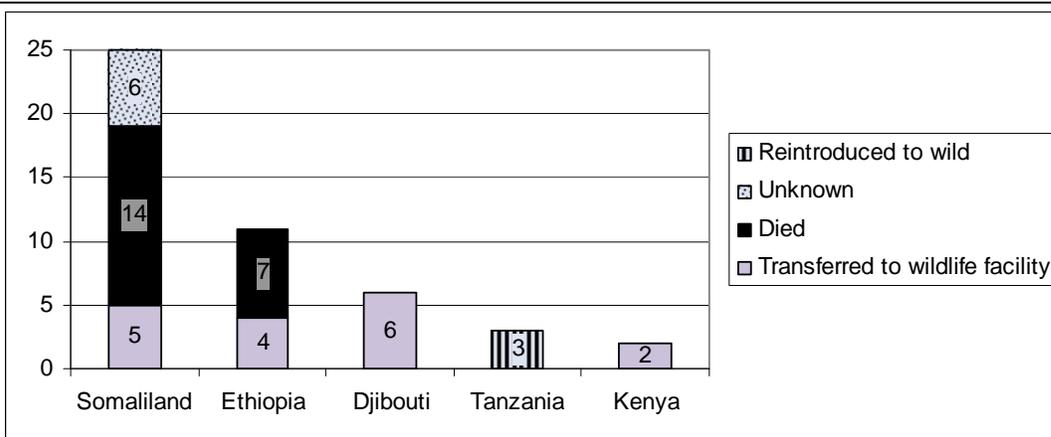


Figure 14. Disposition of confiscated live cheetahs 2005-2013 (based on CCF *in litt.* 2014)

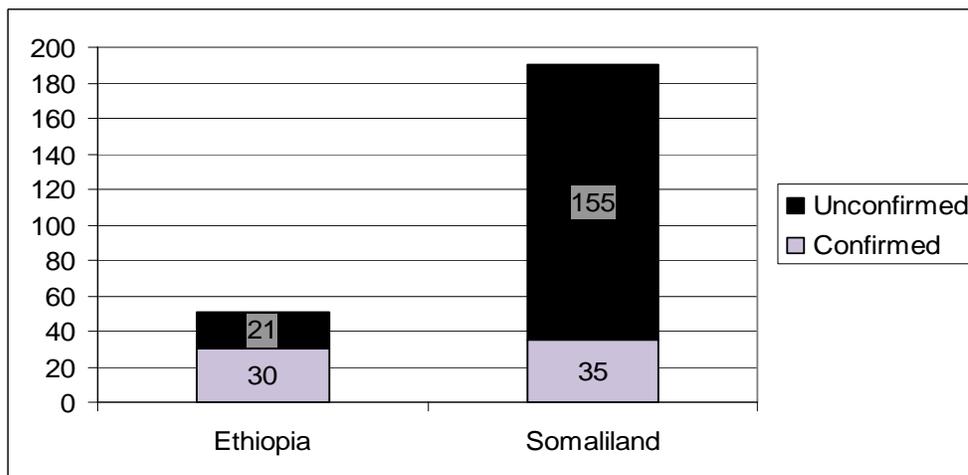
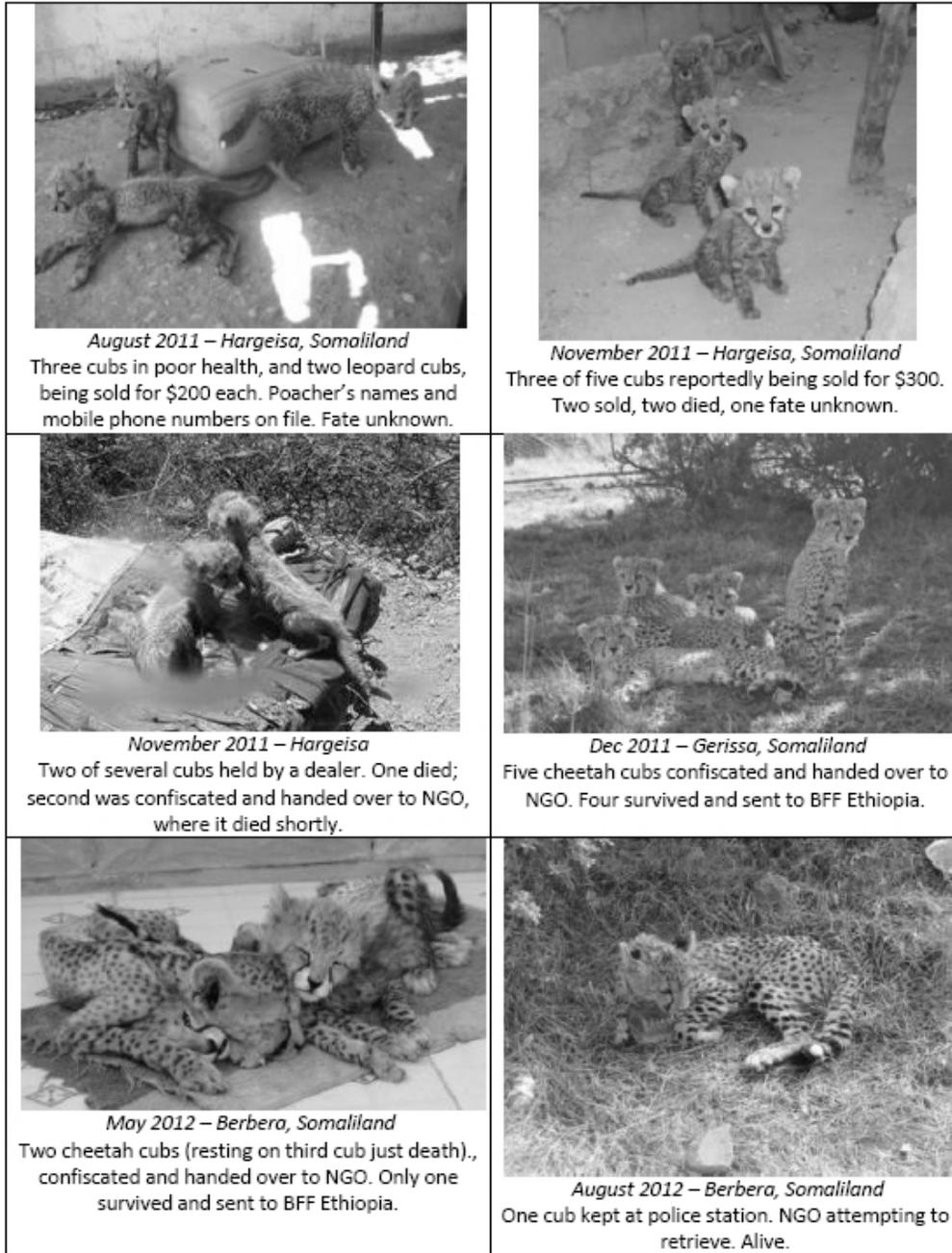


Figure 15. Number of live cheetahs recently observed and reported in illegal trade 2010-2013 (based on CCF *in litt.* 2014)



**Figure 16. Photographs of young cheetah cubs confiscated and in illegal trade in Somaliland. Exhibit A from testimony of the Cheetah Conservation Fund to the US Congressional International Conservation Congress, November 2012 (CCF 2012).**

Yemen is now home to a large Somali refugee population, and its southwestern coast is as little as 30 km from the African continent. A year-long investigation there by journalists documented cheetah cubs, along with other live African wildlife, being smuggled by boat out of Somaliland, through Yemen, and up the coastal road to the border crossing with Saudi Arabia (Sheffer 2013, Sheffer and Kennedy 2013). Illegal trade in cheetahs (and other African wild animals) is opportunistic and low-volume compared to other types of smuggling activity in the region. Still, it is apparently profitable, comparing prices from observations of cases of illegal trade along the trade chain (Table 5).

While few people have had the opportunity to contact or question those involved in the illegal cheetah trade out of East Africa to the Arabian peninsula, one newspaper journalist located, interviewed and quoted a 27-year-old UAE national from Abu Dhabi who is known to sell cheetahs illegally in the Gulf states:

*“These cheetahs are mainly exported from African countries to Somalia. From there, they are exported to Yemen and then it is smuggled into the UAE from Saudi borders. This is done by highly experienced people who have been doing this for a very long time. We buy these cheetahs which are aged about one month old for Dh15,000 (US \$4,084). Then, we sell each between Dh35,000 to Dh40,000 to buyers (US \$9,529-\$10,890). The price can go higher depending on the quality of the cheetahs and the buyers. Many of these cheetahs die on the way from Africa to the UAE due to the bad transportation methods used while moving them from one place to the other. At the end, only 10 to 15 cheetahs survive and this is what we get. The demand on these cheetahs is very high as they are very popular pets for many rich individuals in the GCC. We keep them in our farms for a month till we get the buyers. These are mainly wealthy individuals who like keeping such pets at their farm houses or villas” (Ahmed 2010).*

Numerous online news articles and social media posts attest to the popularity of cheetahs, along with other big cats and exotic animals, as pets in the Gulf States (Table 6). The news articles shown in the table are all unique, not repetitive of the same incident. Such incidents include escaped cheetahs, one of which pounced on seven campers in a tent and bit one of them on the back of the neck one night in Kuwait before it was fetched by its owner (Aziz 2013). Each year from 2010-2012 authorities in the UAE had to capture escaped pet cheetahs after being alerted by the public; all three animals that were involved in these incidents were young adults less than 20 months old (Huang 2010, El Shammaa 2011, Salem 2012). In Saudi Arabia an escaped cheetah was shot by police (Khan 2011).

Most articles in Table 6 are from UAE newspapers, although every Gulf state is represented. There are hundreds more social media posts, including photos and videos of owners with their cheetah pets, and images taken by passersby of big cats cruising in cars or being walked on leash (Figure 17). A Dubai Men’s College student documentary visited exotic cat owners in the UAE, and the filmmaker said, “The idea of making the film came from the phone as pictures of exotic cats are being exchanged all the time. So I wondered who these people were and where the animals came from” (DMC 2012). “The number of big cats has definitely been increasing and cheetah is the largest population we’re dealing with,” one veterinarian told an Abu Dhabi newspaper (Simpson 2012).

Veterinarians in the region have reported seeing numerous young cheetah cubs, many of them gravely diseased or ill (Lloyd 2007, CCF *in litt.* 2014, Table 6). In 2007 one veterinarian in Saudi Arabia told reporters she estimated she had seen 100 cheetah cubs on separate occasions over a six month period (Anon. 2007). Dubai’s Central Veterinary Research Laboratory carried out post mortem examinations on 58 large felines in 2011-2012; samples from 22 cheetahs were analyzed for parasitology and 11 were mounted by the taxidermy department (CVRL 2012) (not all cheetahs were from private owners; some came from zoological facilities [CCF *in litt.* 2014]). The main reasons for death were cited as inappropriate diet and ethylene glycol poisoning, presumably from accidentally drinking antifreeze fluid (Simpson 2012). Staff at one clinic in the UAE estimated that most young cheetahs survive just 3-4 months in private hands (CCF *in litt.* 2014).

**Table 6. Recent news articles on cheetah and exotic pets in the Gulf States**

Ahmed, M. 2010. Huge market for smuggled cheetahs: Filthy rich like to show off the dangerous pets. Emirates 24/7, 14 Oct

Almazroui, A. 2012. Keeping a big cat at home isn’t cool; it’s just plain cruel. The National, 24 November.

Anon. 2012. Cheetah smuggling soars in Kuwait. Kuwait Times, 30 October.

Anon. 2013a. Keeping wild animals as pets has become a menace in UAE: Lion, cheetah and tiger cubs are in high demand, fetching Dh15,000-Dh50,000. Emirates 24/7, 14 May.

Anon. 2013b. PHOTOS; Cheetah for sale in Qatar (sold). Doha News, 24 January.

Anon. 2013c. 37 smuggled lions and tigers seized. Arab News, 7 March.

Anon. 2007. Wild practice. Saudi Gazette, 16 Sept.

Anon. 2006. Gators and tigers add to your stature. Arab News, 19 Mar.

Aziz, Al Anzi. 2013. Fright night in Almtalaa: Cheetahs storms the tent of seven youth. Al Rai (Kuwait), 17 February (in Arabic).

Das, R. 2014. Trainer's call of the wild: huge demand to train cheetahs and leopards in the Gulf region. Times of Oman, 15 Feb.

DMC. 2012. DMC students shine at Gulf Film Festival with exotic cats documentary. Dubai Mens College, 11 April.

Eipe, NZ. 2012. Illegal. Exotic. Blatant. JustHere Qatar, 8 February.

Elwazer, S. 2012. Lions, tigers become problem pets in the Gulf. CNN, 4 April.

Fattahova, N. 2013. Kuwait develops taste for wild, wild animals – Buying, breeding illegal wildlife on the rise. Kuwait Times, 28 Aug.

Leate, F. 2013. A clamp on animal trade is pledged.

Marker, L. 2013. Ending the illegal pet trade in cheetahs. Huffington Post, 1 March.

McLain, S. 2011. Exotic animals are not your pets. The National, 4 June.

Neild, B. 2010. Gulf cheetah panic spotlights illegal animal trade. CNN, 30 Dec.

Nye, J. 2013. The rich guys of Instagram show off their 'ultimate status symbols' ... big cats: How mega-wealthy Arab men are accessorising their supercars and powerboats with lions and cheetahs. Daily Mail, 17 November.

Ponce de Leon, J. 2013. Fight illegal trade by refusing to buy exotic pets. Gulf News, 3 Dec.

Sheffer, J. 2013. Lion breeder in Yemen cashes in on Gulf demand for exotic pets: Conservationists criticize flourishing trade in animals bound for private collections in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Emirates. The Guardian, 3 Feb

Sheffer, J. and Kennedy, T. 2013. Yemen: Arabia's wildlife supermarket. Al Jazeera, 13 August.

Simpson, C. 2013. Illegal wildlife trade in big cats is thriving on UAE websites. The National, 12 Feb.

Simpson, C. 2012. More big cats being imported to UAE. The National, 28 January.

Toumi, H. 2013. Lion caught roaming Kuwait streets. Gulf News, 8 Sept.

Townson, P. 2009. Qatar: Growing number of cheetahs kept as "pets." Gulf Times, 8 July.

York, G. 2011. War-torn Somalia serving as transit route for wildlife smugglers. The Globe and Mail, 24 May updated 24 Aug 2012.



Figure 17. A selection of recent photos from hundreds posted on social media from the Gulf States (searches in English and Arabic)

Still, many have survived to adulthood and are obviously treasured by their owners, some going to great lengths to ensure them a comfortable existence. A recent article in the Times of Oman interviewed an Indian animal trainer, and included a photograph of him with one of his cheetah subjects. He said he had nine recent requests from Oman to train cheetahs and leopards, and had previously worked with privately held cheetahs in Bahrain. He said owners want their pets to behave well in front of their relatives and friends, and also to be able to take them along on trips to the desert. He advised them to get treadmills to keep their cheetahs fit (Das 2014).

Cheetahs are seen in social media postings inside homes and playing roughly with young children. The keeping of big cats in residential areas across the Arabian peninsula poses serious environmental and safety risks, both to people as well as the cats. It poses concerns for the welfare of both human and animals, threatens wild populations (both source populations and the endemic species of the region), and risks disease (Mohamed 2013). The editor of 999, the English language magazine of the UAE Ministry of Interior, launched a recent investigation of the black market trade in exotic pets, and said, "Wild animals belong in the wild. They do not belong in an SUV cruising down city roads; they do not belong in a confined space where they become depressed and aggressive; and they certainly do not belong on the streets, where they could end up if their owners leave them to starve. Unfortunately, they serve as status symbols for some people. These exotic pet owners do not realise that they are putting city residents in danger and also contributing to the illegal trade in wildlife. We encourage everyone to report wild animal sightings in UAE cities so that we can all help to put an end to this social menace." (Anon. 2013b)

Journalists have interviewed some owners who are well aware that their young cheetah was smuggled in illegally, as they found their cub through personal contacts (e.g., Anon. 2012). Finding a cub for sale is not necessarily a difficult process; the 999 magazine investigation found a cheetah cub for sale within 18 minutes of looking, by asking a person selling parakeets in a souq (Anon 2013b). From 2012-2013 the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia dissuaded nearly ten separate inquiries sent by email from people around the Arabian peninsula seeking to purchase or care for cheetah cubs (CCF *in litt.* 2014).

Cheetah cubs and other exotic animals are openly advertised on regional e-commerce websites, although some administrators try to remove any ads for exotic animals (e.g., Dubizzle: Croucher 2011). A one-month survey by IFAW found nearly 800 live animal advertisements, with just a fifth claiming to have necessary legal documents. Many said the animals were captive-bred, such as this posting on a Dubai classified ads site: "We are a breeder of a wide variety of exotic animals such as cheetah cubs, cougar cubs, jaguar cubs, leopard cubs, black panther babies, lion cubs, yellow and white Siberian tigers and Bengal tiger cubs," (Simpson 2013). Some advertisers say they are based outside the region, such as two companies supposedly based in Cameroon which answered a Bahraini reporter's request to obtain exotic big cat cubs (Leate 2013). Research has turned up a number of ads in the region connected to South Africa as well (Marnewick 2012). More detailed investigation is required to determine if animals advertised or the companies that advertise them actually exist.

Figure 18 shows disposition of confiscated live cheetahs as gathered from recent news reports. Some of the seizures took place during transit (15 cheetah cubs seized in Dubai from a flight from Somalia - Todorova 2010 and 4 cheetah cubs seized from a car at the Jordan checkpoint on the border with Saudi Arabia, reportedly en route to Syria: Namrouqa 2010), but most represent domestic confiscations by authorities. These publicized reports understate the interdiction level; for example, one observer reported that Saudi Arabia has confiscated a "substantial" number of cheetahs in the last four years (BCEAW *in litt.* 2014). Dubai Customs told participants at the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Arabian Biodiversity Conservation Workshop in February 2014 that they had just confiscated seven young cheetahs, and transferred them to several wildlife facilities (IUCN *in litt.* 2014).

Longtime observers of the trade in the UAE believe that levels, at least in that country, have declined sharply since 2005, and that at least part of the domestic pet cheetah population market consists of locally captive-bred cheetahs of South African origin (BCEAW *in litt.* 2014). The UAE imported 76 cheetahs from South Africa as captive-bred animals from 2005-2012 (Figure 19); a large proportion of these went to one facility in 2005, Al Bustan Zoological Centre, which participates in the international cheetah studbook and has since seen 68 births (deKock 2012, CCF *in litt.* 2014). Most import transactions shown in Figure 19 were recorded as mainly for zoological and breeding purposes, but from 2008-2012 more than 30 South African captive cheetahs were imported to the UAE for personal purposes, suggesting that at least some of the privately-held cheetahs there were acquired legally. However, this route to ownership is now closed, as the UAE banned the import of cheetahs and other big cats except to licensed facilities in a ministerial decree in July 2012 (Simpson 2013).

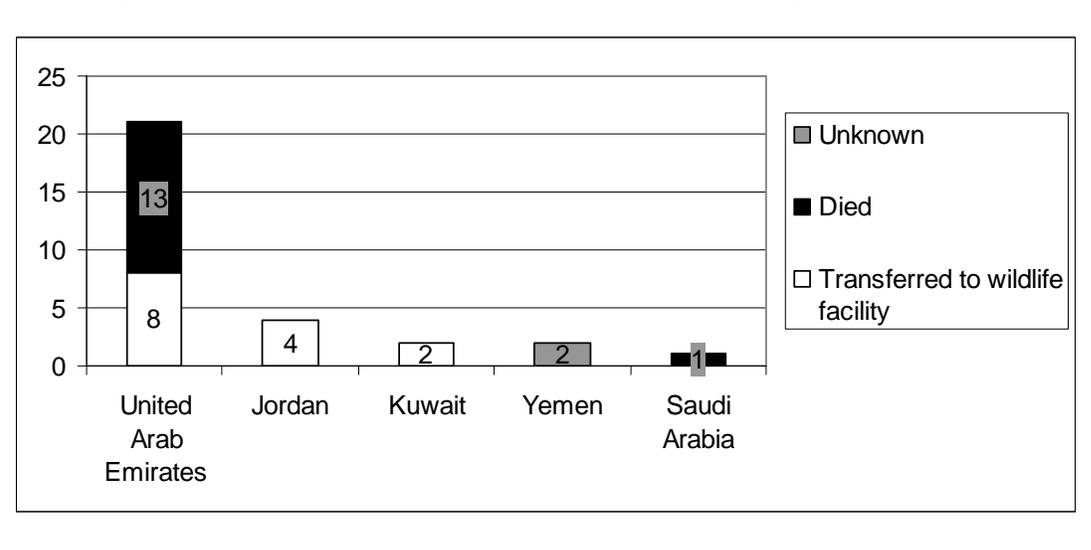
Very few imports of captive live cheetahs are reported in the CITES Trade Database for the remaining Gulf states.<sup>2</sup>

This study found several examples of efforts to reduce demand for big cats as pets. Some newspaper columnists have written opinion pieces (e.g., “Keeping a big cat at home isn’t cool, it’s just plain cruel”: Almazroui 2012), and the International Fund for Animal Welfare has started a campaign with an initial focus on the dangers such pets pose to children (Mohamed 2013). Demand reduction approaches could include working with cultural and religious leaders. For example, in 1992 the Grand Mufti of Yemen issued a proclamation (fatwa) against the use of rhino horn (for traditional dagger handles, supplied by illegal international trade). This edict formed an important part of a rhino horn demand reduction and educational awareness campaign launched at several zoos around the country (Vigne and Martin 2008). An approach for the cheetah could be complicated by the ancient tradition of hunting and reference to it in the Qur’an. Two online issuers of fatwas considered the question of whether the eating of meat from an animal killed by one’s hunting cheetah is in conformity with Islam, and were of divided opinion (Questions 2028 and 2031 on Islam-Wa-Sunnah.com Fatwa site). However, although hunting gazelles with cheetahs is still practiced today (as evidenced by photos and videos posted on social media), the main demand for the illegal cub trade is as exotic pets, and it is on this aspect that demand reduction efforts should focus.

**Table 5. Recent reported prices (USD) for illegal wild-caught cheetah cubs along the illegal trade chain**

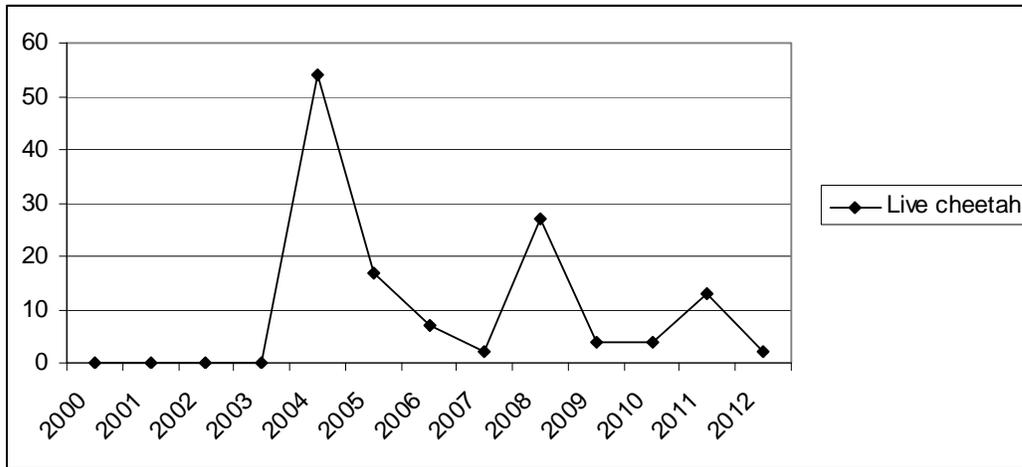
Somaliland	Yemen coast	Arabian peninsula
\$66-300 (n=6)	\$3,000 (n=1)	\$9,500-\$10,900 (n=2)
CCF <i>in litt.</i> 2014 (2012-2013)	Sheffer and Kennedy (2013)	Anon. (2013b), Ahmed (2010)

**Figure 18. Disposition of confiscated live cheetahs in the Gulf region from public reports in recent years (Sources: El Shammaa 2009, 2011; Huang 2010; Khan 2011; Namrouqa 2010; Salem 2012; Todorova 2010; CCF in litt. 2015)**



<sup>2</sup> Bahrain (2012) and Oman (2008) joined CITES relatively recently; the other four Gulf states have been Party and reporting trade for at least the past 12 years.

**Figure 19. UAE gross imports of live cheetahs from South Africa**



This study was not able to obtain detailed information on regulation of captive cheetah (and other big cat) national trade and ownership outside licensed zoological facilities in the Gulf states, but from public information (including statements of officials to journalists) it appears to be largely illegal or in the process of becoming so (Eipe 2012, Anon. 2013b,c,d; Leate 2013, Simpson 2013, Das 2014, Fattahova 2014). Ajman, one of the seven constituent emirates of the UAE, has taken the definitive legal step of prohibiting possession of all wild animals and reptiles in homes, apartments and hostels. Ajman's Executive Director of Health and Environment told a reporter that the new Law 54 was passed following surveys carried out by the department and complaints received by citizens and residents, and anyone in violation would receive "a penalty of 10,000 Dirham (or \$2,720) and the animal will be transferred to a zoo or reserve park." He added, "Ajman is the first to pass such a law. We hope that others will do the same" (Laylin 2012). Another article on a new animal welfare law enacted in Saudi Arabia referred to official statements that a cooperative approach among Gulf states was being taken with others considering adoption of similar legislation (Anon. 2013d). Such a cooperative approach could also be considered to tackle the region-wide problems of uncontrolled keeping of and trade in big cats, as policies and practice have been insufficient to deter the spread of illegally imported wild cubs. Authorities should implement measures to ensure that their national policies regarding ownership and trade in big cats support the effective implementation of the Convention.

#### **4.1.3. Illegal skin trade**

In the Sahel region, from Algeria (Belbachir in prep.) to Sudan in particular, cheetah skins have been prized for making traditional men's slipper shoes, known as markoob in Sudan. Most are made of ordinary shoe leather, but exotic species, particularly python and spotted cat are valued as luxury items (IUCN Antelope SG, Loro and Seme 2012). Leopard or cheetah markoob might cost up to \$250, and as formal footwear for ceremonial occasions like weddings this practice is "deeply rooted in Sudanese culture," (Sudan CITES MA *in litt.* 2014). This is illustrated as well by a 50-year old leopard markoob in a shoe museum, and a painting, posted on Instagram, of a traditionally dressed man with his spotted cat slippers (Figure 20). That there is a certain appreciation of cat skin markoob is reflected in this recent web blog comment (2011): "I would not give [you] so much as a cat, for a cat's skin may be used to produce markoob." While perhaps demand for cat markoob is largely restricted to older men of means (perhaps 1-2% of the population) (Sudan CITES MA *in litt.* 2014), other photos posted on social media show young men in stylish Western dress "representing" with their python markoob, indicating that demand for these shoes may come in several flavors.

Another social media post contained a plea from a local Sudan resident for a campaign to halt the practice of wearing shoes made from endangered species skins (and in fact the Sudan CITES MA [*in litt.* 2014] reports that national environmental societies have done a lot to raise awareness on this issue). The accompanying photo from the concerned citizen, though, appeared to include fake rather than real spotted shoes. Fakes were frequently seen in online photos of shoemakers in Khartoum. Some shoes, however, appear genuine (Figure 20).

In South Sudan, both fake and real cheetah skins have been seized (Figure 20), along with leopard skins. Interviews with rangers, police and locals around South Sudan's Badingilo National Park indicated that most

considered the demand for markoob to be a strong incentive driving local cheetah poaching, with skins being transported north to Sudan (Loro and Seme 2012).

Python and leopard shoes, and one cheetah skin, were among recent violations presented at the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement workshop by the delegation from Sudan (Mahgoub 2012). Sudan's CITES Management Authority (*in litt.* 2014) reports that rangers are finding it more difficult to confiscate shoes made from protected species because shop keepers are more wary about displaying them.

Elsewhere in the region, spotted cat skins have been part of traditional ceremonial wear for many ethnic groups, but there are few observations of illegal skin trade, or confiscations. In 2005, researchers observed several cheetah and leopard skins recently confiscated in Kenya near the border with Tanzania, where the skins were believed to have originated (ACK *in litt.* 2012). A cheetah skin recently confiscated in Uganda, near the resident cheetah population in Kidepo National Park, is believed by authorities to be about ten years old (Uganda CITES MA *in litt.* 2014).

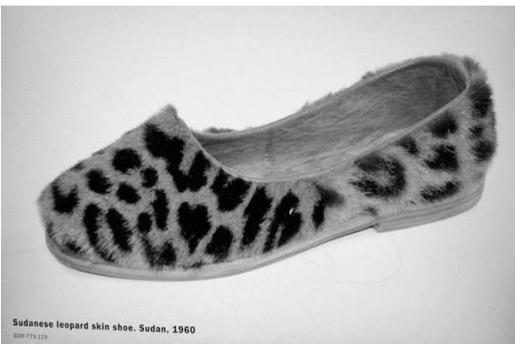
Figure 20. Spotted cat skins are valued for traditional men's shoes (markoob) in Sudan



A painting posted on Instagram from Sudan and tagged #markoob (June 2013). The man's slipper shoes in the painting's center are yellow and spotted.



Confiscated cheetah skin (2011) at South Sudan CITES Management Authority headquarters in Juba (RWCP *in litt.* 2014)



A leopard markoob shoe from Sudan, 1960, in the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, Canada



Possibly genuine cheetah markoob, posted on a Sudanese social media site, June 2013

## **4.2. North, West, and Central Africa**

### **4.2.1. Cheetah status and trade impact**

Cheetahs have largely been extirpated from this region (Figure 1), and range countries are concerned that illegal trade, although seldom observed, has the potential to pose a serious threat to those that remain. There are only five known cheetah populations, with an estimated total of approximately 450 adults, thinly distributed over arid desert and savanna regions (Figure 21). While there are large areas of unknown range (including Libya, northern Niger, Chad and Central African Republic), they are unlikely to hold significant populations. The evidence from countries with relatively complete information (Mali, Algeria, Nigeria, Burkina Faso) suggests that a marked contraction in the cheetah's geographic range has occurred (IUCN 2012).

All countries in this region are Party to CITES, and since 1990 very few exports of any type of cheetah specimen have been recorded in the CITES Trade Database.

Illegal trade was treated as a leading threat to the cheetah in the regional conservation planning process: "Cheetah in this region are reported to be hunted for their fur, for cultural purposes, and for the live animal trade. Although there are no data on the magnitude of this threat, the small sizes of cheetah populations in this region, and the relatively large proportion of participants who considered this factor a likely threat, suggest that such hunting may well raise serious concerns." A key objective of the regional cheetah strategy is "reducing the pressure of illegal offtakes" (IUCN 2012). At the regional strategy workshop the government representative of Niger voiced strong concern about skin trade (to Nigeria) and for medicinal use, and controlling illegal trade is a key objective for the PAPE project supporting the W Park Complex, which holds West Africa's only known cheetah population (Figure 21) (RWCP *in litt.* 2014).

### **4.2.2. Illegal skin trade: North Africa**

In the Sahel region of North Africa, (Lhote 1946, DeSmet 2003) cheetah skins have been used for many years for a variety of purposes: as rugs and prayer rugs, decorative hangings, ornamental camel saddle pads, and slippers. No current information was found for other countries, but in Algeria (home to the largest population in the region (Figure 21), cheetah skin pieces are also valued in local folk medicine around the Ahaggar Cultural Park (as protection against "the evil eye"). Interviews with local men there who had actually hunted cheetahs in the past indicated that they were motivated by a perceived need to protect livestock, rather than for skin trade *per se*. A few cheetah skins have been observed for sale in the market in Ghardaïa (northern Algeria), but the origin is not known and they could possibly have been smuggled in from neighboring countries. Skins have not been seen in the market in Tamanrassat, the largest town near the wild population, and there are no known incidents of live capture of wild Algerian cheetahs for illegal trade. Illegal trade does not appear to be the leading threat to the cheetah in this part of the region, but with numbers so low and thinly distributed it remains an area of concern (Belbachir *in prep.*).

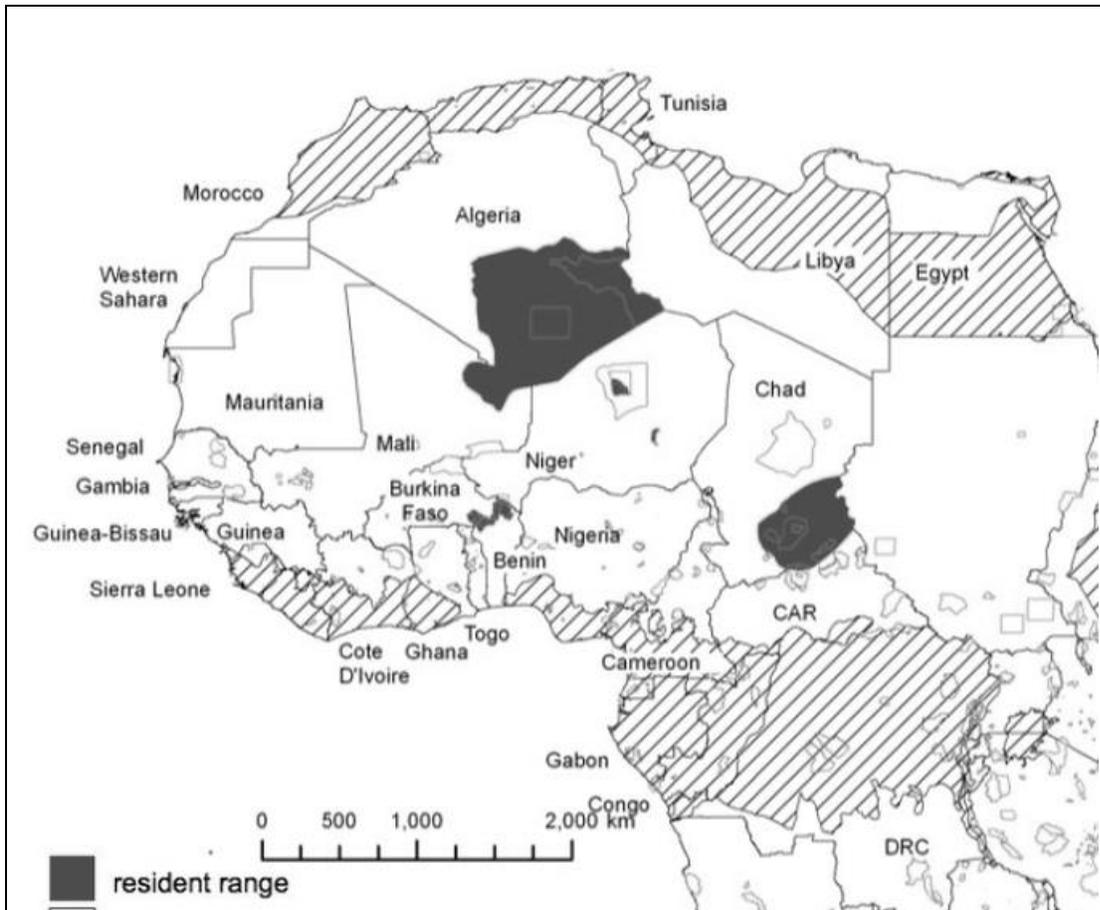
### **4.2.3. Illegal skin trade: West and Central Africa**

Although rarely encountered in the market due to the cheetah's rarity in the region, skins appear to be the main type of cheetah product in illegal trade. Demand does not seem species-specific; rather cheetah skins feed into a generalized market for "leopard," "panther" or otherwise spotted skins. Whole skins of leopard and cheetah can be distinguished with some elementary training, but skin pieces can be more difficult and positive identification would require the use of forensic techniques such as genetic analysis or hair microscopy.

Spotted or big cat skins are in demand whole (eg., as in the ones photographed for sale in Conakry, Guinea in February 2009: Figure 22) for decorative or ceremonial purposes, in pieces for garments and accessories (shoes, bags, and garment trim) as well as for use in traditional medicine, or *médico-magiques*. This encompasses a range of practices from medical (seeking to cure a physical ailment) to the spiritual and mystical. Researching the range of traditional, medical and magical uses for large carnivore parts in Benin, where cheetahs are rare, Sogbohossou (2006) found many reported uses for lion skins and bone but was able to document only one use for a cheetah part: its anus will purportedly attract the man or woman of the user's desires.

In West and Central Africa, medicinal demand for big cats is centered on the lion. One survey, carried out around Nigeria's Yankari National Park, found more than 22 lion parts considered of medicinal value, with most of the over 200 interviewees saying they had used lion parts in the past, and half within the past three years (Born Free Fdn 2008). This medicinal demand for lion parts has a similar dynamic to the tiger parts trade in

Figure 21. Cheetah resident range in North, West and Central Africa, and estimated population sizes (reproduced from IUCN 2012)



Hashmarking shows areas outside historic range in the region

**Table 3.2** Areas in western, central and northern Africa considered by participants to support resident cheetah populations. Population estimates are calculated using a number of different methodologies and have a very wide margin of error. Protected areas are in IUCN categories I-IV. Locations are shown in Figure 3.5.

Name	Country	Trans-boundary?	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )		Population estimate (adults)	
			Total	Protected	Total	Protected
Adrar des Ifhogas/ Ahaggar/Ajar & Mali	Algeria/Mali Benin/Burkina Faso	yes	803,202	153,464	201*	38‡
W Complex	Faso/Niger	yes	23,157	23,104	23†	23‡
Bahr Salamat	Chad/CAR	yes	216,643	42,772	217†	43‡
Air et Ténéré	Niger	possibly	8,052	5,059	4*	3‡
Termit Massif	Niger	possibly	2,693	0	1-2*	0
<b>Grand total:</b>			<b>1,053,746</b>	<b>224,399</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>107</b>

\*population sizes in desert habitats estimated from the size of the polygon using a conservative density of 0.25 adults per 1,000km<sup>2</sup>, which is half that found in the Ti-n-haggen region (Belbachir *et al.* unpublished); †population size in savannah habitats estimated from the size of the polygon using a conservative density of 1/1000km<sup>2</sup>; ‡sizes of protected populations estimated by multiplying total population size by the proportion of total land area falling inside protected areas.

Asia – other threatened big cat species (in this case leopards and cheetahs) are drawn in as alternatives or substitutes.

Also similarly, fakes are frequently observed by and reported to researchers (Panthera, RWCP *in litt.* 2014). For example, a recent seizure in Togo was reported as consisting of 15 ‘panther’ (= Leopard) skins and 10 panther heads (Figure 23). However, the items are fake, and the spot pattern resembles more cheetah than leopard rosettes. Similar fake spotted items (heads and skins) have been photographed at Togo’s famous Akondessa fetish market in the capital Lome (Figure 24 and Watt 2012).

The prevalence of fakes is indicative of a continued demand. While fakes may replace items in the market that otherwise would be illegally sourced from the wild, they could perpetuate demand when consumers aspire to the genuine wild item rather than making a conscious choice of an (often cheaper) alternative.



*Peau de léopard*

**Figure 22. Leopard skin for sale in market in Conakry, Guinea (PFNH 2009)**



**Figure 23. Fake cheetah skins seized in a law enforcement operation in Lome, Togo (ANCE-TOGO 2014)**



**Figure 24. Fake spotted cat heads at Akondessa fetish market in Togo (Trent 2013)**

Table 7. Cheetah skin seizures with exporter identified as Nigeria

Year	Product Seized	Country of seizure	Quantity
2001	Skins	GB	2
1993	Skins	US	1
1995	Leather products	US	1
1996	Leather products	US	1
1997	Pairs of shoes	US	1
2008	Skin pieces	US	1
2009	Leather products	US	1
2009	Skins	US	2

Despite some peoples' positive experiences using big cat parts, real or fake, as spiritual or consumptive medicine, this is not only illegal but also potentially dangerous if their use replaces appropriate medical care.

Genetic analysis of lion and leopard skins encountered in trade have shown that big cat parts have been transported far from their place of wild origin (L. Bertola pers. comm. 2014), and this transnational illegal trade is often intertwined with illegal trade in other species. For example, 12 leopard skins and a piece of lion skin were found among a large seizure of great ape body parts in Gabon in January 2011 (Anon 2011). Five leopard skins were among a major haul of ivory and rhino horn when Hong Kong Customs seized a container from Nigeria in August 2013 (Inocencio 2013). Nigeria is a known regional hub for illegal wildlife traffic, and, increasingly, Chinese road workers and loggers who smuggle skins into Asia (Panthera 2011). No cheetah skins were reported seized by countries in the region in the CITES Trade Database, but the US and UK have reported several cheetah skin seizures originating from Nigeria (Table 7). Congo has also been identified as a potential destination for illegal cheetah skins (RWCP *in litt.* 2014).

None of the countries in the region have reported the export of live cheetahs in the CITES Trade Database. However, several independent online searches of adverts for cheetah cubs have found sellers claiming to be based in Cameroon (Marnewick 2012, CCF *in litt.* 2014), although it is unknown if the cats or companies actually exist or are just an Internet advance fee fraud scam. A Bahrain-based journalist did contact two purportedly Cameroon-based sellers – one offered to transport a “hand-tamed” 16-week-old lion to Bahrain for US\$2,900; another offered African king cheetahs for \$2,500, and white lion and Siberian tigers for \$3,200. The company's representative said they would use an “animal express agency” and the cats would come with a health certificate and official papers (Leate 2013). In 2014 a case arose of fraudulent CITES permits from Cameroon associated with the trade in four cheetahs that were claimed to be captive bred to a European country (CITES Secretariat *in litt.* 2014).

Illegal trade pressures have contributed to the endangerment of other big cats in the region – the lion in West Africa was recently assessed by IUCN as Critically Endangered (Henschel et al 2014 and *in prep.*), and skin trade in West and Central Africa contributed to the leopard's “uplisting” by IUCN from Least Concern to Near Threatened. With cheetahs so scarce, and having been recently extirpated in many range States in the region, any trade pressure could contribute to further reductions.

#### 4.3. Iran: Cheetah status and trade threat

Still widely distributed in Southwest and Central Asia until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the last remaining population of Asiatic cheetahs (subspecies *A.j. venaticus*) survives in the eastern deserts of Iran. It is regarded as Critically Endangered by IUCN, with numbers estimated at 40-100 (ICS 2013, Khosravifard 2013). It survives today mainly due to major investments in its conservation by a government-NGO partnership, the Conservation of the Asiatic Cheetah Project (CACP). Occurring at low density, in areas with low wild prey availability and increasing numbers of livestock, illegal offtakes for trade-related purposes would represent a serious additional threat to the other known causes of mortality (road kills and illegal killing in protection of livestock). There are only two verified reports in the last decade of illegal live capture and possession, with perhaps a vague intention to sell, of cheetahs in Iran (Jowkar et al. 2008, Panthera *in litt.* 2012). There is a single unverified report of a live cheetah smuggled by boat out of the country across the Persian Gulf (CACP *in litt.* 2014).

## 4.4. Southern Africa

### 4.4.1. Cheetah status and trade impact

The region holds 6 known cheetah populations, with an estimated total of approximately 6,200 adults, with the vast majority in a population that is the largest in Africa (ranging over 1 million km<sup>2</sup>) and transboundary, covering six countries (Figure 25). In South Africa, cheetahs have been reintroduced into more than 22 fenced reserves, estimated to hold in total an additional 204 cheetahs (South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014). There are large areas where cheetah range and status are unknown (Angola, Mozambique and Zambia: Figure 1), but these areas are considered unlikely to hold significant resident populations (IUCN 2007b).

All countries in the region are Party to CITES, and of the regions considered in this study only southern Africa legally exports cheetahs for commercial purposes. Three countries in southern Africa have CITES annual quotas, agreed by the Conference of the Parties at its eight meeting in 1992, for export of wild live cheetahs and hunting trophies (Namibia – 150, Zimbabwe – 50; Botswana – 5). These quotas are part of an annotation of the species in Appendix I, and as such are legally binding for all Parties to the Convention (unlike quotas for Appendix I-listed species that are mentioned in species-specific Resolutions or Decisions, which are 'soft law'). Over the past decade, Botswana has not used its quota, while Namibia and Zimbabwe have allocated their quotas almost entirely to hunting trophies.

Trophy hunting in Namibia (Figure 26) and Zimbabwe is generally considered to have assisted conservation of the largest cheetah population by providing a financial incentive for landowners to maintain them (Lindsey et al. 2013, Zimbabwe CITES MA *in litt.* 2014). An internet search of trophy hunting operations indicates that a cheetah is a high-value hunt package, with client prices ranging from \$10-20,000. Nearly 40% of 150 potential clients interviewed at a major American hunting convention were interested in a cheetah trophy hunt (Lindsey et al. 2011). The trophy trade is not considered a threat in either Namibia or Zimbabwe's draft and yet to be adopted national cheetah action plans. Both action plans however highlight the need for trophy trade to remain well-regulated and monitored (MET 2013, ZPWMA 2009).

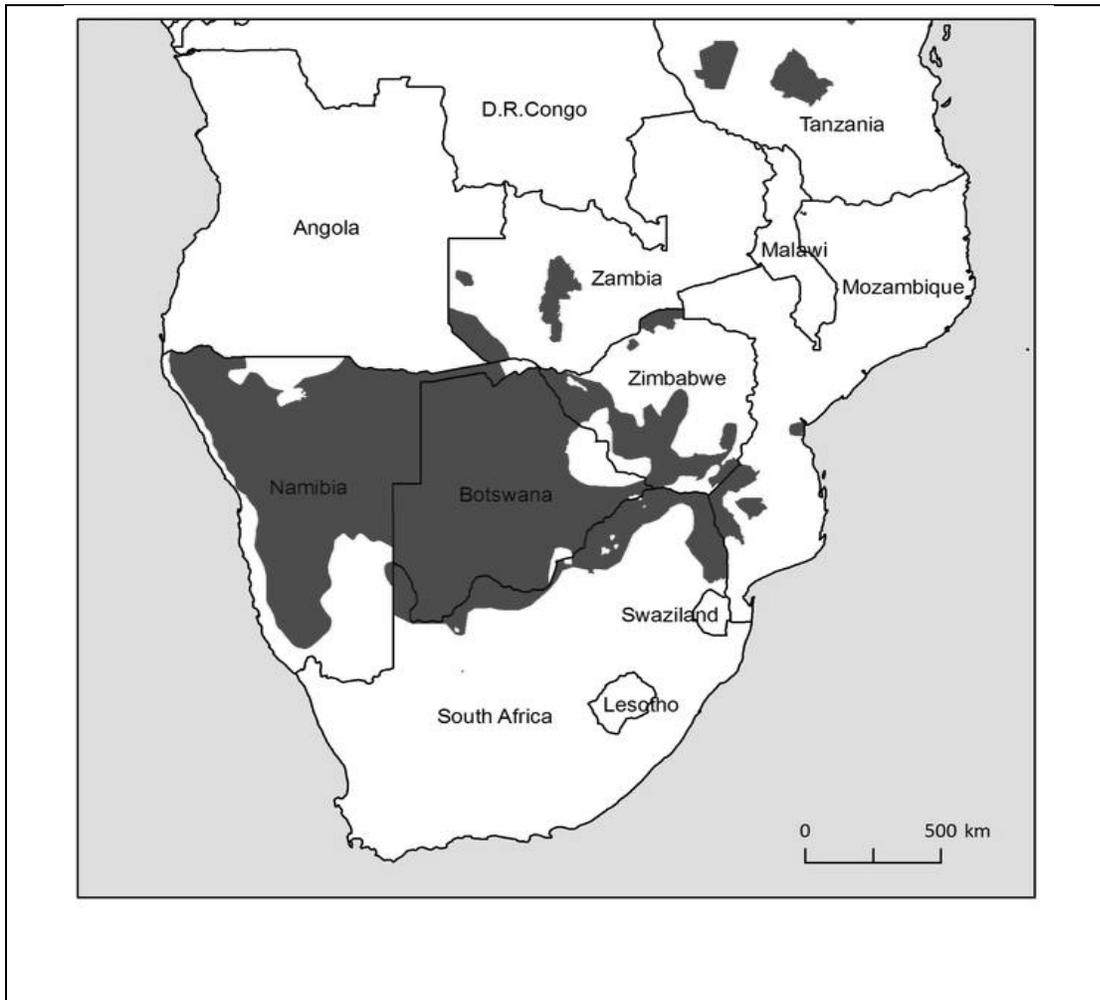
The only legal form of trade (both national and international) identified as a potential threat in national action plans and the regional conservation strategy is the captive cheetah trade (Table 8). Namibia was formerly the primary supplier of cheetahs to the captive trade, and most of the world's captive cheetahs are of Namibian stock (Marker 2002). Although in recent years very few wild cheetahs have been exported under the Appendix I quota system, one of the original justifications for including live animals was that cheetahs are difficult to breed in captivity ("According to the International Cheetah Studbook, the sustainability of the world's captive population depends on continued importation...of live animals from Namibia:" CITES Doc. 8.22 [Rev.]). Understanding of the conditions and techniques to achieve successful reproduction has improved, and more facilities around the world have successfully bred cheetahs (33 facilities in 2011: Marker 2012). Over the past decade, South Africa has become the world's biggest exporter of cheetahs recorded as captive-bred, and is the only country with CITES-registered commercial Appendix I breeding operations for cheetahs. Despite these successes, there is concern that live-trapped wild animals are illegally entering the legal captive export trade (Lindsey 2011, Marnewick 2012).

The large population in Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe occurs mostly outside protected areas (livestock and game ranches as well as communal farmlands) where "local control over resource use is high" (South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014). Cheetahs are still widely viewed as an undesirable threat to livestock (Lindsey and Marnewick 2011; CCB, CCF *in litt.* 2014); as an example, 80% of communal farmers interviewed in Zimbabwe said they would kill cheetahs even if not currently experiencing any livestock predation (Thomas 2011). Particularly in the first three countries, large steel cage traps are used to capture cheetah, placed around marking trees used by cheetahs (identifiable by scats and other sign), with brush used to channel the animal into the trap, or live animal bait (as cheetahs do not scavenge) (Marker 2002) (Figure 27).

In the past, many were subsequently shot; illegally, cheetahs are reportedly still killed (Thomas 2011; CCB, CCF, EWT, South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014), a practice colloquially known as "shoot, shovel and shut up," although probably at lower levels than in the past. The number of permits issued to landowners to remove wild cheetahs from their property used to be quite substantial in Namibia, averaging nearly 300 per year from the mid-1980s-1990s and several times higher in previous decades (Nowell 1996). Since then Cheetah Conservation Botswana and Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia, among others, working with both landowners and government authorities, have taken possession of unwanted live cheetahs and have extensive experience with translocation and release back to a wild existence, although that is not always possible (CCB, CCF *in litt.* 2014). Currently few permits are issued in any of the four countries for lethal cheetah control or live cheetah removal (Lindsey and Marnewick 2011; CCB, CCF, CITES MAs of South Africa and Zimbabwe *in litt.*

2014). However, the practice of live trapping in these countries continues, and animals captured without permits form a potential illegal source for the legal trophy and captive trades.

**Figure 25. Cheetah resident range in southern Africa 2013 (RWCP *in litt.* 2014), and estimated population sizes (reproduced from IUCN 2007b)**



**Table 3.2** Areas in southern Africa considered by participants to support resident cheetah populations in unfenced areas. Population estimates are derived from a number of different methodologies and have a very wide margin of error. Locations are shown in Figure 3.5.

Name	Country	Trans-boundary?	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )		Population estimate (adults)	
			Total	Protected	Total	Protected
Bot/Nam/SA /Za/Zim	Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe	Yes	1,141,124	231,327	6,000	1,200
Kaŋue	Zambia	No	20,745	20,745	200	200
Liuwa Plains	Zambia	No	2,899	2,899	20	20
Cabora Bassa	Mozambique	Yes	2,417	0	20	0
Mana Pools	Zimbabwe	No	1,965	1,965	20	20
Matusadona	Zimbabwe	No	1,328	1,328	20	20
<b>Grand total:</b>			<b>1,170,479</b>	<b>258,264</b>	<b>6,260</b>	<b>1,460</b>

population sizes estimated from the size of the polygon using a conservative density of 1 adult per 100km<sup>2</sup>;

**Figure 26. A high-value cheetah trophy hunt in Namibia**



**Figure 27. Wild cheetah captured on private land in Namibia in a typical cage trap used in southern Africa (CCF 2011)**



**Table 8. Countries where live animal trade is flagged as a threat and/or in need of improved regulation and monitoring in conservation planning**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Regional cheetah conservation strategy</b>	<b>Draft national cheetah action plan</b>
Botswana	X	X
Mozambique		
Namibia	X	X
South Africa	X	X
Zambia		
Zimbabwe		X
Malawi		N/A
Angola		N/A

Skin trade was flagged in the regional cheetah strategy as a secondary threat. There have been a few recent confiscations of skins in the region, including in Zambia (Interpol 2012, Mendelson 2012, CCF *in litt.* 2014), and a recent observation of cheetah skins for sale in Angola (CCF *in litt.* 2014). However, this trade appears to be opportunistic and as curios, with little to indicate organized demand as for the captive trade.

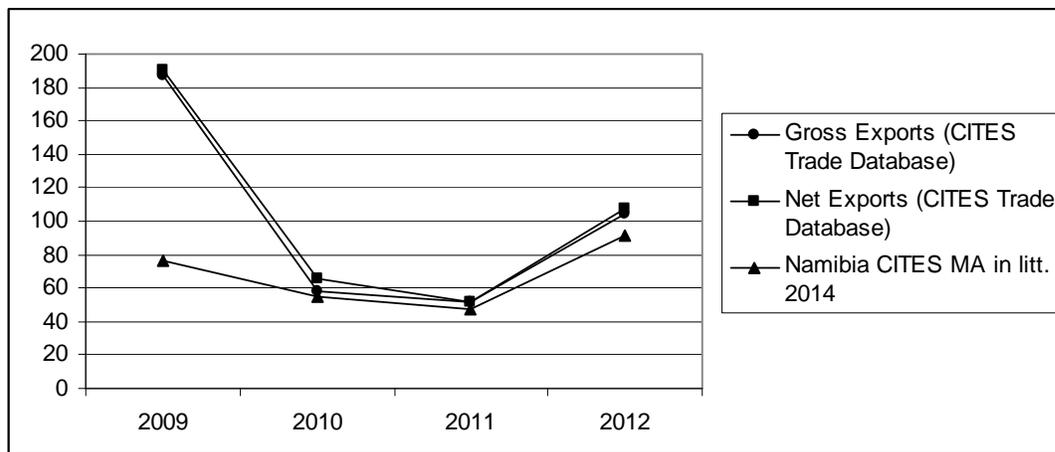
There are no records of any illegal trade in cheetah live animals, skins, or parts and derivatives in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe CITES MA *in litt.* 2014) and researchers concur that there are few reports to indicate illegal trade as a problem in that country, (RWCP *in litt.* 2014). While there are no registered captive breeding facilities for cheetah in Zimbabwe, there have been inquiries about keeping cheetahs as pets (Zimbabwe CITES MA *in litt.* 2014) and improvements in captive policies and trade monitoring are included in the country's draft national cheetah action plan (ZPWMA 2009).

#### 4.4.2. Trade in hunting trophies

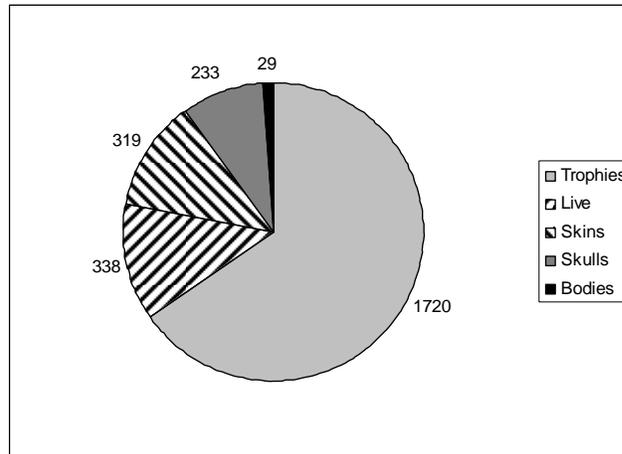
Hunting trophies have been the main component of legal trade since the early 1990s, and Namibia has been the primary exporter (90% of total net trophy exports shown in Figure 5). Zimbabwe has exported an average of fewer than ten trophies per year (CITES Trade Database and Zimbabwe CITES MA *in litt.* 2014), and Botswana has not reported any export of cheetah trophies under its quota of five.

In Namibia in April 2009, a moratorium on cheetah trophy hunting was put into effect for a subsequent period of about a year (Anon. 2009, CCF *in litt.* 2014). CITES Trade Database records (both gross and net exports) indicate that Namibia's exports exceeded its quota of 150 in both 2008 and 2009. There may be recording errors, since figures provided by Namibia's CITES MA (*in litt.* 2014) of trophy exports for 2009 do not correspond to the Trade Database records for that year (Figure 28). Recorded separately from hunting trophies, Namibia exported a relatively large number of skins and skulls in the 1990s (totals shown in Figure 29), but few since 2001-2002, when total exports of cheetah specimens (187 and 199 trophies, live animals, skins and skulls) also appear to have exceeded the quota (Figure 30). The management of the quotas in Namibia needs to be better understood and may need improvement to avoid trade in excess of allocated quotas.

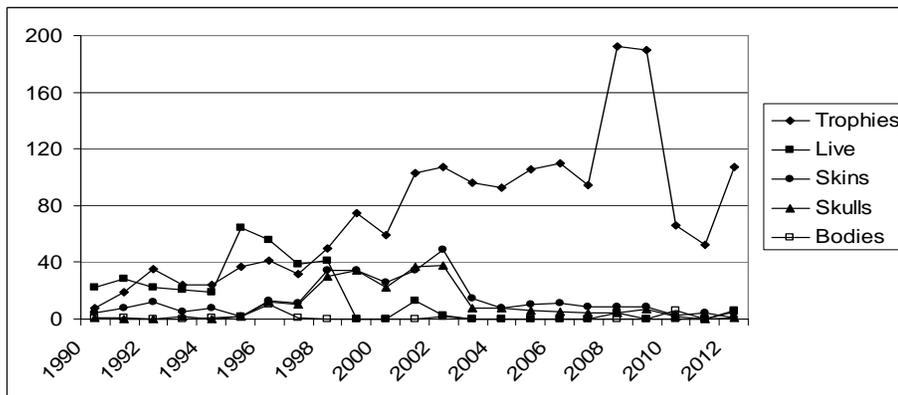
**Figure 28. Comparison of recent wild cheetah trophy exports reported from Namibia**



**Figure 29. Net Exports of Cheetah Specimens from Namibia, 1990-2012**



**Figure 30. Namibia's annual net exports of cheetah specimens**



It is permissible under Article III of the Convention to export cheetah trophies without an Appendix I quota, and 24 were reported in the CITES Trade Database as net exports over this period from South Africa, and 1-3 each for several other African countries, including Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. The CITES Management Authority of South Africa noted that from its hunting register record no cheetah was hunted as a trophy animal from 2006-2012, and that the purpose code H is also used by them for export of whole bodies (natural mortalities) (South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014).

South Africa's Scientific Authority recently undertook a preliminary non-detriment finding concerning the possibility of establishing a trophy hunting quota for cheetah, and found that "there are insufficient data available on population size and trend and inadequate information on the scale of illegal hunting to advise on a sustainable quota," (South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014).

#### 4.4.3 The live animal trade

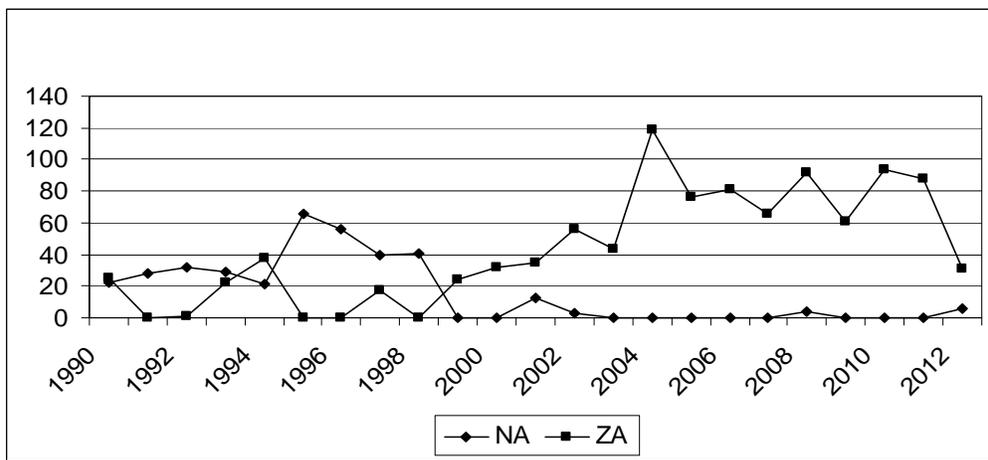
The major exporters of live animals have been Namibia and South Africa – Namibia for wild (in the 1990s), and South Africa for captive (particularly in the 2000s (Figures 31 and 32). Namibia has largely ceased exporting live wild animals and has allocated its quota almost entirely to trophy hunting in recent years. According to records of the South African CITES Management Authority, 786 live cheetah were exported from 2002-2011 (South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014).

South Africa has exported cheetahs to many countries from 1990-2012, but nearly half (531) have gone to four countries: China, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, and the US (Figure 33). Gross imports for these four

countries were higher during the most recent decade, particularly for the UAE (Figure 34). While most imports to these countries were reported as destined for zoos under transaction purpose, UAE reported the import of more than 30 live cheetahs for personal purposes from South Africa in 2008-2011.

South Africa is the only country which has registered with the CITES Secretariat Appendix I captive breeding operations authorized to export cheetahs for commercial purposes: DeWildt (now Ayn van Dyk) Cheetah and Wildlife Centre and Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre. The South Africa CITES Management Authority (*in litt.* 2014) notes that “the majority of live cheetah exported from South Africa originate from captive facilities not necessarily registered with CITES,” but which are registered according to national legislation with provincial authorities. Less than 5% of South Africa’s cheetah exports were coded as commercial in the CITES Trade Database; the purpose of most transactions was reported as Z (zoo) (Figure 35), and under Article III of the Convention this type of trade is considered noncommercial and exporting facilities need not be registered with the CITES Secretariat. Under South African CITES implementation legislation, provinces administer certificates for international trade in listed species, and bred-in-captivity specimens can only be exported by facilities which have registered with their provincial government according to regulations under this law (South Africa CITES Management Authority *in litt.* 2014).

**Figure 31. Net exports of live cheetahs by major exporters**



**Figure 32. Total Net Exports of Live Cheetahs 1990-2012**

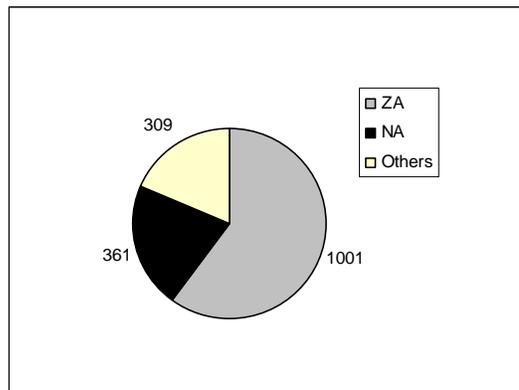


Figure 33. Gross imports of live captive cheetahs from South Africa 1990-2012

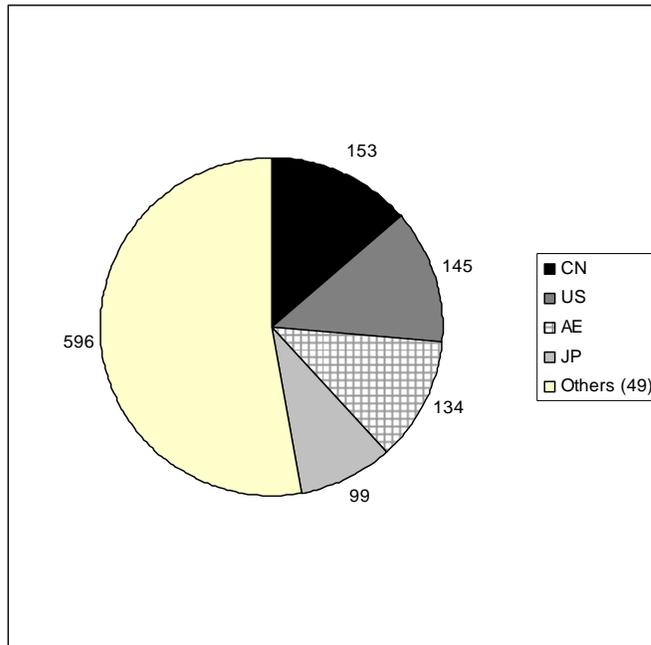
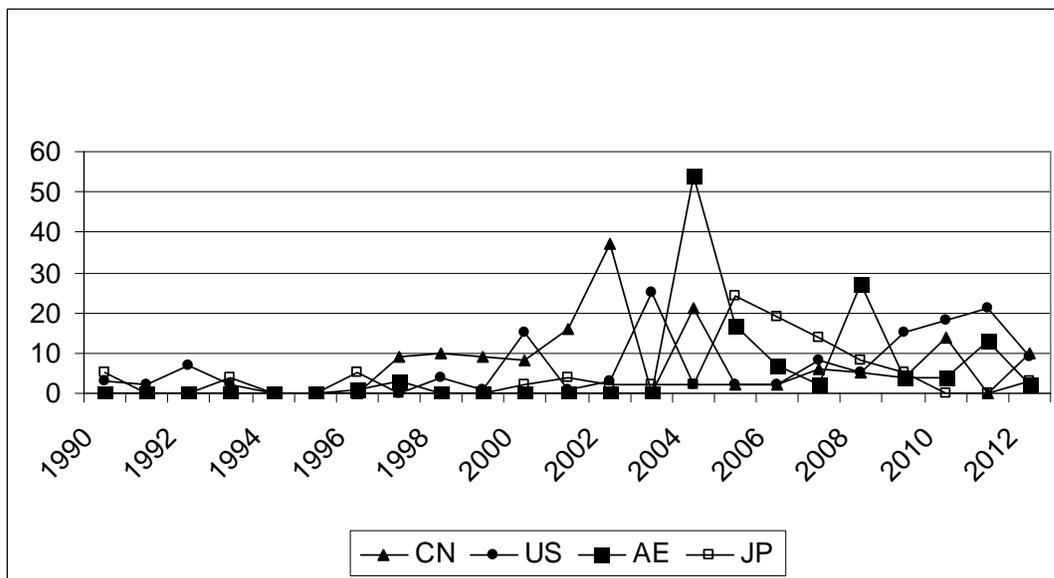


Figure 34. Gross imports of live captive cheetah from South Africa

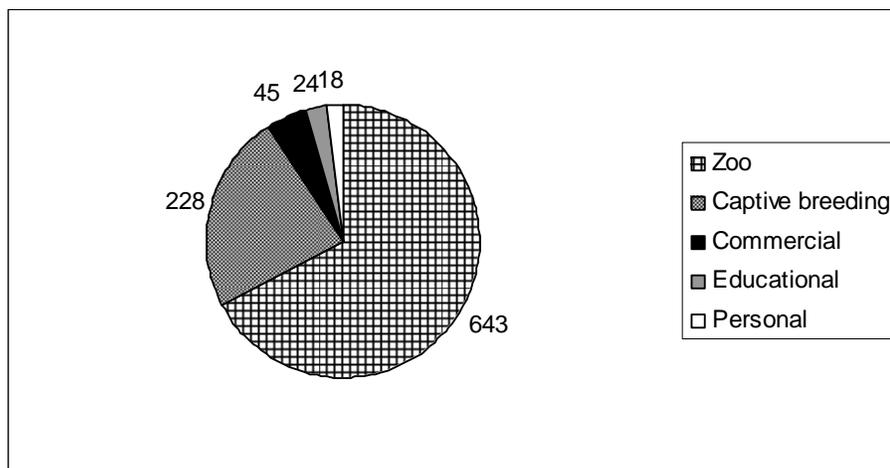


Provinces have been licensing more captive cheetah facilities recently; the number of facilities has risen faster than the total estimated captive cheetah population and the annual captive export trade (Figure 36). Many of the new facilities are small, with fewer than five cheetahs (Lindsey 2011). While only about 20 facilities are licensed by provincial authorities to breed cheetahs, a survey of captive facilities suggests that more are attempting to breed (Marnewick 2012). Most facilities are open to the public and offer some sort of touch or

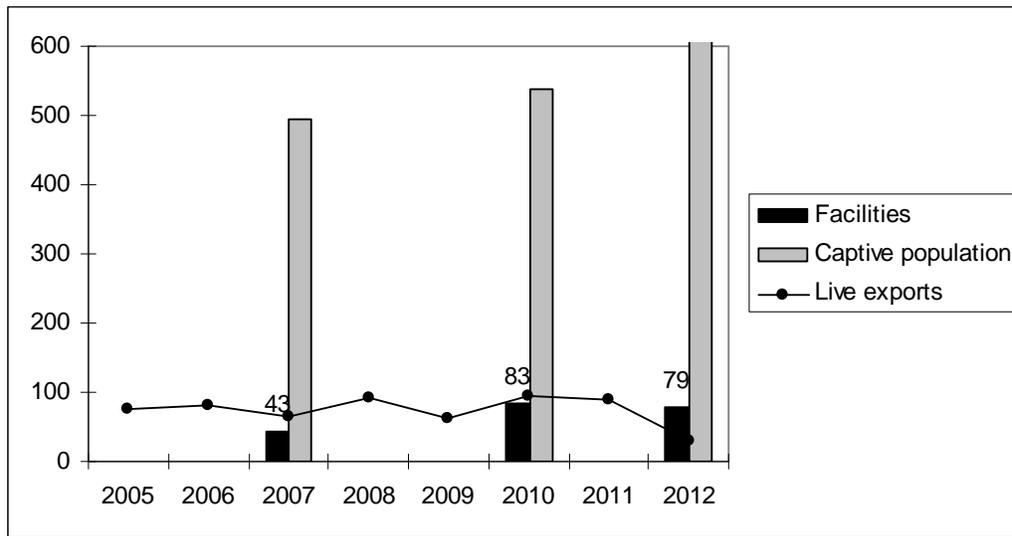
petting experience; some are private collections (Marnewick 2012). Although “description of the strategies used by the breeding operation, or other activities, that contribute to improving the conservation status of wild populations of the species” is a required part of the facility registration application process (South Africa CITES Management Authority *in litt.* 2014), and many facilities request donations from the public in support of such programs, a survey of eleven facilities found that most (ten) “did not appear to be directly involved with any type of conservation work that directly benefits the free-roaming cheetah population through funding or field projects” (Marnewick 2012). Some of the same facilities that breed lions for “canned” trophy hunts (currently legal in South Africa for this species) also are licensed to keep cheetah (Marnewick et al. 2007). 17 South African facilities contribute to the International Cheetah Studbook (Marker 2012), and recent attempts to set up coordinating associations for captive cheetah facilities have failed, with few being willing to participate (Marnewick 2012).

Cheetah experts suspect that some facilities in South Africa may not have mastered the challenge of breeding cheetahs and are instead trading illegally in live-captured wild animals (BCEAW, CCF, EWT *in litt.* 2014). Researchers have interviewed dozens of observers in recent years – primarily farmers and also conservation officials – who have reported illegal international movement of live-captured wild cheetahs between Botswana, Namibia and South Africa (Klein et al 2007, Marnewick et al 2007, Lindsey and Marnewick 20011, Lindsey 2011, Marnewick 2012, CCB, CCF *in litt.* 2014). According to these reports, the Botswana border may see the most significant movement of live animals into South Africa, destined for captivity. Captive cheetahs have also reportedly been smuggled from South Africa to Namibia and used illegally for “canned” trophy hunts (according to its published policy the government of Namibia will not issue a trophy permit for other than a free-roaming adult, along with other conditions: MET 2014). Most hunting operators offer to refund most of a client’s money if a cheetah is not actually taken, so some may be tempted to resort to illegal purchase and release of a live animal. While no confiscations were found to have been documented at any country borders, animals are reportedly moved by vehicle and private aircraft. All three countries have made, with the help of cheetah conservation organizations, occasional confiscations of live cheetahs held without permits in captivity from private landowners who were seeking to sell them or keep them as pets (CCB 2009, Lindsey and Marnewick 2011, CCB, CCF *in litt.* 2014). Still, despite these reports, there are no verified interdictions of illegal international trade (Lindsey 2011; Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe CITES MAs *in litt.* 2014; CCB, CCF, EWT, RWCP *in litt.* 2014).

**Figure 35. Purpose codes for South Africa’s net exports of live cheetahs in the CITES Trade Database, 1990-2012**



**Figure 36. The number of licensed facilities, total captive cheetah population, and annual live exports, South Africa. Sources: (Lindsey 2011, Marnewick 2012, Figure 29)**



It is clear the captive industry in South Africa is interested in acquiring additional wild animals. From 2009-2012, over 40 cheetahs were removed (with permits) from fenced reserves and into captivity. Some of these were donated, and approximately half were sold at an average price of approximately \$1500 (cheetahs sold between reserves also at approximately the same price). About one quarter of these wild cheetah went to one of the CITES-registered commercial breeding facilities, Hoedspruit (van der Merwe 2014, EWT *in litt.* 2014). The South African CITES Management Authority is investigating this issue (*in litt.* 2014) to ensure that permits for the removal of wild-living cheetahs were issued appropriately and to determine if such animals “are likely exported as captive individuals.”

Some cheetahs may be illegally moved into captivity when captured from the South African free-roaming population of about 400 (EWT *in litt.* 2014) to 550 (South Africa CITES MA *in litt.* 2014), on ranchland in the northern border regions. Provincial records from recent years indicate that, nationally, an average of eight cheetahs per year are legally removed (with permits) as problem animals, and provincial officials reported receiving information on an average of one case per year of illegal skin trade, “poaching” and illegal trophy hunting (Lindsey and Marnewick 2011). The South African CITES MA [*in litt.* 2014] is investigating a recent case of a wild cheetah being advertised for a hunt. Reports from farmers’ to researchers indicate that illegal offtakes for problem animal control occur as well (Lindsey and Marnewick 2011). The South African CITES MA (*in litt.* 2014) states that “harvesting of cheetah [in South Africa] is opportunistic and/or unselective. This includes informal, illegal control of damage causing cheetah following losses of domestic stock or wildlife (which is conducted in an effort to reduce the population size) and harvest of live cheetahs for the captive trade (in order to maximize financial returns). Little information is available on the trends or extent of this harvest.”

For an Appendix I captive-bred live animal to be exported from South Africa, it must be “individually and permanently marked in a manner so as to render alteration or modification by unauthorized persons as difficult as possible” (South Africa CITES Management Authority *in litt.* 2014). Microchips are most commonly used (Lindsey 2011, Marnewick 2012). One of the only reported confiscations of a live cheetah outside the Gulf region took place recently in the UK where one cheetah out of four flown from a safari park in South Africa through London to Russia was seized by the UK Border Agency’s specialist CITES team for lack of a microchip (and transferred to a wildlife facility within the UK) (UK Home Office 2012).

It can be difficult for law enforcement authorities seizing live cheetahs to determine if they are genuinely captive-bred. Genetic testing can reliably identify an individual, provided there is a reference sample (which is why there have been calls for South African authorities to require “genetic passports” for captive cheetah

exports [Lindsey and Marnewick 2011]). However, as a law enforcement tool it is still imperfect to reliably distinguish where the animal came from. Most of the world's captive cheetah population is descended from Namibian cheetahs, including the South African captive population (Marker 2002, 2012). Geneticists looked at microsatellite DNA in samples taken from six cheetahs confiscated by provincial authorities from a farm in South Africa near the border with Botswana, suspected to be of Botswanan origin, but due to lack of regional variation evident in their library of reference samples were unable to determine whether the animals were from Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, or captive-bred (Kotze et al. 2008).

There are concerns that a microchip alone is not sufficient to guarantee that the animal is of captive origin, as a wild-caught cheetah could be easily implanted. Researchers as well as national authorities have found it difficult to obtain the necessary provincial records to monitor captive breeding and trade (Lindsey and Marnewick 2011, CCF *in litt.* 2014), and a centralized database has been recommended (Marnewick 2012). At present it is unclear whether South African authorities can certify with confidence that animals exported under CITES meet the Convention's bred-in-captivity requirements. The South African CITES MA (*in litt.* 2014) recently announced that it would exercise increased national oversight of the provincial captive cheetah registration system with the aim of ensuring uniform implementation of protected species regulations.

## 5. Key findings

Legal trade in wild cheetahs (net exports, primarily hunting trophies from Namibia) has averaged 153 annually from 2002-2011 (based on the figures from the CITES Trade Database; the average would be slightly lower if the figures provided by Namibia's CITES MA [*in litt.* 2014] were used). Three southern African countries have had an Appendix I quota since 1992 totaling 205 per year. Legal trade in live animals (captive-bred, 90% from South Africa) averaged 88 per year over the same period. Confiscations (skins and live animals) reported in the CITES Trade Database over the same period average just three per year. However, this study has collected information demonstrating that the level of illegal trade could be much higher than indicated by reported confiscations, threatening most wild populations.

East Africa is the region where there are the most records of illegal trade, and where it likely has the greatest negative impact on wild populations. The primary organized source of demand is the exotic pet trade on the Arabian Peninsula. The exact origin of the wild-caught cheetah cubs which supply this demand is unclear, but the trade is mainly carried out by ethnic Somalis throughout the Horn of Africa region, and has been ongoing for at least 15 years. Smuggling by boat across the Gulf of Aden is facilitated by Yemen's large population of displaced Somalis. While piracy in the Gulf of Aden has been successfully deterred (BBC 2014), other forms of maritime crime, including wildlife trafficking, represent a continued challenge to authorities in Yemen and the Somali regions, who are already facing bigger ones. Once in Yemen the trade is apparently taken over by Gulf state citizens, and the price of an animal that has survived reportedly reaches up to \$10,000.

There are multiple indicators that private ownership of cheetahs is popular throughout the Gulf region, including dozens of news articles, hundreds of social media posts, and the observations of NGOs that have researched the issue. There is some captive breeding in the region, but it is unclear how many of the region's cheetah pets were legitimately acquired, as no national monitoring systems are in place outside licensed facilities. This study was not able to obtain detailed information on regulation of captive cheetah (and other big cat) national trade and ownership outside licensed zoological facilities in the Gulf states, but from public information (including statements of officials to journalists) many of these pets would appear to be illegal or in the process of becoming so. Ajman municipality, one of the seven constituent emirates of the UAE, has taken the definitive legal step of prohibiting possession of all "wild" (nondomesticated) animals and reptiles in homes, apartments and hostels. A news article on a 2013 animal welfare law enacted in Saudi Arabia referred to official statements that a cooperative approach among Gulf states was being taken with others considering adoption of similar legislation. Such a cooperative approach could also be considered to tackle the region-wide problems of uncontrolled keeping of and trade in big cats, as policies and practice have been insufficient to deter the spread of illegally imported wild cheetah cubs. Authorities should implement measures to ensure that their national policies regarding ownership and trade in big cats support the effective implementation of the Convention.

A smaller organized source of demand that could fuel illegal trade is the traditional use of cheetah skins for luxury male footwear in Sudan. Skins are the main form of illegal cheetah trade as well in West and Central Africa, where these and other body parts are valued as traditional medicines and fetishes. Cheetahs are scarce in the few regional areas to potentially supply these markets – South Sudan, and the five known resident cheetah populations in North, West and Central Africa, and authorities view illegal trade as a serious threat. There are very few records of illegal trade in or confiscations of genuine cheetah products, but a similarity between the luxury shoe and *médico-magiques* markets is that many fakes are observed for sale. Faux cat products do have the potential to replace wild-sourced items (Panthera 2013), as shown by the wide embrace

of cat pattern prints by the fashion world rather than actual furs, as in the 1960s-70s. However, in these cases, while the consumer may be aware that the item they purchase is fake, if they aspire to the genuine item this can perpetuate demand and illegal trade. Moreover, despite some peoples' positive experiences using big cat parts, real or fake, as spiritual or consumptive medicine, this is not only illegal but also potentially dangerous if their use replaces appropriate medical care.

Iran has little evidence of illegal trade, but holds the world's only wild population of the Critically Endangered Asiatic cheetah, and its proximity to the uncontrolled captive trade in the Gulf region requires that the conservation community should be on guard to prevent any illegal trade precedents.

Southern Africa has the largest and most viable cheetah population. Overall, the CITES quota system seems to operate in a satisfactory manner, and the legal trade in specimens resulting from these annotations may be neutral or beneficial for the conservation of the species in the wild.

Captive breeding was not considered contributory in any significant way to the conservation of wild cheetahs in any of the three African regional planning processes. While the captive cheetah industry in South Africa plays an important role in raising awareness and generating revenue for local economies, the trade in captive animals in South Africa was flagged as a threat to cheetahs within the country and in neighboring countries as well (especially Botswana). Strict national oversight is required in South Africa of captive breeding operations and export trade to ensure adherence to regulations and that CITES permits or certificates are not issued for illegally sourced wild cheetahs.

Live animals have been confiscated by governments in East Africa, the Middle East, and southern Africa. High mortality rates are evident (70% of 30 cubs confiscated in Ethiopia and Somaliland, and 48% of 27 cubs confiscated in Jordan, Kuwait and the UAE). Live animals are generally relegated to wildlife rehabilitation or zoological facilities as soon as possible after interception, primarily in country, but also exported. Kenya has a government-run wildlife orphanage, but its capacity is being exceeded and animals are sometimes sent to private facilities (ACK 2012). While this seems to be a workable solution, it depends on the facilities' having sufficient resources to care for the animals.

Most cheetahs confiscated in East Africa and the Middle East are too young to consider release into the wild, but that has been a viable option in southern Africa, where many adult cheetahs are live-trapped on private lands as unwanted potential problem animals. The region is home to several NGOs with an established record of working with governments to accept, rehabilitate and often release such cheetahs in areas where owners and managers will accept them.

There seem to be two principal markets for illegal live cheetahs: southern Africa (largely supplied within the region) and the Middle East (largely supplied from East Africa). The latter is more significant and lucrative. Live animals supplying it have been confiscated primarily at the transit and consumer portions of the trade chain, rather than the source, so there is little information to indicate which wild populations are being affected. The young cheetahs may be taken from areas unknown to conservationists, but possibly from known resident populations as well. In southern Africa, the largest cheetah population seems to have been essentially stable over the past 10-15 years and the impact of illegal trade is unclear; it may absorb some animals that would have been otherwise removed or destroyed. Although there is little information on illegal trade in live animals or cheetah skins from Iran as well as North, West and Central Africa, the conservation status of cheetahs in these regions has deteriorated to the point that the impact of any illegal trade is probably significant.

## **6. Recommendations**

Based on the key findings of this study, the following considerations are of particular relevance:

### **Legislation**

Parties which have been identified in this study as consumer markets for illegally imported live wild cheetahs (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) should be requested to submit a report on the legislative and regulatory controls in place and in development regarding cheetahs in captivity, as well as enforcement of said controls. Compulsory registration for Appendix-I listed species, combined with individual identification marking, could be envisaged.

## **National enforcement**

The Gulf states, as the prime destination for illegal wild cheetahs, need to significantly step up enforcement efforts at the borders and internally. These countries should financially and technically support East Africa to combat illegal trade in cheetahs and enhance in situ conservation efforts.

The Somali regions in the Horn of Africa, and Yemen were identified as key transit points for the illegal live animal trade (affecting not only cheetahs but many other species). Both the administrative authorities and the local NGOs with whom they cooperate should be supported by Parties to improve capacity to address illegal wildlife trade and undertake targeted enforcement actions.

Illegal cheetah trade has largely been detected at the consumer and transit points, rather than the source, and this is particularly true of the live animal trade. Range states should be supported in their efforts to improve monitoring of wild cheetah populations in order to detect and counter trade-related offtakes.

South Africa should consider implementation of additional measures to reliably mark and trace captive-bred cheetahs, and should be requested to provide a report on its efforts to exercise greater national oversight of registration of captive cheetah facilities, and to ensure that all facilities breeding cheetah for commercial (not for conservation) purposes are registered with the CITES Secretariat according to Resolution Conf. 12.10 (Rev CoP15).

## **International coordination**

Similar to the ways in which regional wildlife trade control organizations have focused on illegal tiger trade in Asia (sharing information among network members and between networks, capacity building seminars and workshops), the cheetah should receive greater attention from the Lusaka Agreement Task Force linking Eastern and Southern Africa, and Wildlife Enforcement Networks in the regions of the Horn of Africa (HA-WEN), West Asia (WA-WEN), Southern Africa (WENSA) and Central Africa WEN/Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC). In southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) could also provide a cooperative investigative framework for South Africa to focus on illegal crossborder live cheetah trade.

The international community has recognized the need to deploy a broader spectrum of government resources to counter illegal wildlife trafficking (G8 Leaders Communiqué 2013, United Nations 'Group of Friends' Against Wildlife Trafficking 2014, London Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade 2014, United States National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking 2014). Parties who are part of the multi-national maritime security forces operating in the Gulf of Aden and surrounding waters (CMF 2014, EUNavFor 2014) should take under consideration the potential to provide briefings to them which could support greater detection and deterrence of illegal wildlife trade

## **Demand reduction**

The nature of the demand for pet cheetahs in the Gulf states is such that demand reduction initiatives have a good chance of success. It is apparent that people who buy cheetah cubs do so out of a love of the animal, and for predator conservation, that is half the battle. People may also not be aware of the difficulties and dangers of keeping big cats, or its potential illegality. Approaches to demand reduction in this region deserve further study, and Parties may wish to call for one.

A similar study is recommended for West and Central Africa (big cat skins and other body parts for ceremony and medicine). The study should explore ways in which the medical community could be engaged to warn people of the potential dangers of using big cat parts as medicine. The role of fakes should be evaluated, with consideration of the potential application of work being done with communities in other regions, such as in South Africa where faux alternatives to real leopard skins are being tried out with communities using them for ceremonial purposes (Panthera 2013). More research effort should be put into documenting illegal trade in both real and fake cat products in the region.

The other significant source of demand identified in this study, the luxury traditional men's shoe (markoob) market in Sudan, is also deserving of further research into potential demand reduction approaches and opportunities.

## Dealing with confiscated live cheetahs

East African countries should consider the need to develop a joint strategy to effectively deal with confiscated live specimens, focusing on areas and regions where confiscations are taking place and insufficient capacity exist to shelter confiscated live animals. Centers that can take care of confiscated animals should be identified, promoted and supported. The region should reach out to the international zoo community to seek technical assistance, and should work with designated NGOs or rescue centers for coordination and advice on the disposal of confiscated live animals.

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