

CHEETAH CONSERVATION STATUS AND THREATS

What is CITES?

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international agreement between governments which aims to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.



CHEETAH

Acinonyx jubatus

IUCN RED LISTED AS **VULNERABLE** | CITES APPENDIX I

NOW RESTRICTED TO 9% OF HISTORIC GLOBAL RANGE



Photo © Dennis Minja, Serengeti Cheetah Project

What is the conservation status of cheetahs?

Cheetahs were once found across sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and as far east as India, but are now restricted to **only 9% of their historical range**. They are **one of the most threatened big cat species in the world**. Cheetah populations are threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, prey reduction and the international illegal trade in pets and skins.

Cheetahs are currently categorised as **Vulnerable to Extinction** by the IUCN Red List. The species is declared “protection-reliant” i.e. reliant on conservation measures, such as large, effectively managed protected areas being maintained, to survive in the long-term.

There are thought to be **approximately 7,000 adult cheetahs left in the world**, living in 33 subpopulations - mainly comprising less than 200 individuals. **Cheetahs naturally live at low population densities and require huge home ranges to survive** - generally around 600-1,000km², but can exceed 3,000km². **Therefore, taking even a small number of individuals from the wild is a threat to their viability.**

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Photo © Helen O'Neill



Is international trade in cheetahs legal?

In the light of cheetahs' population status, the species is included in CITES **Appendix I**. This means that **international trade in wild caught cheetahs is banned**, except for annual quotas for hunting trophies and live specimens given to Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. (Note – if the cheetah can be **proved** to have been bred in captivity it may be treated as a CITES Appendix II species.)

What form does the illegal international trade in cheetah take?

Historically, cheetah were captured for use in hunting. This was a key driver of the species' extinction in Asia. In recent years, the main trade focus has shifted to **cheetah cubs taken from the wild for the illegal pet trade**.

Cheetahs are usually illegally transported in poor conditions and thus have a low survival rate. Many illegally traded cheetah also go undetected, so for every cheetah sold, it is likely that several more will have also been removed from the wild. A **mortality rate of 70% of cheetah cubs** with known outcomes has been reported. **Cheetahs may also be killed and traded for their skins**, which are used for traditional ceremonies and the global fur trade.

Evidence indicates that the majority of cheetahs taken from the wild for the illegal pet trade originate in East Africa.

Learn more...

Information and resources related to cheetahs can be found on the CITES website:

https://www.cites.org/eng/prog/terrestrial_fauna/cheetahs