



# ***Feline Facts***

Published by  
The International Society for Endangered Cats Canada Inc

# **Feline Facts**

Three quarters of the world's cat species are small. In spite of this, little is known of their behavior, ecology or status. To increase public knowledge of these vital little carnivores, ISEC Canada has compiled fact sheets for all 38 species of the Felidae family. This guide is meant to be a general reference only, and does not contain technical scientific data.

The information contained has been researched from a variety of sources, as noted in the Bibliography following the text. Data is updated regularly, as new information is discovered.

For many of these small cats, much is still to be learned of their ecology and reproductive biology. Where this information is unknown, we have stated it as such.

Reproduction of this data is encouraged.

**In this revised edition, we have included original artwork of all the cat species. This work has been generously donated to the Society by Mr. Norman Worsley, of Calgary, Alberta, Canada.**

Information compiled by:

Pat Bumstead  
Warren Fitch  
Dwight Knapik  
Scott Russell

Revised Edition 1999

Reproduction of *Feline Facts* is made possible by a generous donation from  
Imperial Oil Charitable Foundation, Toronto, Canada

## The Small Cats:

1. African Golden Cat	<i>Felis aurata</i>
2. Andean Mountain Cat	<i>Felis jacobita</i>
3. Asian Golden Cat	<i>Felis temmincki</i>
4. Bay Cat	<i>Felis badia</i>
5. Black Footed Cat	<i>Felis nigripes</i>
6. Bobcat	<i>Felis rufus</i>
7. Caracal	<i>Felis caracal</i>
8. Chinese Mountain Cat	<i>Felis bieti</i>
9. Cougar	<i>Felis concolor</i>
10. Domestic Cat	<i>Felis catus</i>
11. Fishing Cat	<i>Felis viverrina</i>
12. Flat Headed Cat	<i>Felis planiceps</i>
13. Geoffroy's Cat	<i>Felis geoffroyi</i>
14. Iriomote Cat	<i>Felis iriomotensis</i>
15. Jaguarundi	<i>Felis yagouaroundi</i>
16. Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>
17. Kodkod	<i>Felis guigna</i>
18. Leopard Cat	<i>Felis bengalensis</i>
19. Lynx - Canadian	<i>Felis lynx canadensis</i>
20. Lynx - Eurasian	<i>Felis lynx lynx</i>
21. Marbled Cat	<i>Felis marmorata</i>
22. Margay	<i>Felis wiedii</i>
23. Ocelot	<i>Felis pardalis</i>
24. Oncilla	<i>Felis tigrina</i>
25. Pallas Cat	<i>Felis manul</i>
26. Pampas Cat	<i>Felis colocolo</i>
27. Rusty Spotted Cat	<i>Felis rubiginosa</i>
28. Sand Cat	<i>Felis margarita</i>
29. Serval	<i>Felis serval</i>
30. Wildcat	<i>Felis silvestris</i>

## The Medium and Big Cats:

31. Cheetah	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>
32. Clouded Leopard	<i>Neofelis nebulosa</i>
33. Jaguar	<i>Panthera onca</i>
34. Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
35. Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>
36. Snow Leopard	<i>Uncia uncia</i>
37. Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>

## APPENDICES

- A. ISEC Canada Information
- B. CITES/IUCN Information
- C. Glossary
- D. Taxonomic Classification
- E. Bibliography

ORDER	FAMILY	GENUS	SPECIES
Carnivora	Felidae	Acinonyx	jubatus

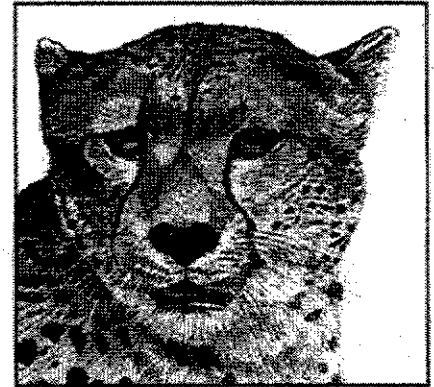
# Cheetah

**LENGTH:** 140 - 220 cm (56 - 88")  
**WEIGHT:** 40 - 60 kg (88 - 132 lbs)  
**HEIGHT:** 75 - 85 cm (29 - 33")  
**RANGE:** East Africa, possibly Iran remnant population in Sahara  
**HABITAT:** Savannah, semi desert  
**REPRODUCTION:**

Average 2 - 4 cubs born after 90 - 98 day gestation.  
Sexually mature at 20 - 21 months

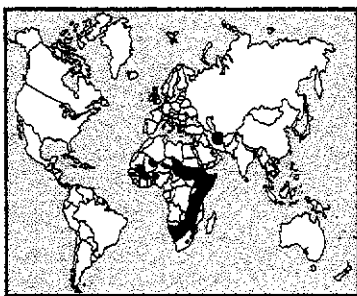
**COLOURING:**

Golden yellow, with solid black spots, black stripes from eye to mouth



Possibly the best known of the nonroaring cats, the cheetah is a larger, slender cat with the reputation of the fastest land animal. It is estimated that an adult can reach a speed of about 60 miles per hour (95 kmh) for a brief period. This kind of speed is only possible over open ground, thus they are limited in their range.

The fur has a background color of light golden yellow, covered with small, round, black spots on the cheeks, forehead, crown, neck, and limbs. The tail, spotted above and pale below, has three to six black rings near the end, and a white tip. One of their most distinctive features is the black line, or tear stripe, running from the eye to the corner of the mouth. The ears are black, but tawny at the base and edges. They have a mane like black stripe running the length of their back. In some animals this stripe is highly pronounced, and the body spots flow together to produce stripes and blotches. Animals with this coat pattern are called king cheetahs.



Ten to twelve thousand years ago, the cheetah suffered a massive dieoff. Prior to this, there had been many different species, but only a small number of the modern species survived. It is from this remnant population that all cheetahs alive today have descended.

As a species, they are genetically identical, with only 2% genetic variation compared with 10% or more in other cats. A skin graft taken from any cheetah will grow normally on any other cheetah in the world, while a graft from any other cat will wither and die. The potential for a virus to wipe out large numbers is high because of the lack of variation in disease resistance.

The cheetah shows many adaptations for fast running. Long legs and a flexible spine permit a long stride length for extra speed, exposed claws act like running spikes, and large nostrils assist breathing and cooling off after a sprint. Their canines are relatively small, leaving a larger nasal aperture between the roots for more air intake following the chase. They have relatively larger heart, lungs, adrenal glands and air passageways as well. Their feet are equipped with hard pads that have ridges, possibly acting like anti-skid treads. The long tail is essential as a counterbalance when turning.

As a hunter, the cheetah relies on stalking to within about 100 ft (30 m) of its prey, and then a short sprint of 20 - 60 seconds. When it catches up to a fleeing animal, it attempts to knock it off balance with a swipe of a front paw. Actually, it is trying to hook it with the enlarged front dew claw which is claw located up off the ground on the inside of the front leg. They usually prey on gazelle, impala, wildebeest calves, and other hoofed mammals up to 90 lbs (40 kg). Rabbits and birds may also be taken. Larger hoofed animals are taken by cooperating groups of males, usually litter-mates. Cheetahs apparently do not require fresh water. They appear, at least in the Kalahari Desert, to obtain enough moisture from their prey.



## ***Cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus)***

These cats tend to hunt more often in the daytime than the other carnivores in their range, for a number of reasons. First is the need to see the terrain during high speed chases; and second, they can eat their prey with less chance of disturbance from nocturnal carnivores.

Females are solitary and appear not to be territorial. They tend to follow the prey animals and will overlap with other females in the same area. Related young males form groups of two to four and occupy small territories. These coalitions defend their territories against other males for all or most of the year. The larger the coalition the longer it will keep its territory. Coalition males appear to live longer, healthier lives and so may have more years for breeding compared to solitary males.

Unlike most cats, cheetahs do not have a regular breeding season. Cubs may be born in any month. The average litter size is three, but the range is from one to eight. The gestation period is 90 - 98 days, with the birth rate around 270 grams, just over one half pound. Their eyes open around four to 11 days of age. The cubs are kept hidden in dense grass or under bushes until five or six weeks of age. The blue grey ruff or mane running down their back probably aids in camouflaging during this time. Weaning occurs around three months. Males do not take part in the rearing of the cubs, and are actually predators on the young. Many other carnivores will kill young cheetahs, including hyenas, lions, leopards and eagles. Fewer than one third of a litter is likely to survive to adulthood under normal conditions.

Captive breeding has been attempted for centuries, since these cats were kept as hunting leopards by Indian and Arab Royalty, but it was not until the mid 1950's that any real success occurred. It was found that females need to choose from a number of males as they would in the wild, rather than being kept with a single male year round.

Once ranging over most of Africa's open areas and also the grasslands of Central India, Pakistan, southern Russia, Iran and the Middle East, the majority are now found in east and southern Africa. An estimated 50 - 100 Asian cheetahs are thought to exist in Iran, and a government sanctioned research project has been underway there since 1997. Cheetahs in this area endure temperatures from well below zero to 45C in mid summer, and must compete with the many well armed hunters for their favorite prey, the gazelle.

In all areas, their numbers are declining rapidly. Hunting, habitat loss, and the loss of prey are the primary factors responsible for their decline. Predation of cubs by lions is also increasing, as the two cats are forced into ever closer proximity. Another aspect of habitat loss is the loss of natural prey species. As ranchers move into the cats' territories with their domestic livestock, cheetahs are coming into increasing conflict with man, and the big cats are often shot as stock killers.

In 1993, a remnant northern population was found in Egypt. These cats are smaller and stockier than their southern cousins. They also have unusually large ears, and a pronounced, square muzzle. The coat color is lighter, and the black markings muted. Unfortunately, this small population is under severe threat from the recent onslaught of Bedouin hunters and rich hunting parties from the Arab states. Many reports have been received of hunters killing entire families of mothers and cubs. These same hunters are also eliminating the main prey species for these cats, the gazelle. Only the most urgent conservation measures will prevent the extinction of this unique form of cheetah.

The cheetah, with its strange mixture of dog like and cat like features, is one of the world's most popular cats. A great deal of genetic research, captive breeding data and behavioral information is being gathered. Field experts are working closely with government officials to establish conservation plans in the cats' countries of origin. All of this is necessary to provide a future for these unique animals. Cheetahs are fully protected over most of their range in Africa. CITES has placed them on Appendix I.