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Abstract: Short description about cheetahs biology and occurrence in Asia and Africa.



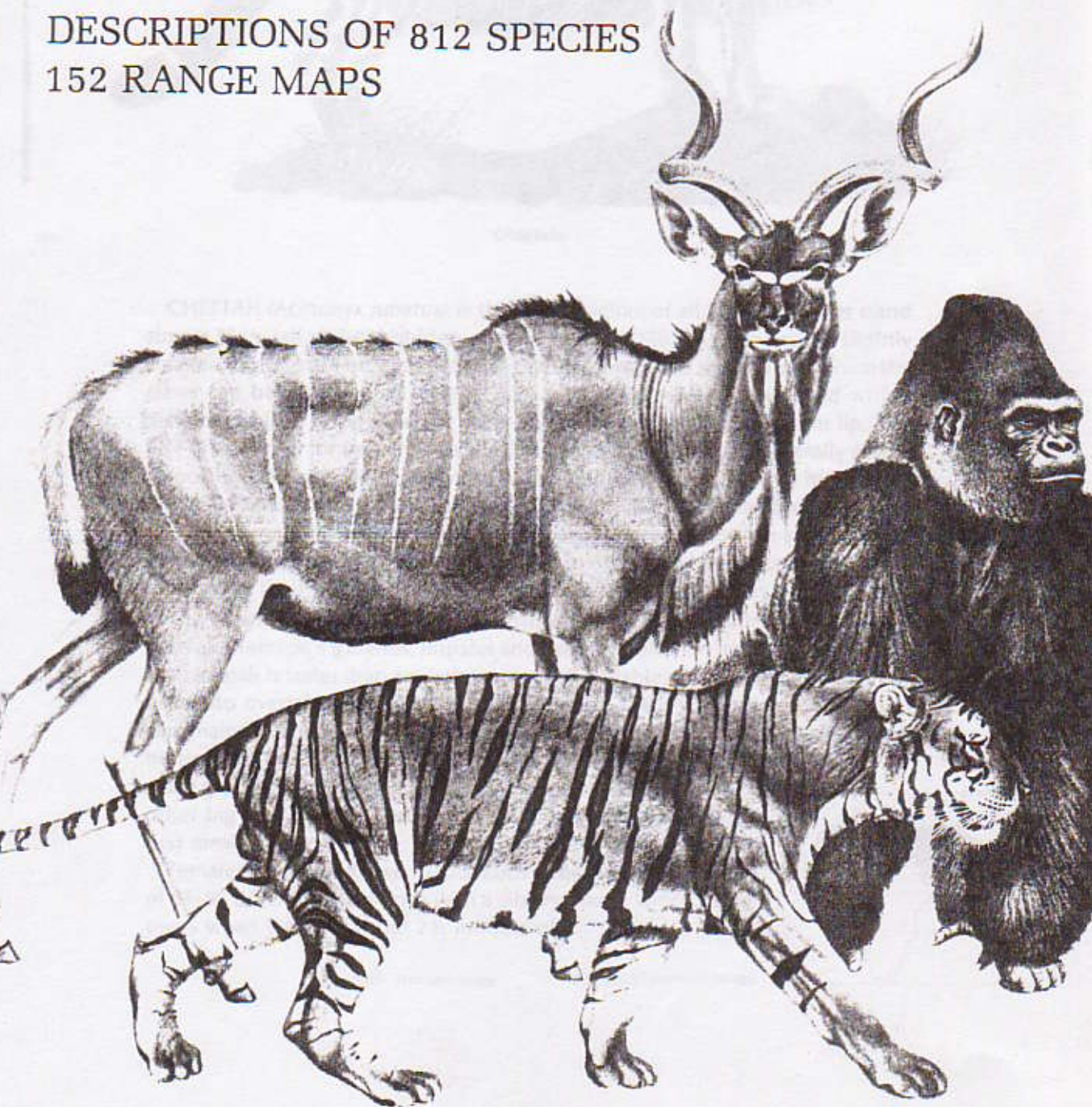
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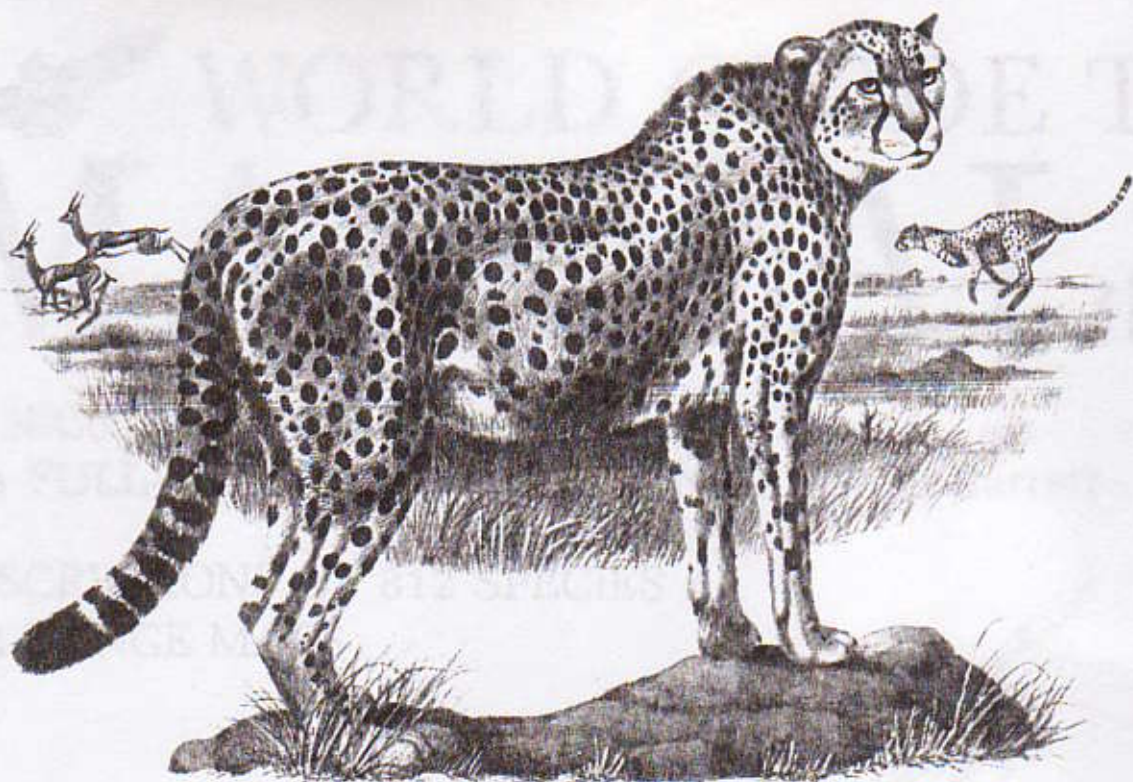
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Cheetahs

CHEETAH (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is the most doglike of all the cats. Males stand almost 30 in. tall at the shoulders and weigh up to 130 lbs.; females are slightly smaller. The legs are exceptionally long, and there are no sheaths into which the claws can be retracted as in other cats. Cheetahs have a small head with a distinctive black stripe from the inner corner of each eye to the upper lip. The hair on the neck forms a crest or short mane. Cheetahs have a generally gentle disposition. They tame easily when young and have been used in hunting.

Cheetahs occur mostly in open savannas in Africa. They once occurred also in southwestern Asia but have been eliminated there except for several small populations in Iran. They have fared better in Africa but have become localized because of their inability to tolerate alterations in their habitat.

The cheetah's prey ranges from birds to small and medium-size antelopes, such as Thomson's gazelles, impalas and oribis. It relies on its superior speed—the cheetah is faster than any other mammal, capable of running at 60 miles per hour—to overtake and pull down its prey. But the cheetah tires quickly and can maintain this speed only for short distances. Almost wholly diurnal, it hunts alone by sight rather than scent, and never in pairs or in small groups as do lions. It may also hunt by moonlight. Unlike other big cats, cheetahs rarely return to a kill to feed after the first meal.

Females give birth to two to four cubs after a gestation period of 84–95 days. Cubs are born with a silvery mane, which disappears when they are about 2½ months old.



Cheetah, former range

Cheetah, present range