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Abstract: The Global Cheetah Forum (GCF) is a neutral, global forum which aims to support and facilitate the efforts of cheetah conservationists worldwide, through communication, collaboration and integration. Its goals are to facilitate open dialogue between the role players and stakeholders in cheetah conservation, to assist in problem solving, encourage and support sound scientific research on cheetah, provide a link between ex situ and in situ cheetah conservation programmes and promote the interests of cheetah conservation globally.



The Global Cheetah Forum

Ensuring the survival of the cheetah through integrated conservation, education and research programmes

Background

The cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is a Vulnerable species on the IUCN Global Red List and an Appendix I species in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES 2002). The fastest animal on Earth, cheetah are found in a wide variety of habitats ranging from open plains and savannah to arid or semi desert regions and thick bush. Historically, cheetah ranged widely throughout Africa and southwest Asia. Today however, free-ranging cheetah inhabit areas of North Africa, the Sahel, eastern and southern Africa only. The largest known populations exist in Namibia, Kenya and Botswana. Over the past 50 years, cheetah have become extinct in at least 13 countries and it is believed that between 12 – 15 000 cheetah remain in the wild. Although the species faces different problems in different parts of its range, the main causes of decline are human-cheetah conflict and a vast reduction in suitable, secure habitat.

In response to the urgent need for a comprehensive, global cheetah conservation strategy, cheetah conservationists from 13 countries congregated in South Africa in both 2001 and 2002 to develop a Global Cheetah Action Plan which was facilitated by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group Southern Africa and sponsored by the North American Cheetah Species Survival Plan (SSP). The result was an initial Global Cheetah Action Plan developed in 2001 and revised and updated in 2002. This Global Action Plan deals with cheetah health, *in situ* and *ex situ* population management, the protection of cheetah outside protected areas, the international cheetah studbook, cheetah censusing methods and education and awareness.

During these workshops, the group identified the need for a forum to continue facilitating their collaboration, resource sharing and networking. Many of these organisations and individuals had been working in the same field and on similar projects for years and had never, until then, met or communicated with each other. This therefore provided the impetus for establishing the Global Cheetah Forum as a tool to facilitate their continued collaboration, communication and partnership building.

The Global Cheetah Forum

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Structure

The GCF secretariat is currently held by CBSG Southern Africa, a regional network of the IUCN's Species Survival Commission's CBSG in partnership with the Endangered Wildlife Trust. The GCF currently has more than 70 members in 14 countries. These members are served by a list serve and receive a quarterly electronic newsletter called "The Fast Track" to which they contribute. Financial

support for the group has been received from the Columbus Zoo, the North American Cheetah Species Survival Plan, the Wassenaar Wildlife Breeding Centre (Holland) and Diana Twining.

Objectives of the Global Cheetah Forum

To....

- Facilitate and foster open and effective communication between workshop participants and other cheetah conservationists worldwide;
- Educate and inform the general public and other stakeholder groups on matters relating to cheetah conservation;
- Facilitate dynamic, interactive collaboration and information exchange between various role players in cheetah research and conservation, worldwide;
- Facilitate fundraising for cheetah research and conservation and channel funds into needy projects;
- Encourage and support sound scientific research on cheetah;
- Encourage an holistic approach to the conservation and management of cheetah ;
- Provide a link between *ex situ* and *in situ* cheetah conservation programmes;
- Act as a forum through which obstacles facing effective cheetah research and conservation can be addressed and dealt with;
- Provide a forum for channelling queries and requests for information or participation from cheetah conservationists, as well as members of the public, to the appropriate organisations / individuals;
- Act as a neutral mouthpiece for cheetah conservation organisations worldwide; and
- Keep the processes initiated at the Global Cheetah Action Planning workshop “alive” and dynamic.

For more information please see
www.ewt.org.za/cbsg
or contact us on + 27 (0) 11 486 1102
brendad@ewt.org.za
yolanf@ewt.org.za

Information on The Global Cheetah Forum was provided by Yolan Friedmann, Conservation Manager/ Endangered Wildlife Trust; Programme Manager/Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (SSC/IUCN) Southern Africa.