

Futehally Z, Prince P, Gaekwad FP, Sankhala KS, Singh A, Jackson PFR, Mountfort G, Schaller GB.

Keywords: 45Asia/5IR/Acinonyx jubatus/cheetah/reintroduction

Abstract: Correspondence about the reintroduction of the cheetah to India between 1983 and 1985 of different people. Planned is to reintroduce cheetah from the Iran to Asia and different problems and questions are discussed.

NO 1983

26.11.1983

To,

H.R.H. Prince Philip,
President,
World Wildlife Fund-International
Buckingham Palace,
UNITED KINGDOM.

Dear Prince Philip,

It was a great pleasure for all of us, to meet you again in Delhi. Your speeches, on all occasions, were most appropriate and enjoyable.

There was one project about which I wanted to speak to you, but somehow did not get the opportunity.

As you know, the only mammal which India has lost is the Asiatic Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*). The Moghul Emperor Akbar, had 500 of these animals in captivity, but the last Cheetah in the wild, was shot somewhere in Madhya Pradesh in the 1930s. Since the African Cheetah belongs to a different race, it was not possible to think of introducing this animal into a Sanctuary, though some of these seem to be doing well in our Zoos.

It was only about a decade ago, that it was realized that the Iranian Cheetah and the Indian Cheetah belonged to the same race, and, therefore, it would be quite in order, even according to strict conservation rules, to introduce the Cheetah from Iran into India.

During the Second World Congress on National Parks, held in Yellowstone, USA, in 1972, I made a suggestion regarding the translocation of the Iranian Cheetah into India. At that time, the Minister of Environment in Iran was Eskander Firouz, and he welcomed the idea. There are several knowledgeable naturalists in India, including H.K. Ranjit Singh, our former Director of Wildlife, Shri M.Y. Ghorpade of Sandur, also a very knowledgeable naturalist and a former Finance Minister of Karnataka, and many other members, both of the Forest Department and of World Wildlife Fund, who think that this project is important enough to merit International support. One of its advantages would be, that we would have to rehabilitate areas where the Cheetah

(-2-)

formerly existed, by introducing blackbuck, Indian gazelle, black-naped hare, and other ground nesting birds and mammals which form the prey of the Cheetah. This exercise would be in keeping with the fundamental principles of WNF, that we should select animals as indicator species, and then rehabilitate the environment around them.

My talks with Government officials and others, in Karnataka, indicate that there are sufficiently large semi-arid regions available in the State, which could be suitably rehabilitated for the Cheetah, and stocked with prey species over a period of 5 years or so. But this project would only be worthwhile, provided the Iranian authorities were willing to permit the tranquilising, capture, and translocation of a few Cheetahs from Iran to India. This is an operation which only WNF-International could undertake, and my purpose in writing to you, is to let us know whether the WNF Council would agree, in principle, to such a venture. They could take a decision after they are sure that our ground work in India has been satisfactorily completed.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(Zafar Futehally)

CC: Fatesingh Rao Gaekwad of Baroda
All Trustees - WNF India
N.A. Partha Sarathy
N.Y. Ghorpade
H.K. Ranjit Singh
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S.G. Neginhall



BUCKINGHAM PALACE.

5th December, 1983

Dear Mr. Futehally,

Thank you for your letter. I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet the Trustees of WWF India as well as the members of the staff while I was in Bombay.

I heard quite a lot about the cheetah scheme. As I was led to understand, it involved an exchange of Asiatic lions from Gir for cheetahs from Iran. There seem to be two main technical problems. The revolution in Iran and the difficulty of finding a suitable habitat for the cheetahs in India. Needless to say, WWF International would most certainly consider very carefully any scheme for the re-introduction of Asiatic cheetah to India put forward by IUCN. I am therefore sending a copy of your letter to the World Conservation Center at Gland.

Yours sincerely
Philip

February 20, 1984

By Hand

I acknowledge, with thanks, the receipt of your letter No.104/4/83-DND, dated February 2nd, 1984, on the subject of the Cheetah, mainly pertaining to the question of a sub-species ever having been indigenous to India.

I greatly appreciate the pains you have taken in finding out and supplying the information as instances of evidence suggesting that an Asiatic sub-species was once native to some parts of India. Out of the six grounds mentioned in your letter, I fear, I find only two of real interest, viz. (v) and (vi). I do not think we need bother ourselves about whether the Cheetah was once found in Afghanistan or that it may still be found in Iran, but it is certainly interesting to read the contents of (v) and (vi) since they are the records of this century. What a great pity that your grandfather shot two between 1900 and 1910 and the Maharaja of Korea, I am informed, three males, as late as in 1948! The historian has gone on record to say that they were "wantonly shot"!

In spite of the above, regretfully, I must say that I still remain rather concerned about this subject, although, as stated in my letter addressed to Shri Zafar Futehally dated December 12, 1983, a copy of which I had forwarded to you, you will note that I have ended item 1 with the words, "I would be the happiest person if you or anybody else is in a position to conclusively prove that the Cheetah was ever indigenous to India." After all, I cannot lay claim either to be a scientist or an expert on the subject, but before my laymen's views are brushed aside with contempt, I feel, I am justified in asking for concrete proof to satisfy my inquisitive mind.

Furthermore, as you will see from my letter addressed to Shri Zafar Futehally and referred to earlier, merely establishing the fact of the Cheetah ever being indigenous to India is only a small part, the tip of an iceberg, of the 'master plan' proposed by him. What I am really querying is the sagacity of the proposal to reintroduce the Asian sub-species of the Cheetah into a suitable habitat in India, by translocating some from Iran, where their current existence is highly suspect. When a dozen or more species of animal and bird life in India are known to be on the brink of extinction, how could anyone justify an expensive gimmick like this, especially when it involves two imperilled species? I take it that you have not overlooked this aspect when mooted the proposal of exchanging some of our Asiatic lions with Cheetahs from Iran.

- 2 -

I must once again thank you for sending me such a detailed reply which I have greatly appreciated.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(F.P.GAEKWAD)

Shri Y. Digvijay Singh,
Deputy Minister for Environment,
Government of India,
Bikaner House,
NEW DELHI.

cc: Shri Samar Singh, New Delhi.
Shri M.Y.Ghorpade, Bangalore.
Shri Zafar Futehally, Bangalore.

W
27/11



KAILASH SANKHALA

JAIPUR
November 20, 1984

My dear Rao,

I have just received a notice No.3-7-/84 FRY(WL) dated 15-11-1984 for attending a meeting being held in connection with reintroduction of cheetah in India, to be held on November 30, 1984. Are we in that 'hurry'? We have hardly come over the difficulty of reintroduction of the Indian Rhinoceros! And introduction of a predator is still more difficult since its prey range and the habitat of the prey has to be first established. To my best knowledge, there is hardly any habit in India which is what it was half a century ago when cheetah became extinct. The first and the foremost question is did cheetah exist in India? If so, when and why did it become extinct even when it enjoyed royal protection of the Maharajas of cheetah habitat. Did it become extinct in an evolutionary process by its reduced breeding potential, high infant mortality and reduced longevity. To quote you an example there is not a single cheetah in India today in any zoological park. None has the record of breeding of cheetah in India! History should be an aid and not a dictate. The decision has to be based on ecology.

I am visiting Saurashtra region of Gujarat which is said to have some pockets where this experiment is to be tried. I will come up with my report in December 1984.

I am sure there is no hurry to bring cheetah and release them. If they are available free and we are likely to lose this opportunity, then let us have them for our 'cheetah starved' zoo including the National Zoological Garden, Delhi, but programme of reintroduction can surely wait.

I know I am sending this unpleasant pessimistic note but I feel it to be my duty once you have invited me to the proposed meeting.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(K.S. SANKHALA)

c. to
Fateh Singh Rao P. Gachwad
WWSF, India.
Respectful regards
K.S. Sankhala

Shri Kishore Rao,
Deputy Director (WL)
Department of Environment
Wildlife section,
Krishi Bhawan,
NEW DELHI

P.S. I will come to Delhi from somewhere in Gujarat and return to my field work and therefore the expenses will have to be paid for that journey. Please send me a telegram if you donot agree to pay. My address would be c/o Conservator of forests, *

B/18

December 18, 1984

Sub: Proposal to re-introduce the Asiatic sub-species
of the Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*) into
the Indian sub-continent.

Dear Peter,

I am not sure whether you are aware of the above proposal mooted by the Government of India and whether your learned views on the subject have been elicited.

Actually, the original proposal goes back to over 10 years ago when a dialogue was started by the Government of India with the then Government of Iran suggesting the exchange of a certain number of Asiatic Cheetahs from Iran for a number of Asiatic lions from India. The same proposal has been revived about 2 years ago when Mr. Zafar Futehally, a former Vice President and Trustee of WWP-India, marked a copy to me of the letter dated 26-11-1983 he had addressed to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. I wrote to Mr. Futehally on December 12, 1983 conveying my frank comments on the subject.

You would be doing me a great personal favour as also a great service to the conservation movement if you could devote some time to go through the enclosed correspondence and let me have the benefit of your expert and scientific reactions to the proposal, and particularly in reference to the views I have expressed in my letters. I might add that the views expressed are personal and not the views of WWP-India.

Before I end, may I take this opportunity of wishing you a Merry X'mas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year?

With kind regards,

*P.S.
I believe Dilcep has already spoken
to you about this*

Yours sincerely,

F.P.

(F.P.GAEKWAD)

Mr. Peter Jackson,
Haut Verger,
1171 Bougy Villars,
Switzerland.

(Similar letters were sent to : 1. Dr. George B. Schaller, (2) Mr. Arjun Singh (3) Prof. Dr. Khalid Hamid Sheikh, (4) David Attenborough Esq. (5) Guy Montfort, Esq.

B/18

December 26, 1984

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your letter dated November 20th, 1984, addressed to Shri Rishore Rao. The meeting, as you know, was put off at the last moment, probably due to the announcement of General Elections.

I am glad you have conveyed your frank and forthright views on the subject of the re-introduction of the Cheetah into the Indian sub-continent. Instead of writing to you in detail about my views on the subject, I am enclosing a copy of my letter dated 12th December 1983, addressed to Shri Zafar Futehally, wherein, as you will notice, I have raised several fundamental issues. Perhaps, when you have a little spare time, you could let me have your views on some of the points I have made. Kindly note that these are my personal views and not those of WWF-India.

Thank you again for sending me a copy of the letter.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

✓

(F.P.GAEKWAD)

Shri K.S.Sankhala,
21, Dhuleshwar Garden,
JAIPUR 302 001.



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P. O. Palla 262 902
Dist. Khari (U.P.)
India.

1 January 1985

Dear Fakhri Singh

Many thanks for your letter dated 18.12.84 referring to a proposal to re-introduce the Asiatic Sub Species of the Cheetah into the Indian Sub Continent.

I am grateful to you for seeking my reactions to the above proposal. As you are aware, the Establishment considers me a maverick whose unorthodox views are best left unsolicited.

I am horrified to learn of the proposal of exchange of Iranian Cheetahs for Indian lions. We already have too few of these animals in too constricted an area. In view of the government's miserable failure to establish a second home for the lion in Chandraprabha we should endeavour to repeat the experiment in a more realistic manner, instead of proposing an irresponsible barter exchange with a war torn regime. The proposal is to my mind the typical attitude of Wild Life Conservation paying for itself in a slick deal, with a minimum of financial or moral commitment on the part of Government.

Regarding the (re) Introduction of the Cheetah, I do not think there can be any objection to such a project if the Govt. of India are willing to underwrite the necessary financial and environmental commitments, if only to prove the sincerity of their devotion to the principle of Wild Life Conservation. To my mind it is immaterial whether the subspecies is jubatus or venaticus for the stronghold of scientific caveat is rapidly losing us the conservation battle of attrition. The rigid dogma of the scientist, must now be tempered by the flexible outlook of the Conservationist, and not vice versa if we intend to sustain the bona fides of our claims.

Finally in view of the uncontrollable surge in human population, and the dismal future for the plains ranging carnivores like the lion, wolf, lynx, fox, cats of the desert etc. I don't think there is the slightest likelihood of the (re) Introduction of the cheetah being anything else but an exercise in futility, unless we can have a separate Wild Life Service to monitor such an experiment.

I am sending you a copy of my paper on the Man-eating Phenomena for your information. I look forward to discussing this with you on my visit to Delhi.

Many good wishes for the New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Arjan Singh

Lt. Col. Patesingh P. Gaekwad of Baroda
President, WWF- India,
7, Duplex Lane
New Delhi



20/1/85

SPECIES SURVIVAL COMMISSION

3
2
14/1

CAT SPECIALIST GROUP

Chairman

Peter Jackson
1171 Bougy-Villars
Switzerland
Tel.: (021) 76 60 12
Tlx: 22618 iucn ch

Lt. Col. F.P. Gaekwad
Hoechst House, 17th Floor
Nariman Point
Bombay 400 021
Inde

2 January 1985

Dear Fatehsingh,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Thank you for your letter about the cheetah re-introduction proposal. I was interested to read the attached correspondence.

The Cat Group gave its views at the Kanha meeting in the following recommendation, which has now been approved by the Steering Committee of the Species Survival Commission:

Recognizing that reintroduction of endangered felids into former parts of their range may be essential to the long-term survival of taxa, such as the Asiatic lion and the Asiatic cheetah,

that such reintroductions would stimulate public interest in the preservation of these species and in conservation in general,

that such an endeavour would result in effective conservation of the remnant habitats of these species, which have been severely degraded,

that the detailed investigation with regard to the status, distribution and ecology of the relict populations of these endangered taxa in their present habitat, which would be an essential precursor to any programme of reintroduction of such species, would lead to better conservation of these relict populations in their existing habitats,

declaring that such reintroductions should only be carried out in consonance with the IUCN position statement on Introductions, Reintroductions and Restocking,

the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group recommends:

that efforts be made to ascertain the possibilities of reintroduction of species, such as the Asiatic lion and the Asiatic cheetah, in former habitats from which they have disappeared.

While the recommendation favours the idea in principle, the IUCN Position Statement referred to contains important provisos as far as the cheetah is concerned. I enclose the relevant section, but should like to mention some points here. Firstly, the statement says that reintroductions should only take place where the original causes of extinction have been removed. Secondly, the species should only be reintroduced if measures have been taken to reconstitute the habitat to a state suitable for the species. Thirdly, the animals involved must be of the closest available race or type to the original stock, and preferably be the same race as that previously occurring in the area.

The third point is an important one in view of information I have received from Samar Singh that Kenya has offered cheetah for the project. The fact is that the Asiatic cheetah, Acinonyx jubatus venaticus still exists in Iran, as we know from a recent communication from the Director of the Teheran Natural History Museum to M.A. Rashid, although he gave no numbers. Clearly any animals for reintroduction in India should come from there and the Director told Rashid that his request had been passed to the relevant authorities. Of course, it is difficult to communicate with Iran these days, but this may change. So long as true Asiatic cheetah exist, IUCN could not approve reintroduction of African cheetah.

There are arguments that recent research has shown a very narrow genetic base for cheetah, but the samples were from Namibia and Zimbabwe, with some from Kenya. That is not a valid basis for argument that African cheetah should be reintroduced in India.

I am sympathetic to the view that a reintroduction project could help restoration of degraded areas, and I would love to see cheetah again in India, but I have difficulty in envisaging restoration of a truly viable wild population, given the pressure on land. I doubt whether sufficient prey populations could be established. Cheetah need large areas and are threatened even in Africa. Furthermore, experience in Bophutatswana showed that cheetah have a marked tendency to wander and to attack livestock. They are certainly a problem in ranching areas in Namibia and Zimbabwe. Can you imagine the situation in India? In view of the anti-conservation sentiment aroused by tiger attacks on humans - apart from their cattle lifting - reintroduction of cheetah, which started attacking livestock, could well be counter-productive.

Frankly, I feel that there are so many conservation issues of far higher priority in India than attempts at cheetah reintroduction.

I have a few points regarding Zafar's letter. The cheetah is the only cat species India has lost, but not the only mammal - the Javan and Sumatran rhinos, for example, once lived there. Akbar had some 1,000 cheetah, I believe, not 500, and the last cheetah were shot by the Maharajah of Korea towards the end of 1947 not in the 1930s - Van Ingen's letter to the BNHS reporting the incident was dated 9 January 1948.

I hope these comments are useful.

With warm regards,

Yours
Peter

Peter F R Jackson
Chairman

PART II

THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF SPECIES

1. Re-introduction is the release of a species of animal or plant into an area in which it was indigenous before extermination by human activities or natural catastrophe. Re-introduction is a particularly useful tool for restoring a species to an original habitat where it has become extinct due to human persecution, over-collecting, over-harvesting or habitat deterioration, but where these factors can now be controlled.
2. Re-introductions should only take place where the original causes of extinction have been removed.
3. Re-introductions should only take place where the habitat requirements of the species are satisfied. There should be no re-introduction if a species became extinct because of habitat change which remains unremedied, or where significant habitat deterioration has occurred since the extinction.

The species should only be re-introduced if measures have been taken to reconstitute the habitat to a state suitable for the species.

4. The basic programme for re-introduction should consist of:

- a feasibility study
- a preparation phase
- release or introduction phase
- follow-up phase.

The Feasibility Study

- a) An ecological study should assess the previous relationship of the species to the habitat into which the re-introduction is to take place, and the extent that the habitat has changed since the local extinction of the species. If individuals to be re-introduced have been captive-bred or cultivated, changes in the species should also be taken into account and allowances made for new features liable to affect the ability of the animal or plant to re-adapt to its traditional habitat.
- b) The attitudes of local people must be taken into account especially if the re-introduction of a species that was persecuted, over-hunted or over collected is proposed. If the attitude of local people is unfavourable an education and interpretive programme emphasizing the benefits to them of the re-introduction, or other inducement, should be used to improve their attitude before re-introduction takes place.
- c) The animals or plants involved in the re-introduction must be of the closest available race or type to the original stock and preferably be the same race as that previously occurring in the area.

The IFC/ISC Cat Specialist Group recommends:

That efforts be made to ascertain the possibilities of reintroduction of species, such as the Asiatic lion and the Asiatic cheetah, in former habitats from which they have disappeared.

The Preparation and Release or Introductory Phases

The successful re-introduction of an animal or plant requires that the biological needs of the species be fulfilled in the area where the release is planned. This requires a detailed knowledge of both the needs of the animal or plant and the ecological dynamics of the area of re-introduction. For this reason the best available scientific advice should be taken at all stages of a species re-introduction. This need for clear analysis of a number of factors can be clearly seen with reference to introductions of ungulates such as ibex, antelope and deer where re-introduction involves understanding and applying the significance of factors such as the ideal age for re-introducing individuals, ideal sex ratio, season, specifying capture techniques and mode of transport to re-introduction site, freedom from disease and parasites, acclimatisation, helping animals to learn to forage in the wild, adjustment of the gut flora to deal with new forage, "imprinting" on the home range, prevention of wandering of individuals from the site or re-introduction, and on site breeding in enclosures before release to expand the released population and acclimatise the animals to the site. The re-introduction of other taxa of plants and animals can be expected to be similarly complex.

Follow-Up Phase

1. Monitoring of released animals must be an integral part of any re-introduction programme. Where possible there should be long term research to determine the rate of adaptation and dispersal, the need for further releases and identification of the reasons for success or failure of the programme.
2. The species impact on the habitat should be monitored and any action needed to improve conditions identified and taken.

Peter F H Jackson
Chairman



KAILASH SANKHALA

JAIPUR

January 3, 1984

Your Highness,

Wish you a Happy New Year !

Thank you very much for your letter dated December 26, 1984. I am happy that you appreciated my views on reintroduction of cheetah in India. I think, people are too keen to have more of publicity stunt than real conservation work.

Your highness may recall that a similar stunt was staged regarding Indian Lion which had failed to such an extent that we have not been able to rethink ~~ing~~ of another good area. It is actually the lion that needs more attention since it ~~actually~~ exists in viable number, than cheetah which has become absolutely extinct from India.

I have also read your letter addressed to Shri Zafar Futehally. I will submit my detailed views pointwise adding more information, if I can, in my next letter.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

(KAILASH SANKHALA)

Lt. Col. Fatehsingh Rao P. Gaekwad
of Baroda,
President, World Wildlife Fund, India,
Hoechst House, 17th floor,
Nariman Point,
BOMBAY 400 021

HURST OAK
SANDY LANE
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HANTS
SO4 7DN

10-1-85

Dear Maharaja,

Thank you for your letter about the Cheetah.

I am doubtful about this proposal for three reasons. First, I assume that the Asiatic race A. j. emileus, like its African counterpart A. j. jubatus, requires a very large and undisturbed hunting area. I question whether this could really be found in the State of Karnataka, but I may be wrong.

Second, both the population of the Cheetah in Iran and that of the Asiatic Lion in the Gir are so small that to risk diminishing either for an experimental exchange seems questionable.

Third, Cheetahs in captivity have a bad reputation for failing to breed, except at Whipsnade where they have exceptionally skilled supervision.

I suspect that the proposed experiment would fail at reproductive level unless a fairly large number of animals could be obtained. And this is unlikely in view of the available numbers in Iran.

Finally, if the funds and expertise for such an experiment are available in India, one must ask whether the restoration of some of the surviving but endangered species in India should perhaps be given preference over the Cheetah. With resources so limited, I feel that priorities need to be carefully considered.

I would be the last to oppose any proposal by my good friend Jagan Dutta, or WWF India, but as you have asked my opinion I have given it frankly for what it is worth. The Cats Group at the IUCN are the real experts and I suggest you consult them. Peter Jackson is now Chairman of the Group.

With all good wishes,

Yours very sincerely,

Guy Mountfort

B/18

January 16, 1985

Dear Tiger,

Thank you for your letter of January 3rd. Thank you also for your good wishes for the New Year, which I heartily reciprocate.

Coming to the Cheetah, I think you have hit the nail on the head when you say that some people are pressing the re-introduction of the Cheetah as a pure publicity stunt far removed from any conservation ideals. Like you I shall never forget the lion stunt when more than 10,000 people had gathered in the Chandraprabha sanctuary to witness the release of a trio of lions.

I now await your expert views on the contents of my letter addressed to Shri Safar Futehally. Please do not hesitate to contradict me if you think it is necessary. Thank you again for writing to me.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

S
(F.P.GAEKWAD)

Mr. Kailash Senkhala,
21, Dhuleshwar Garden,
JAIPUR-302001, Rajasthan.

Office of the CHAIRMAN

BRC - DELHI

20th January 1985.

Dear Peter,

Very many thanks for your very detailed letter dated 2nd January 1985 sent in reply to my letter regarding the proposal of re-introduction of the Cheetah. I think you have summed it up well and come to the same conclusion that I have viz: "that there are so many conservation issues of far higher priority in India than attempts a Cheetah introduction".

I greatly appreciate the pain you have taken in sending me such an exhaustive letter and I thank you again for it.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



(Fatesingh Rao P. Gaekwad)

Peter Jackson Esq.,
Chairman
Cat Specialist Group
IUCN-SSC,
1171 Bougy-Villars
SWITZERLAND.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

A DIVISION OF THE NEW YORK ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

January 25, 1985

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12
Lt. Colonel Fatesinghroa P. Gaekwad of Baroda
Hoechst House, 17th Floor
Nairman Point, Bombay 400 021
India

Dear Gaekwad of Baroda:

Thank you for your letter regarding the re-introduction of cheetah into India. This subject was raised at the 1969 IUCN conference in Delhi. On being asked if this was possible, I made two main points:

1) There is probably no area in India which has a large enough wild prey population to support a viable cheetah population on a long-term basis. The main prey in the past was presumably blackbuck supplemented by chinkara, young nilgai, hares and others. My research in East Africa showed that a cheetah preying on Thomson's gazelles kills about one animal every 3 days or so, and that a female with young averages a gazelle per day. You can calculate how many prey animals are needed to support even a small cheetah population without declining — several thousand. Does India now have a suitable place? Do you plan to supplement the cheetah's diet with live sheep and goats?

2) Introductions are difficult unless wild-caught adults are used. Young animals do not know how to hunt and kill, and to teach them is a difficult and time-consuming process.

It is obviously possible to bring back an animal which once was a part of India. However, the task should be most carefully planned and executed to avoid injury or death to even one of the few surviving cheetah in Iran. This means that expert help must be sought in catching and translocating cheetah and that released animals must be carefully monitored and protected.

I would be interested to hear if India taked further steps in this matter.

With best regards.

Sincerely,

George B. Schaller

George B. Schaller
Director

GBS:ng

P.S. The panda situation is not good, but not as bad as reported in the news. I have finished my panda work, though the project continues, and plan to concentrate on Tibet.

New York Zoological Society
Bronx, N.Y. 10460
212-220-5090

P.O. Box 48177
Nairobi, Kenya
011-254-2-23206

2.11.1983

Dear Mr. Ghorpade,

One of the projects which WWF-Karnataka must pursue is the attempt to reintroduce the Cheetah in suitable areas within the State. Since the African Cheetah is not of the same race as the Indian one, the prospect of importing Cheetahs from Africa cannot be contemplated.

However, some years ago, it was discovered that the Cheetahs surviving in Iran, belong to the same race as those in India, and the people working in Iran, including Eskander Firouz, the then Minister for Wildlife, were not averse to having a joint project with India for reintroducing the animal in a suitable habitat in Karnataka, which was its original home.

I made a reference to this possibility in the Second World Conference of National Parks, held in Yellowstone National Park in the United States in 1972. The proposal was welcomed also by M.K. Ranjit Singh, who was then the Director of Wildlife, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.

Conditions in Iran have altered drastically in the last 10 years, and I do not know whether the Cheetahs still exist there. But there are several people here, who are very keen that such an attempt should be made. If we think of such a project, the following steps will be involved:

- (1) To get confirmation from Iran that Cheetahs are available, and to get International support for their capture and translocation to India.
- (2) Identify a suitable habitat, declare it as a Sanctuary, and stock it with suitable prey species.
- (3) Reintroduce the animal by slow stages into the wild.

It is undoubtedly a difficult, but an exciting operation, and if you think the project is worth pursuing, perhaps we can form a Task Force of knowledgeable Conservationists and Government Officials, and go ahead.

You are particularly well placed to be the Convener of such a project, because Sandur was one of the homes of the Cheetah, and your standing, both in the official and the non-official world will help to take matters forward.

I am taking the liberty of copying this letter to the people who, I think, would be interested in the project. Do let me know when you are next in Bangalore, so that we can discuss this.

Mr. M.Y. Ghorpade,
Sandur, Bellary District,
KARNATAKA.

Yours sincerely,

(Zafar Futehally)

CC: President WVF-India,
Chairman, Southern Region (WVF), Madhav Gadgil, C.H. Basappaavar,
Dr. Krishna Gowda, V.R.P. Forme, VASI.



Lt. Col. Patesingh Rao P. Gaekwad of Baroda
President

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December 12, 1983

My dear Zafar,

Thank you for marking a copy to me of your letter dated 2nd November 1983 addressed to Mr. M.Y. Ghorpade on the possibility of re-introducing the Cheetah in Karnataka. Thank you also for sending me a copy of your letter dated 26-11-1983 addressed to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

Permit me to say that I do not agree with the basic idea itself as also some of the reasons advocated in its favour. Here are my reasons.

1. I have myself done a fair amount of research to establish whether the Cheetah was ever indigenous to India. I have come to the definite conclusion that any historical mention of the Cheetah in India either refers to those imported for hunting purposes during the Mughal period and later on by some princely families like Kolhapur or because the word 'Cheetah' has been commonly used for the Leopard. The Baroda family being closely related to the Kolhapur family, in the 20's and 30's, we acquired some from Kolhapur and used them for hunting the blackbuck. I myself have hunted with them in the late 30's and early 40's. When I started my private zoo in the palace compound, I imported a young female from Nairobi, hand-reared it, kept it as a pet, but never hunted with it. The records of the erstwhile State of Kolhapur reveal that in an attempt to breed these lovely species carnivora, the late Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaj imported 20 pairs from East Africa and released them in a walled enclosure. The experiment was a total failure. I do not think that your information that "some of these seem to be doing well in our zoos" is based on facts. While some zoos in the States and in Europe have now been able to breed the Cheetah successfully, no Indian zoo, to my knowledge, has ever succeeded in doing so. Having said this, I would be the happiest person if you or anybody else is in a position to conclusively prove that the Cheetah was ever indigenous to India.
2. If it can be proved that an Asiatic sub species did once exist in the Sub-Continent and that it is now extinct and also that it is the same species as the one known to be in existence in Iran 10 years ago, does the suggested habitat in Karnataka have no other carnivora like the Tiger and Leopard? I think it is an accepted fact that one of the main reasons why the Asiatic Lion is now only to be found in one small corner of India is that he was driven there by the more powerful Tiger and because there is no Tiger population in that area today. I think the same would be the case with the Leopard and the Cheetah.
3. I would be delightfully surprised to know that the Cheetah still exists in Iran and if it does, whether it has more than a viable population justifying the translocation of a few to India.

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Lt. Col. Feteeringhro F. Gaekwad of Baroda
President

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4. I feel it would be a crime and an exercise in futility if the Asian Lion is translocated to Iran without ascertaining that there is a healthy habitat in existence there.
5. Finally, and most importantly, how can the Government of India, World Wildlife Fund-International and World Wildlife Fund-India justify themselves to even look at such a proposal when literally dozens of species of animal, bird and plant life are threatened with imminent extinction in India? They will certainly open themselves to mockery, a justifiable charge of hypocrisy, and severe adverse publicity, which the conservation movement can ill-afford.

I do hope my candid observations are not misunderstood. I have no ulterior motive and no axe to grind. I believe that in matters of conservation, one must be frank, even to the point of being brutal. Conservationists the world over must stand up to the powerful challenges before them. Priorities will have to be established and action-oriented plans implemented. There is no place for idealism. Cold hard facts have to be accepted and faced with courage and conviction. There is no room for either fancy ideas or popular programmes.

I am marking a copy of this letter to those to whom you have sent copies of your letter addressed to Mr.M.Y.Ghorpade. Also, since you have addressed a letter to His Royal Highness, I am marking a copy to him as well as to all our Trustees. I am also marking a copy to the Dy.Minister for Environment since yesterday's papers carried a report that supports your suggestion. A further copy is also being sent to Mr. Samar Singh.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(F. P. GAEKWAD)

Mr. Zafar Futehally,
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