

IUCN. 1976. Red Data Book - Asiatic cheetah 2 p.

Keywords: 1Afr/5IQ/5IR/7SW/Acinonyx jubatus venaticus/Asiatic cheetah/cheetah/distribution/extinction/range/Red List/status

Abstract: The Asiatic cheetah is an endangered species. It has become extinct throughout most of its former range, but still occurs in some arid areas of Turkmenistan, along the northwestern border of Afghanistan and in the eastern half of Iran. The Asiatic cheetah is protected in the USSR and Iran. Further data on its status and distribution are needed as a basis for establishing further reserves.

Acinonyx jubatus venaticus (Griffith, 1821)

Order CARNIVORA

Family FELIDAE

STATUS Endangered. Has become extinct throughout much of its former range (5; 6; 7) but still occurs in arid areas of Turkmeniya, the northwest border of Afghanistan, and eastern half of Iran. It is protected in the USSR and Iran. Further data on its status and distribution are needed as a basis for the establishment of additional reserves.

DISTRIBUTION Formerly, fairly arid regions from the Deccan Plateau, Central India, Rajasthan and Gujarat through Sind, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Iran and Iraq to Syria, Jordan and Israel and across North Africa to Rio de Oro. In USSR, in Turkmeniya, Uzbekistan, Tadzhikistan and, until the 18th century, in Transcaucasia; at present, confined to the southern desert area, where it is seen only rarely. In Afghanistan its status is uncertain but it may still occur on the Turkmeniyan border. (5; 8) In 1972 and 1973, Pakistan fur traders obtained cheetah skins that were alleged to have come from northern Afghanistan. In Pakistan, in 1971, there were unconfirmed reports of the occurrence of cheetah in the Turbat region of Baluchistan, in the extreme southwest near the Iranian border. (T.J. Roberts 1974, pers. comm.) In Iran now found in all Plateau provinces. (4; E. Firous 1974, pers. comm.) In Arabia the most recent records are of four killed in northern Saudi Arabia in the 1950's, and one in the Syrian desert of Iraq in 1947-48. (7) There have been recent reports, considered to be authentic, of cheetah sightings in the Qattarah Depression in Egypt. (R. Fitter 1974, pers. comm.)

POPULATION In Iran, gaining steadily in numbers and distribution, more than 50 in reserves and more than 200 outside them, including more than 30 in and near Khosh Yellagh Protected Region. (E. Firous 1974, pers. comm.) Almost certainly extinct in India (three shot in one night in 1947 were reputedly the last, but has also been seen in an area not too far away as late as the early 1960's (M.K. Ranjitsinh 1974, pers. comm.), also probably extinct in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, Uzbekistan and Tadzhikistan. (1; 8; 10) Over-hunting of the cheetah and of gazelles, its principal prey, has been the major cause of the animal's decline. (E. Firous 1974, pers. comm.)

HABITAT Principally desert steppes and low hills that have gazelles. Also in the desert mountains of Khosh Yellagh where they prey predominantly on urial. (E. Firous 1974, pers. comm.) The destruction of habitat and consequent loss of prey species has been a significant factor in the animal's depletion in certain areas.

CONSERVATION MEASURES TAKEN Protected by law in the USSR and Iran. In Iran, present in several reserves and in the Khosh Yellagh Protected Region in the northeast, where rights of exploitation and usage are restricted but not eliminated—hunting is strictly prohibited, with a fine of Rials 100,000. Included in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, 1973; trade in these animals between acceding nations is subject to severe restriction, trade for primarily commercial purposes is banned. In 1971/74, the International Fur Trade Federation operated a voluntary ban among its membership on the use of cheetah furs.

CONSERVATION MEASURES PROPOSED Further investigations into its status and distribution in countries in which it still occurs are urgently required as a basis for the creation of properly protected reserves. There are plans for upgrading the Khosh Yeilagh to a Wildlife Park. Reintroduction into Soviet Central Asia has been suggested. (11)

REMARKS In 1976, one old male was held in Tehran Zoo and one adult female was kept in the Rare Carnivore Unit of the Department of the Environment. Plans are being made to attempt breeding. (P. Joslin 1976, pers. comm.)—There is one pair in Almas-Ata Zoo, USSR. (2) Ellerman and Morrison-Scott (1951) consider, at least provisionally, that the range of the Asiatic cheetah extends into North Africa. Other authorities (e.g. Harper, 1945) consider the North African cheetah to be a separate subspecies, A. j. hecki Hilsheimer, 1913.

REFERENCES

1. Bodenheimer, F.S. (1958): The present taxonomic status of the terrestrial mammals of Palestine. Bull. Research Council. Israel 7B(3-4): 165-190.
2. Duplax-Hall, W. (ed.) (1975): 1975 International Zoo Yearbook 15. London: Zoological Society of London.
3. Ellerman, J.R., and Morrison-Scott, T.C.S. (1951): Checklist of Palearctic and Indian mammals, 1758-1946. London: British Museum (Natural History).
4. Firouz, E. (1974): Environment Iran. National Society for the Conservation of Natural Resources and Human Environment, Tehran, Iran.
5. Gladkov, W.A., and Masimovich, A.A. (1968): Rare and disappearing animal species and their preservation in the USSR. Resources of the biosphere on the territory of the USSR. Viniti, Moscow. 311-333.
6. Harper, P. (1945): Extinct and vanishing mammals of the Old World. Spec. Publ. Amer. Comm. Int. Wildlife Protection 12. 849 pp.
7. Harrison, D.L. (1968): The Mammals of Arabia. Vol. II. London: Ernest Benn.
8. Masimovich, A.A. (1970): Rare and endangered species of mammals and their protection in the USSR. Engl. transl. Henry Field (ed.). Field Research Projects 16. Miami, Florida. 10 pp.
9. Bovikov, G.A. (1962): Carnivorous mammals of the fauna of the USSR 62. Moscow Academy of Sciences of the USSR Zoological Institute, 1956. Engl. transl. published by Israel Program for Scientific Translations, Jerusalem. 284 pp.
10. Talbot, L.H. (1960): A look at threatened species. Report on some animals of the Middle East and southern Asia which are threatened with extermination. Oryx 5: 153-293.
11. Voronov, V.G., Vornov, G.A., and Rakhizlin, U.K. (1973): Rational use and conservation of "Kaidu" population in the Kouriles. In: Academy of Sciences of the USSR: Rare species of animals in the fauna of the USSR and their protection: Nauka Publ. Moscow.