

# CHEETAH CHEAT SHEET

The word 'cheetah' comes from the word 'chita', which means 'spotted one' in Hindi. Because of its inability to roar, the cheetah is not considered one of the 'big cats', like lions and tigers. Still, the cheetah makes a name for itself by having a distinctive spotted coat, and by being the fastest animal on land.

## IN COMPARISON

While the cheetah is easily recognizable for their spotted coats, there are other big cats they are often mistaken for. Leopards, jaguars, and cheetahs all have distinct coats that one can use to identify them.



### JAGUAR

Jaguars are larger than both leopards and cheetah, and is the only one of the three to live in South America. Their fur is patterned with large rosettes with small spots and markings within them.



### LEOPARD

Leopards have smaller heads than jaguars. Their coats are patterned with smaller rosettes without any markings in them.



### CHEETAH

As opposed to the rosettes seen on jaguars and leopards, cheetahs only have plain, dark spots on their coats.



## A POPULATION IN DECLINE

In 1900, there were an estimated 100,000 cheetahs in the wild. Now, there are less than 10,000, causing the cheetah to be classified as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN's) Red List of Threatened Species. There are various factors that play into the cheetah's rapid decline.



### HABITAT LOSS

Human expansion over the years has severely cut into the places where cheetahs roam. As the available lands for cheetahs roam decreases, so does the carrying capacity of these places, meaning that the land can no longer support the needs of a large cheetah population.



### HUMAN CONFLICT

Because of the amount of land taken by humans, cheetahs often find themselves on private farmland. Farmers that are afraid of cheetah hunting their livestock often resort to killing them. Cheetahs were also hunted for their fur, which also contributed to their rapid decline.



### LACK OF GENETIC DIVERSITY

A mass extinction that killed most of the world's large mammals about 12,000 years ago led to inbreeding between the few cheetahs that were left surviving. The inbreeding resulted in a severe lack of genetic diversity in the species, which makes it harder for cheetahs to adapt and evolve in their environment.



### COMPETITION

Cheetahs often find themselves at odds with bigger and stronger animals when it comes to hunting for food. Predators such as lions, leopards, and hyenas are all competition for prey, and as a leaner and sleeker animal, cheetahs are unable to find them off. Cheetah cubs are also often eaten by these predators while the mothers are off hunting for food.

## BUILT FOR SPEED

### INNER ORGANS

Cheetahs have enlarged lungs, bronchi, heart, and adrenals which help provide the necessary amounts of oxygen and blood to help them reach their incredible speed.

### TEAR MARKS

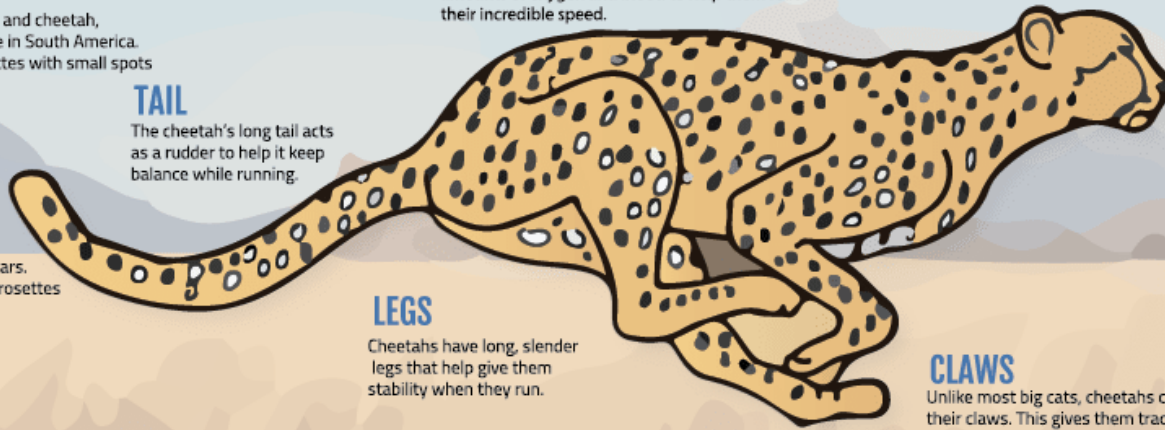
Cheetahs have long black 'tear marks' that run along the inside of their eyes down to their mouths. These marks work as anti-glare protectants from the sun, while hunting during the day.

### LEGS

Cheetahs have long, slender legs that help give them stability when they run.

### CLAWS

Unlike most big cats, cheetahs cannot retract their claws. This gives them traction while running, similar to effect of football cleats. They also have soft pads on their feet that helps them keep their grip on the ground.



## ALL AROUND THE WORLD

There are five different subspecies of cheetahs, each of which resides in a different part of Africa, and some in Asia. Cheetah habitats are characterized by open grasslands with grass and trees that work as cover for hunting. The South African Cheetah is the most numerous of the subspecies, while the Asiatic Cheetah is only estimated to have about 60-70 adults in the wild.

