

# Endangered Species: The cheetah

By Gale, Cengage Learning, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.05.18

Word Count **393**

Level **360L**

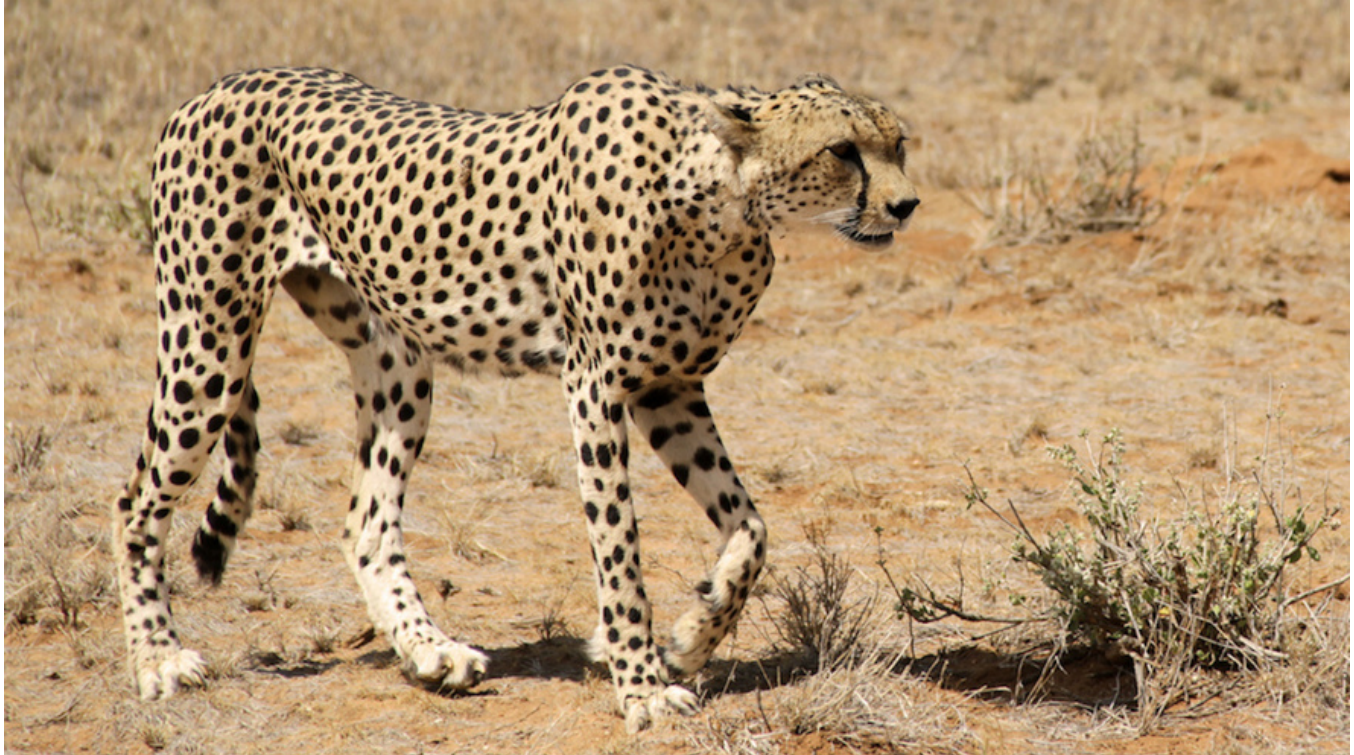


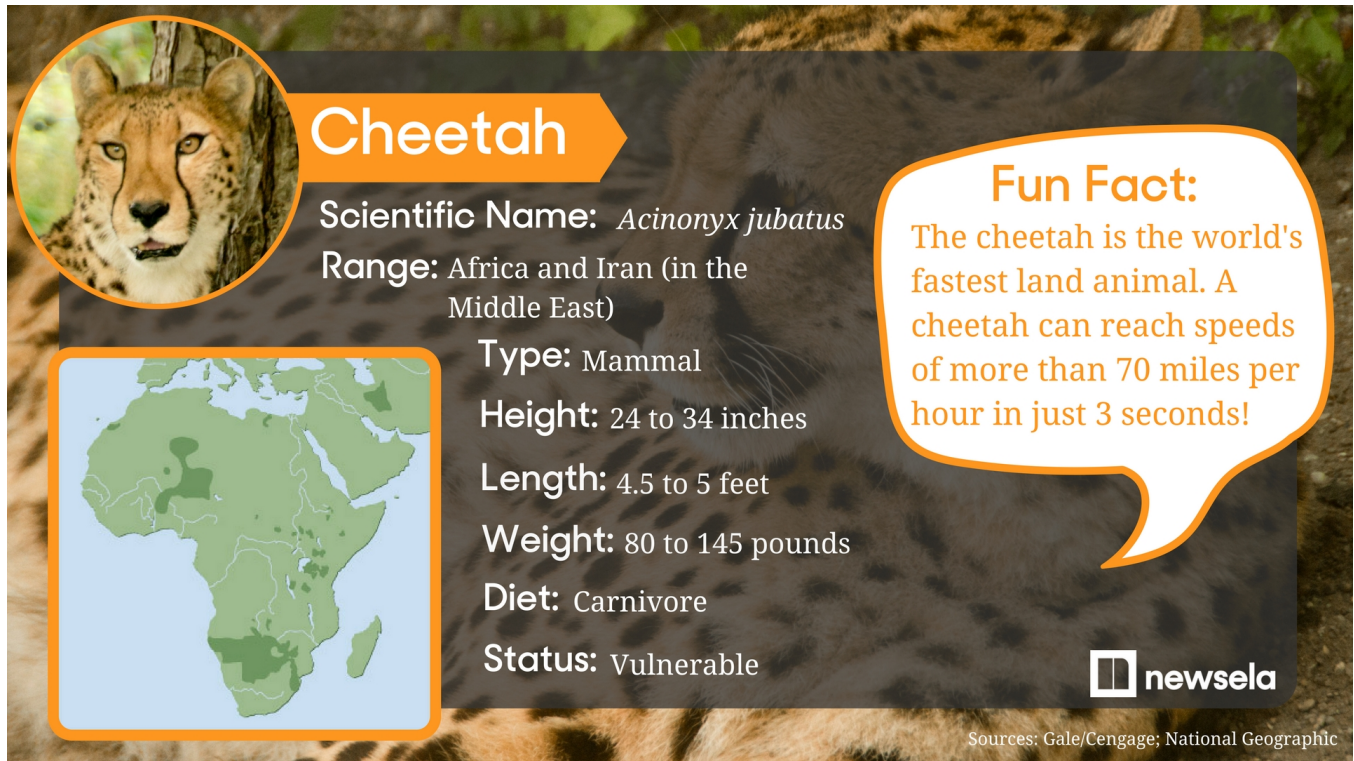
Image 1: Cheetahs are famous for their round, black spots, which help them to hide in the tall grass where they live. Photo from: Wikimedia Commons.


Cheetahs are quick predators. They are the fastest animals on land. These big cats can run at up to 70 miles an hour. That is as fast as a car on the highway.

Cheetahs are not just fast. They move easily, too. Cheetahs have long tails. They use their tails for balance. This lets them quickly change direction.

Cheetahs are one kind of large cat. Tigers are another. Tigers have a special way of hunting. They like to surprise their prey. Cheetahs are different. They like to chase down their prey.

This is not easy. It takes a lot of energy. Cheetahs often need a rest after a long chase. Then they can start eating their kill. They cannot wait too long to eat, though. If they do, other animals will try to steal their dinner.





## Cheetah

**Scientific Name:** *Acinonyx jubatus*

**Range:** Africa and Iran (in the Middle East)

**Type:** Mammal


**Height:** 24 to 34 inches

**Length:** 4.5 to 5 feet

**Weight:** 80 to 145 pounds


**Diet:** Carnivore

**Status:** Vulnerable



### Fun Fact:

The cheetah is the world's fastest land animal. A cheetah can reach speeds of more than 70 miles per hour in just 3 seconds!



Sources: Gale/Cengage; National Geographic

Male cheetahs often live in groups. Females do not. They live alone. They only join the males when they need to mate.

Baby cheetahs are called cubs. The mother cheetah nurses them for two months. Then she teaches them how to hunt.

## Habitat

Cheetahs live in grasslands. These lands are also called savannas. Today, cheetahs mostly live in Africa. A few live in the Middle East, too. There are not many cheetahs left, though. Scientists think there are between 7,000 and 10,000.





## History And Conservation

In the past, there were many more cheetahs. Some lived in Africa and the Middle East. Others lived in India. In the 1950s, there were about 28,000 cheetahs in the world. Then that number went down. By the 1970s, there were only about 14,000 cheetahs left.

One reason for this was hunting. People killed many cheetahs for their fur. They sold the fur around the world. Another reason was loss of land. Wild places were turned into farms. That left cheetahs with less space. It made it hard to hunt.

In most countries, cheetahs are protected. It is against the law to kill them. But some people do not follow the law. They still hunt cheetahs.

In Africa, some people want to help. They have set up reserves for cheetahs. Reserves are protected areas. Animals can live here in peace.