



**CITES CHEETAH TRADE PRESS RELEASE
HOPE FOR CHEETAHS WITH INTERNATIONAL FOCUS ON ILLEGAL TRADE**

8th March 2013

Start

Each year numerous Cheetah are taken from the wild and smuggled across international borders to be sold as pets. Over the coming days the subject will be debated in Bangkok, Thailand, at a gathering of the world's largest international body concerned with the trade in wildlife.

Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda have brought this issue to international attention at the current meeting of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, commonly known as CITES. The conference is already underway in Bangkok, Thailand and runs from March 3rd to 14th with the cheetah trade issue being debated on Friday, March 8th. The three countries were spurred into action due to growing concern for East African cheetah populations that are the source for many of the smugglers. The conservation status of cheetah is classed as Vulnerable in the Red List of Threatened Species and scientists fear that the trade in live animals could be impacting the survival of the cheetah populations in the Horn of Africa.

Dr. Nick Mitchell of the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and said: "Cheetahs are already extinct in many countries and in eastern Africa resident populations are known to exist in just 6% of their estimated historical range." Aside from the illegal wildlife trade, cheetahs face multiple threats ranging from the loss of their habitat to persecution by farmers who fear their livestock are in danger. Dr. Mitchell added: "Cheetahs only ever occur at very low density numbers in the wild so the removal of individual animals to supply a demand for exotic pets could have significant consequences for the survival of those populations."

ZSL's Senior Research Fellow Dr. Sarah Durant commented: "Cheetahs are declining across much of their range and are now thought to number less than 10,000 individuals. Any illegal trade in cheetahs will exacerbate these declines." Adding further weight to the cause it is reported that most of the smuggled cheetahs are small cubs as they are easier to handle and to domesticate but more than half of them are believed to die in transit.

Physical Address: Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,
Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

Postal Address: Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** ewt@ewt.org.za **Web:** www.ewt.org.za

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.



Kelly Marnewick, Manager of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) Carnivore Conservation Programme stated: "Currently the trade is known to affect many countries across Africa but we don't have a good understanding of the scale, the trade routes or the mode of operation. It is this situation that has prompted Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to propose the commissioning of the first serious study of the trade dedicated to answering these questions. The conference delegates will also be considering a range of possible solutions to the problem in which the new Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network is likely to feature. In South Africa 26% of cheetah on small reserves are being removed from the wild and sold into captivity and this is responsible for the current population decline of 5.7% per annum of cheetah on small reserves. It is this harmful trade that has prompted the EWT to launch the Cheetah Metapopulation Project, which co-ordinates a national metapopulation plan for cheetah in small, fenced reserves."

The Range Wide Programme for Cheetah and African Wild Dog Conservation (www.cheetahandwilddog.org) is a joint project of the Zoological Society of London (www.zsl.org) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (www.wcs.org), in collaboration with the IUCN Cat Specialist Group (www.catsg.org) and the Endangered Wildlife Trust (www.ewt.org.za). These organisations are jointly supporting the cause at a side event during the conference on March 8th.

For further information contact Dr. Nick Mitchell at the CITES conference on +66 (0)856 497 066 or cheetah@wcs.org; Dr. Sarah Durant on +44 (0)20 7449 6688 or sdurant@wcs.org available in London from March 7th; and Brendan Whittington-Jones on +27 (0) 72 992 9483 or brendanw@ewt.org.za

End.

About the IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group

The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group is responsible for the global assessment of the conservation status of all 37 wild living cat species. It coordinates and supports the activities of some 200 leading scientists, nature conservation officers and wild life managers in currently 57 countries. Its main tasks include the continuous assessment of the status and conservation needs of all felid species, the support of governments with strategic conservation planning, the development of capacity in felid conservation and the provision of services to members and partners.

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is dedicated to conserving threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people. Our Vision is a healthy planet and an equitable world that values and sustains diversity of all life. The EWT was established in 1973 and is registered as a Non-Profit Organisation. The EWT fills the key niche of on the ground conservation action. We identify the key factors threatening biodiversity and develop innovative methodologies and best practice guidelines to reduce these and promote harmonious co-existence and sustainable living for both people and wildlife. We achieve our goals through specialist programmes, and our skilled field staff are deployed regionally and throughout southern Africa. The EWT is a proud member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the United Nations Global Compact. Visit www.ewt.org.za for further information.

About the Range Wide Programme for Cheetah and African Wild Dog Conservation (RWP)

The Range Wide Programme for Cheetah and African Wild Dog Conservation (RWP) was initiated in 2007 in recognition of the fact that cheetahs and African wild dogs require large areas of land to sustain viable populations, and that both species were declining or extinct in much of their former range. To maintain such large areas there was a need to engage with stakeholders beyond traditional wildlife areas and to work with governments to find ways to protect these two species outside of gazetted wildlife estates. There are three regions under the RWP – North, West and Central Africa, East Africa and Southern Africa, each managed by a regional coordinator. www.cheetahandwilddog.org

About the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)

The Wildlife Conservation Society saves wildlife and wild places worldwide. We do so through science, global conservation, education and the management of the world's largest system of urban wildlife parks, led by the Flagship Bronx Zoo. Together these activities change attitudes toward nature and help people imagine wildlife and humans living in harmony. WCS is committed to this mission because it is essential to the integrity of life on Earth. Visit: www.wcs.org

About Zoological Society of London (ZSL)

Founded in 1826, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) is an international scientific, conservation and educational charity whose mission is to promote and achieve the worldwide conservation of animals and their habitats. Our mission is realised through our groundbreaking science, our active conservation projects in more than 50 countries and our two Zoos, ZSL London Zoo and ZSL Whipsnade Zoo. For more information visit www.zsl.org

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Contact: Kelly Marnewick
 Manager: Carnivore Conservation Programme
 Endangered Wildlife Trust
 Tel: +27 11 372 3600
Kellym@ewt.org.za

and

Nomonde Mxhalisa
 Communications Manager
 Endangered Wildlife Trust
 Tel: +27 11 372 3600
nomondem@ewt.org.za

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