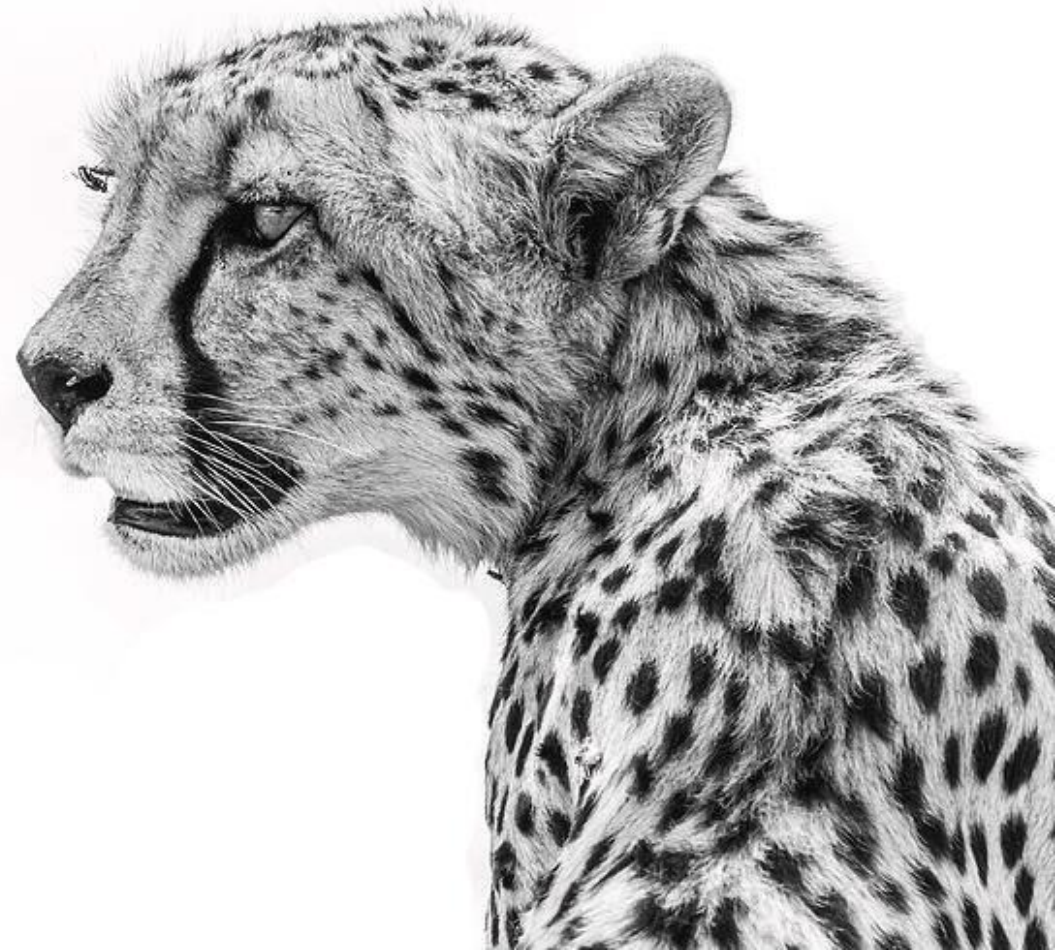


Situation of the Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii* in the Horn of Africa

IUCN SSC Cat Specialist Group



Background

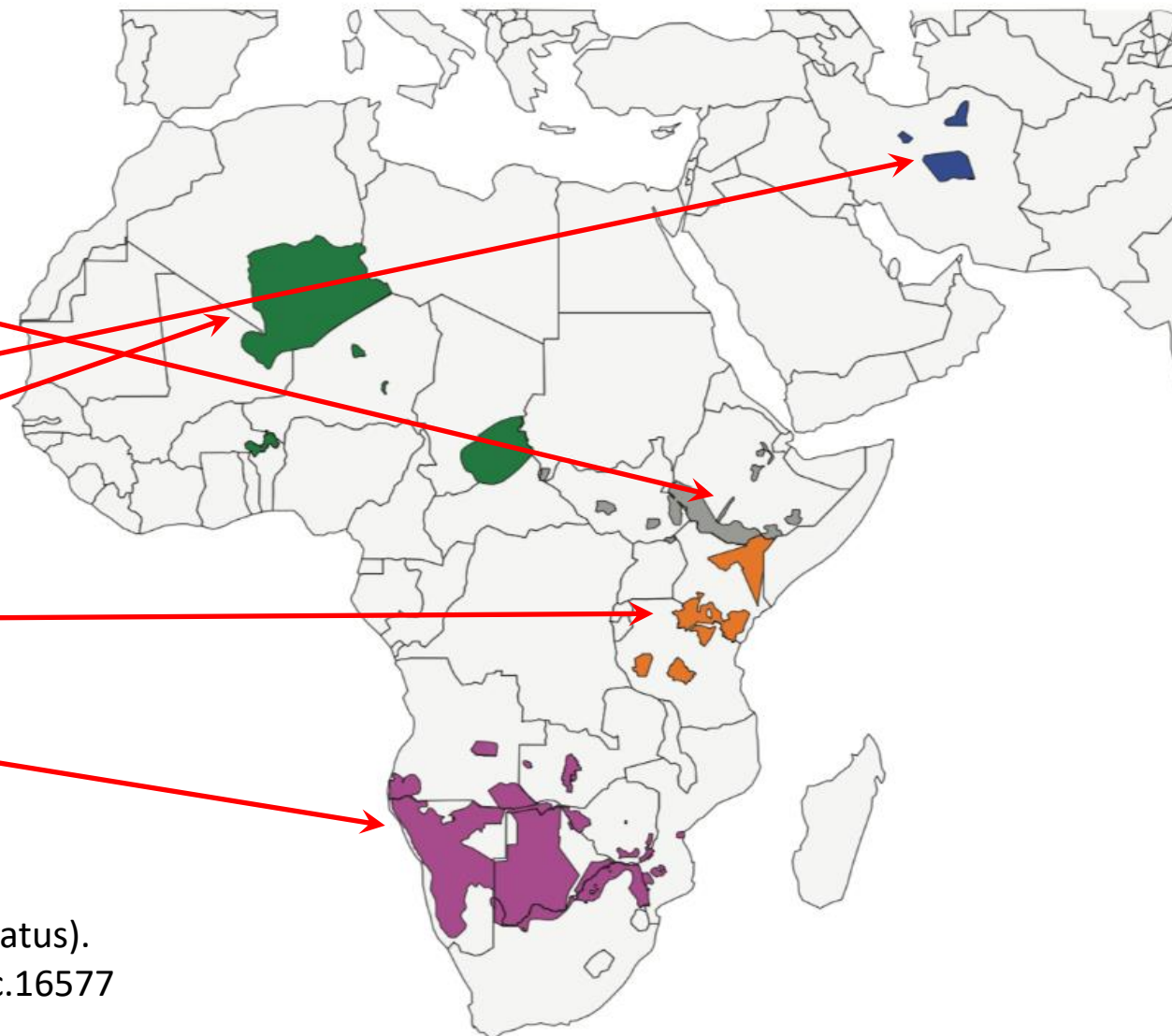
- Report provides an overview of the status of Cheetah in the Horn of Africa, *ssp. Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*, and options for the recovery of this subspecies
- Required under the Terms of Reference for the Intersessional Working Group on the Asiatic Cheetah established at the 5th Meeting of the Sessional Committee of the CMS Scientific Council (UNEP/CMS/ScC-SC5/Outcome 7).
- The report contributes to:
Objective 6 Sustainable use and management and
Objective 7: Illegal trade and illegal or incidental killing in the ACI POW
Including three Results and five Activities



Subspecies distribution

Five subspecies (Prost et al. 2022)

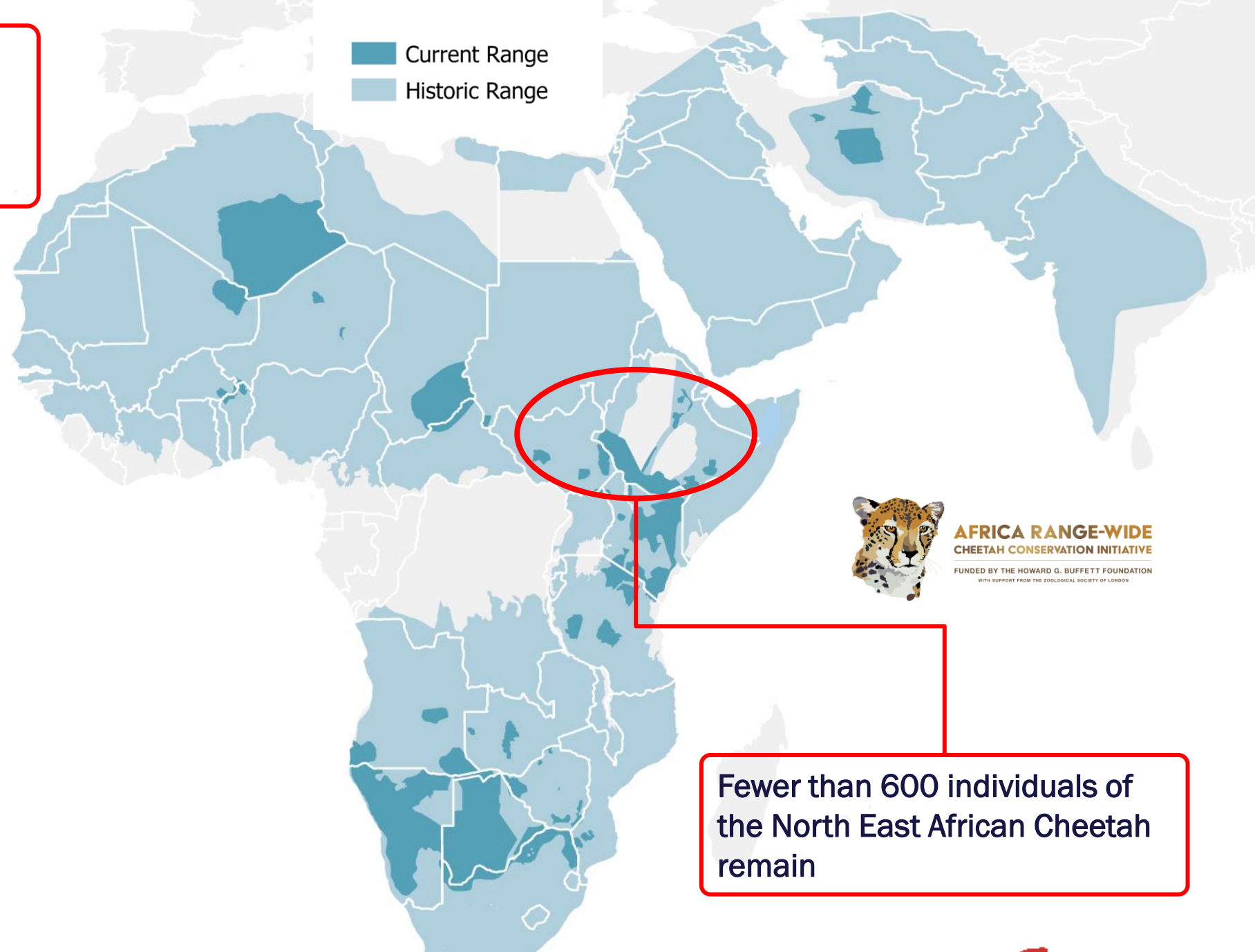
- *Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*
North East African Cheetah
- *Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*
- *Acinonyx jubatus hecki*
- *Acinonyx jubatus raineyi*
- *Acinonyx jubatus jubatus*



Prost, S. et al. 2022. Genomic analyses show extremely perilous conservation status of African and Asiatic cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*). *Molecular Ecology*, 31, 4208– 4223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mec.16577>



Cheetahs restricted to only 9% of their historical distribution



**AFRICA RANGE-WIDE
CHEETAH CONSERVATION INITIATIVE**
FUNDED BY THE HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION
WITH SUPPORT FROM THE ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

Fewer than 600 individuals of the North East African Cheetah remain



Cheetah threat assessment



- Species categorised as **Vulnerable** under IUCN based on past range reduction and ongoing decline (A4b C1)

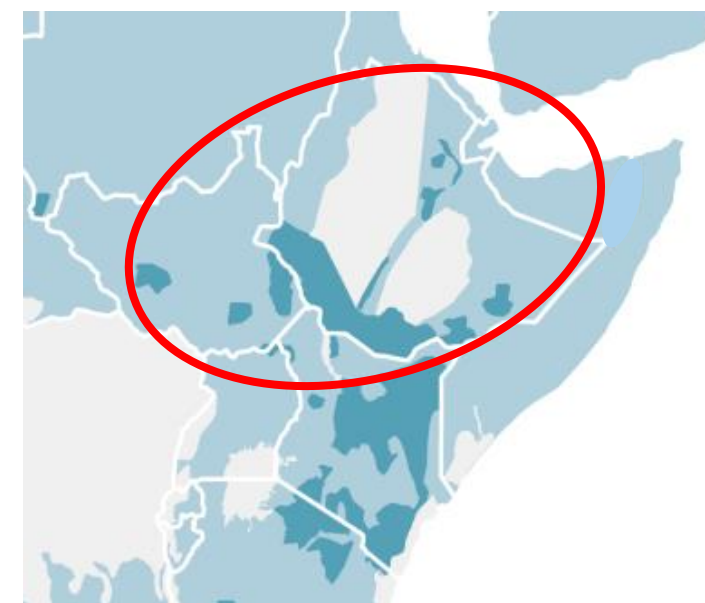


- North East African cheetah assessment is currently undergoing review but based on available data is likely to be **Endangered**



Horn of Africa cheetah populations are vulnerable to illegal trade

<i>Population name</i>	<i>No. of adults</i>	<i>Total area (km²)</i>	<i>Area inside PAs</i>	
			<i>Total (km²)</i>	<i>Relative (%)</i>
<u>Horn of Africa countries</u>				
Afar	10	4,480	1,092	24
Blen Afar	18	8,170	1,856	23
Ogaden	29	12,605	0	0
Yangudi Rassa	7	3,046	3,046	100
Kenya/Ethiopia/South Sudan	175	191,180	37,953	20
<u>Neighbouring countries</u>				
Kidepo/southern South Sudan	17	6,694	1,422	21
Badingilo NP	78	8,517	4,741	56
Radom NP	62	6,821	0	0
Southern NP	135	14,680	10,863	74
Total	533	256,193	60,973	24



References:

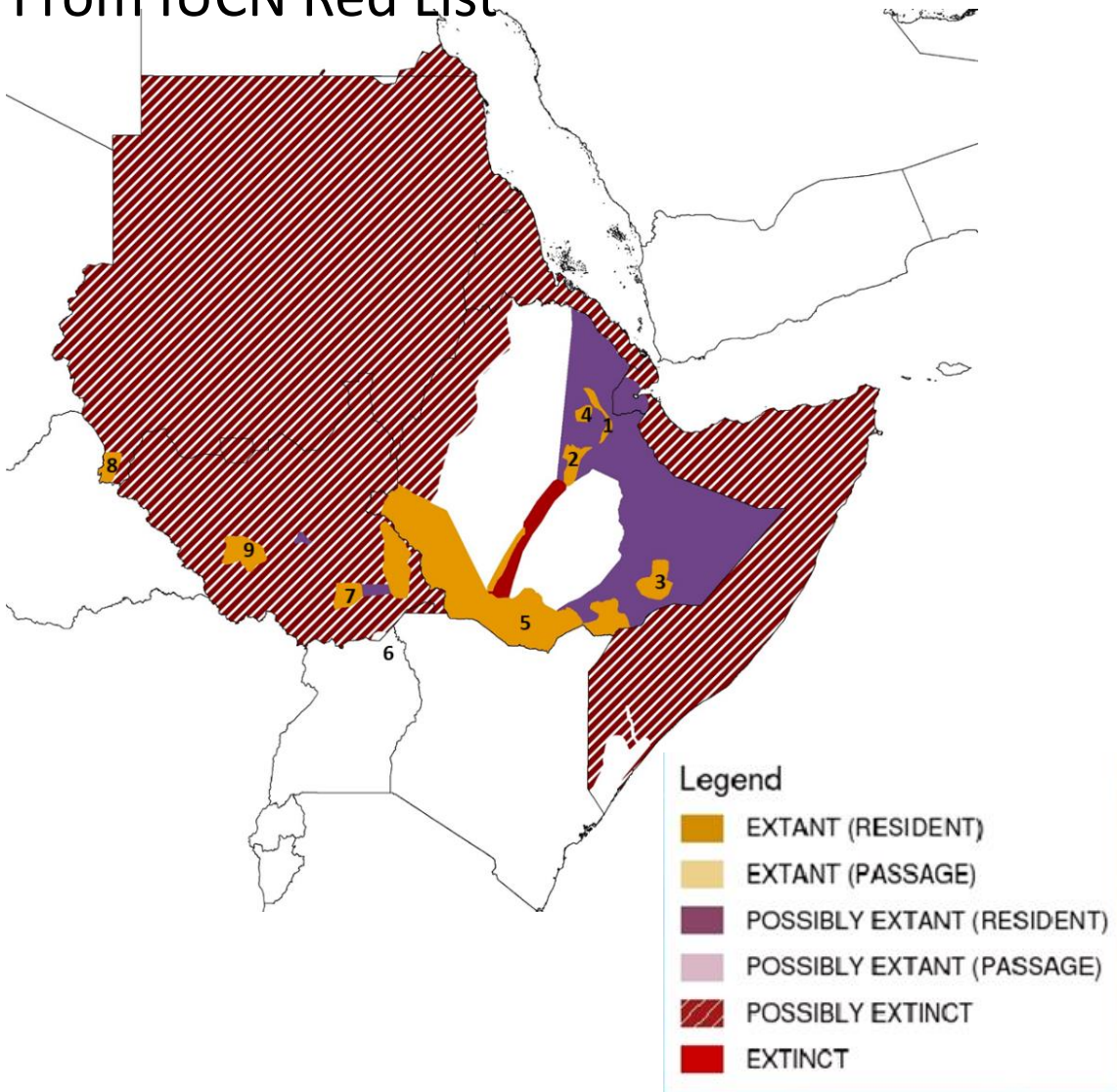
Durant, SM et al. 2017. The global decline of cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and what it means for conservation. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.*, 114, 528-533 10.1073/pnas.1611122114;

Durant et al. 2022 *Acinonyx jubatus*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2022: e.T219A124366642. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2022-1.RLTS.T219A124366642.en>.

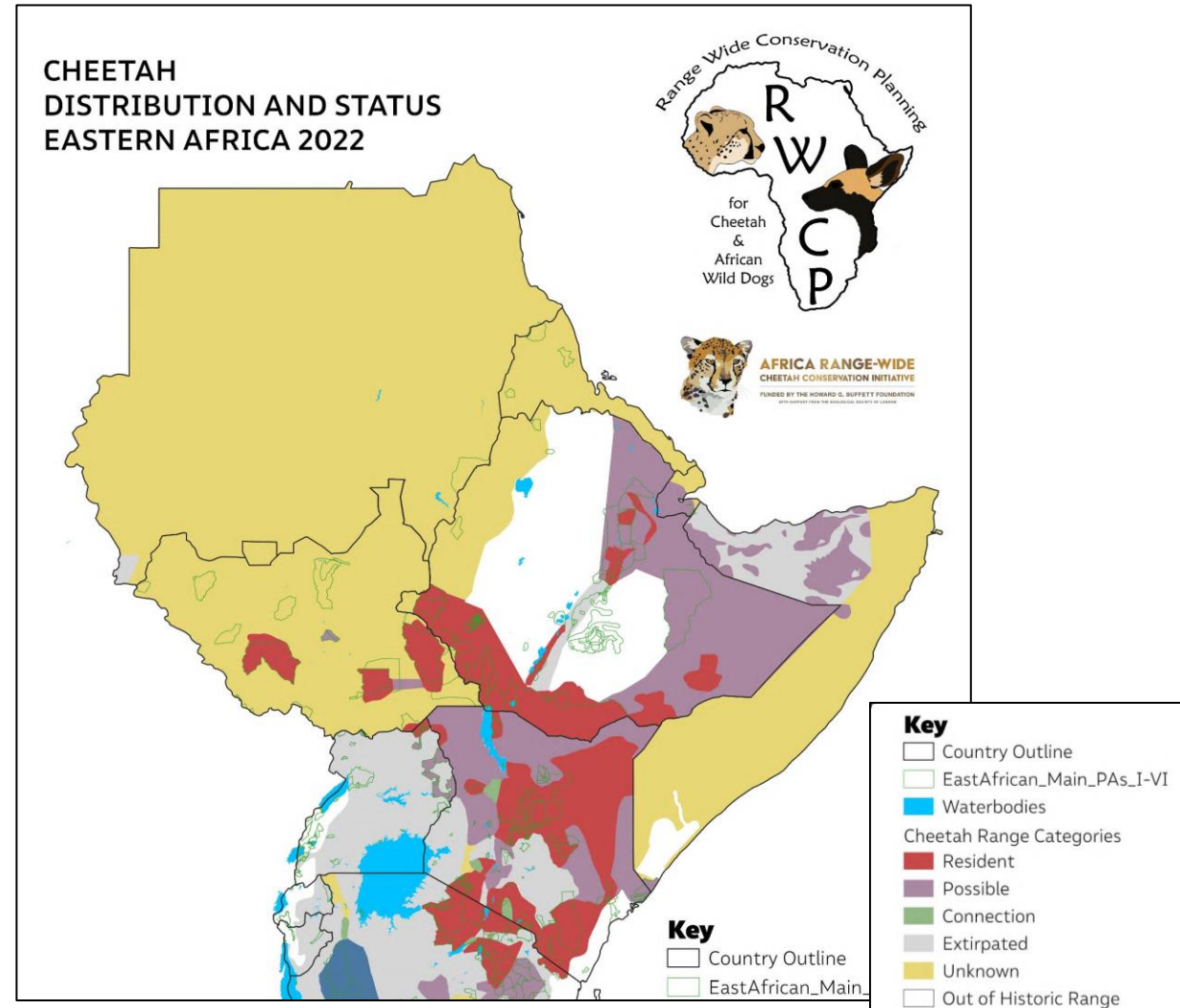


Distribution of North East African cheetah: *A. j. Soemmeringii*

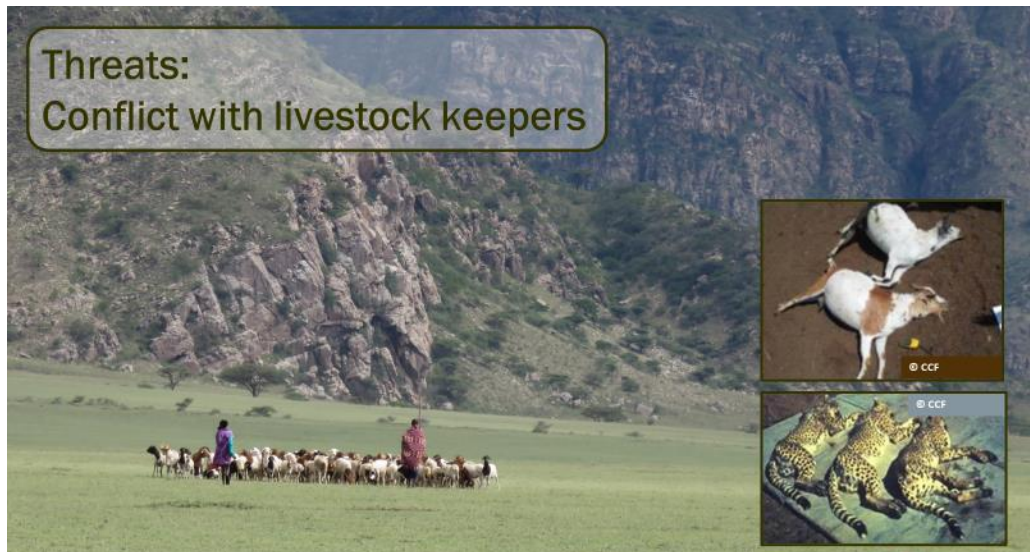
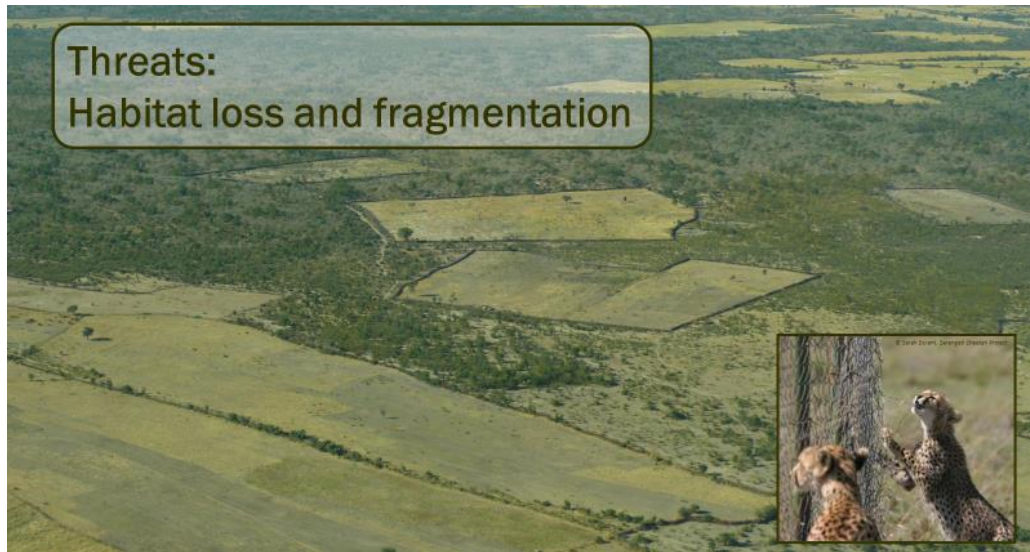
From IUCN Red List



From Eastern Africa strategy - draft



Threats



Threats: Illegal trade in live animals



Scale of illegal trade in North East African Cheetah

CITES Report on the legal and illegal trade in big cats SC75.13 Annex 2

- Seizures were most frequently recorded as occurring in Somalia (23%), followed by Kenya (13%), and Tanzania and Saudi Arabia (both 6%)
- Live cheetahs were among the most seized items reported

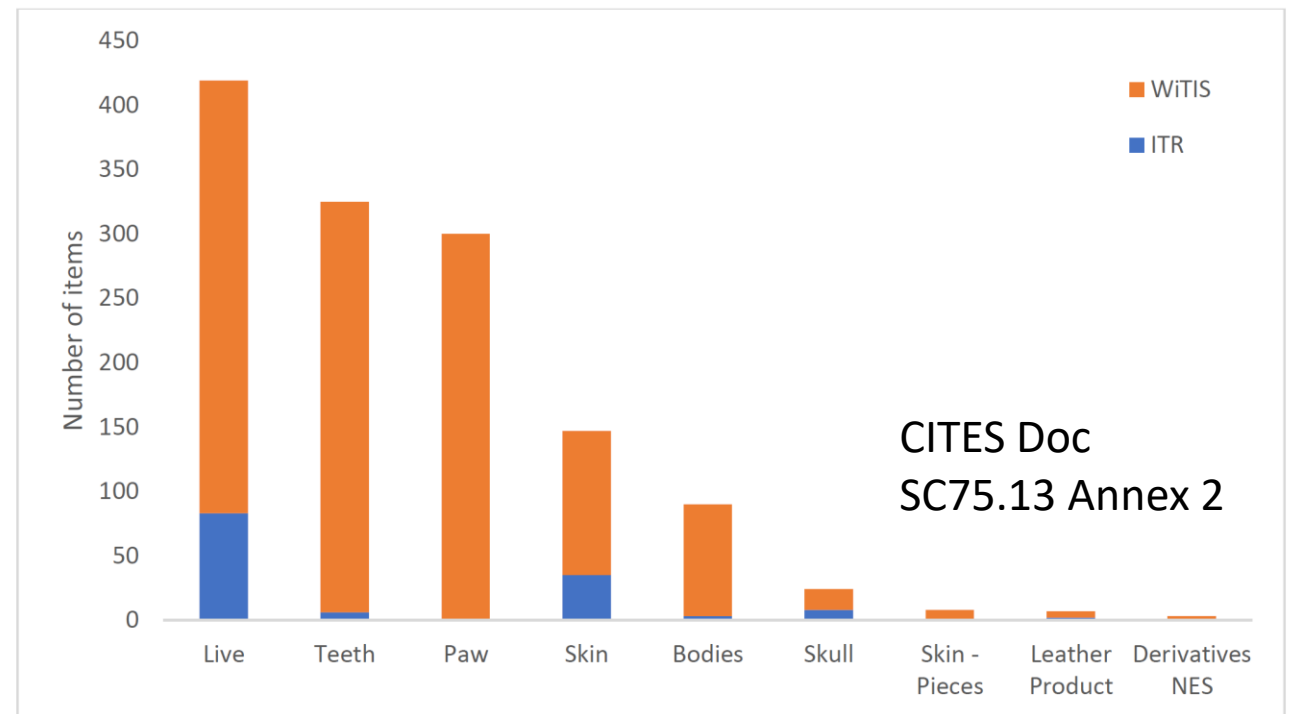


Figure 13: Cheetah commodities seized by number of items 2010-2021 (Source: WITIS and CITES Illegal Trade Reports).



Scale of illegal trade in North East African Cheetah

Data from Tricorache et al. 2021

- More than 400 cheetah/year reported as traded between 2010-2019
- Majority animals traded live (87%), remaining trade primarily skins
- Trade is widespread across cheetah-range states, but Somalia (42%), Kenya (13%) and Ethiopia (10%) constitute highest proportion of records (65%)
- Trade was detected in 41 non-cheetah range states.



Scale of illegal trade in North East African Cheetah

Recent data

- 40 cubs were confiscated in 2022 and survivors are housed in CCF facilities in Somalia's northwest region
- 6 cubs were confiscated in 2023 and housed in CCF facilities in Somalia's northwest region
- 15 cubs were confiscated in the last few days in the Somali region of Ethiopia
- Recent unpublished data from Tricorache using the same methodology indicates no decline in trade between 2020-2022.



Cheetah market price

Period	Poacher Ethiopia/Somalia	Middleman Somalia	Exporter Somalia	Importer selling Yemen/Saudi Arabia	Middleman to consumer Saudi Arabia/UAE
2010–2015	80–500	700-1,500	135-5,400	1,890-7,965	2,700-27,000
2016–2020	100–500	700–2,500	3,000–5,000	1 998–8,100	6,750–30,000

Source: Tricorache P. and Stiles, D. Live Cheetah - Black Market Brief. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC), 2021, and Tricorache P. pers. Comm. 2022.



Sustainability of the illegal trade

- Reproduction rates in cheetah are high – 3-4 cubs after a 3 month gestation
- Data from Serengeti shows that a mother conceives on average within three weeks of the loss of her cubs
- A production rate of 6 cubs per female per year is feasible
- Any adult mortality associated with trade capture will have a serious additional impact on population viability



Sustainability of the live trade

Country	Total number of Cheetahs documented	Total number of cubs documented
Bahrain	12	9
Kuwait	310	205
Oman	13	12
Qatar	98	72
Saudi Arabia	1,558	1,298
UAE	482	313
Yemen	309	270
Grand Total	2,782	2,179

- Represents the majority of documented incidents of illegal trade in live Cheetah outside range states – only 177 total and 6 cubs documented outside the Gulf states

Tricorache, P., Yashphe, S. and Marker, L. 2021. Global dataset for seized and non-intercepted illegal Cheetah trade (*Acinonyx jubatus*) 2010-2019. *Data in Brief* 35: 106848. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dib.2021.106848>



Sustainability of the illegal trade

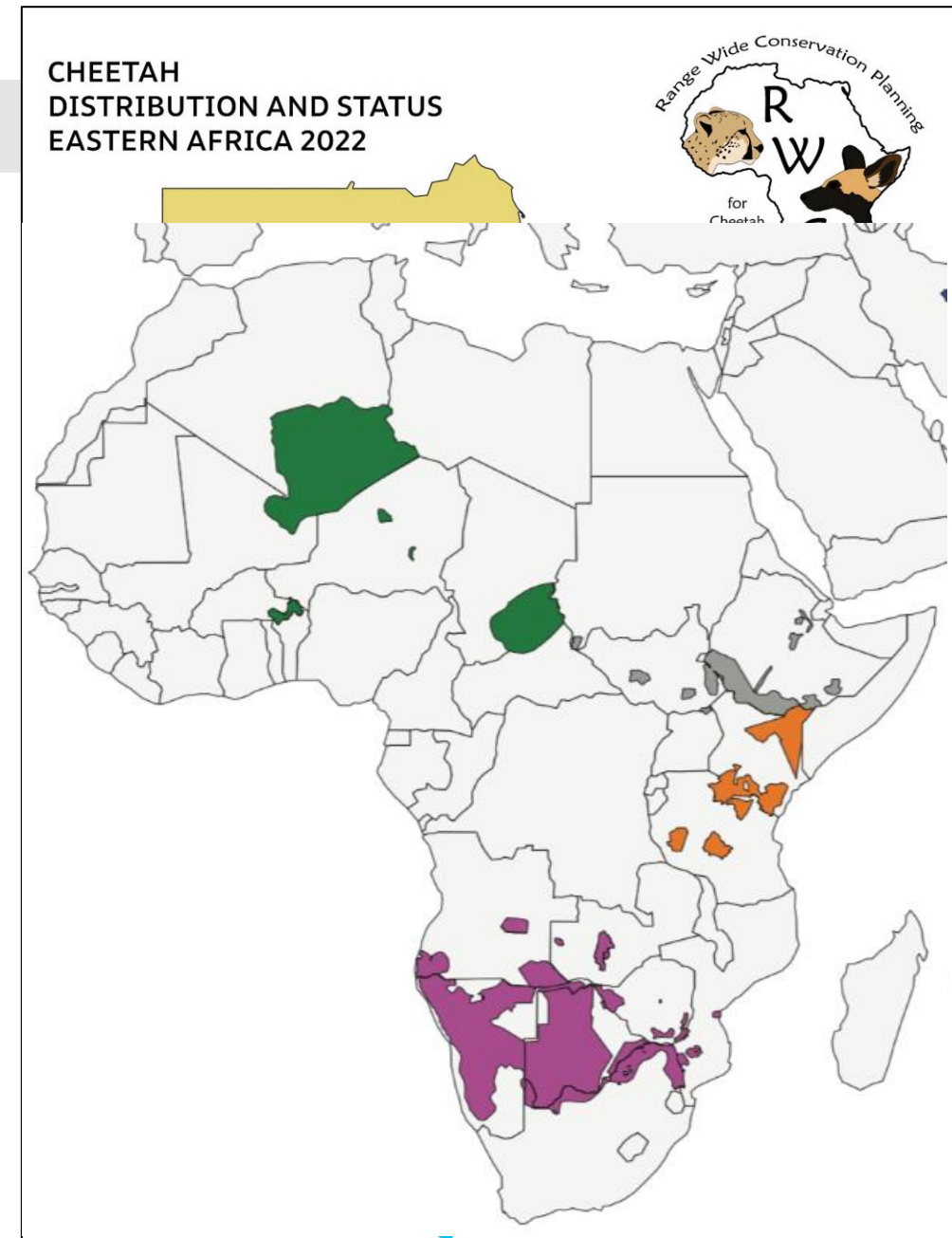
- Tricorache et al. 2021 estimate 218 cubs traded per year
- Mortality rates of 70% estimated ahead of detection – 727 cubs to provide 218 documented cubs
- Requires a population of 121 adult female Cheetah each producing 6 cubs per year
- Although this level of offtake is possible for a population of c 500 adults (incl. c. 250 females), it is unlikely to be sustainable
- It will suppress recruitment in wild populations closest to trade routes
- Any adult mortality associated with trade capture will have a serious additional impact on population viability



Recommendations

Improve knowledge base

1. Research to understand harvest patterns. This should include a) understanding the spatial harvesting patterns; b) understanding methods of Cheetah cub capture, and whether such captures lead to surplus killings of adult females; and c) assessment of the level of undetected trade, including estimation of the survival rate of captured animals at each stage of the trafficking process, and an estimation of the extent of unreported and undetected trade.
2. Research to understand drivers of demand in order to design interventions to change behaviour and suppress demand.
3. Research to understand the role of social media and encrypted messaging apps in the illegal trade in Cheetah at different stages of the trafficking process, in order to design interventions to combat the trade.
4. Identify, assess and monitor key indicators of habitat status for free-living cheetah populations in the Horn of Africa and identify priority areas for long-term monitoring.
5. Surveys to provide abundance estimates for vulnerable populations, and the establishment of long-term strategies for monitoring Cheetah population trends.
6. Genetic research to identify the limits to *A. j. soemmeringii* distributional range, including identifying whether populations in South Sudan, Northern Kenya and Uganda are comprised of members of this subspecies. A more limited distributional range of *A. j. soemmeringii* would substantially increase the urgency of addressing the decline in the North-East African Cheetah subspecies.



Recommendations

Reduce demand

7. Active engagement with social media companies to remove posts associated with Cheetah trade and to remove images that promote the use of Cheetahs as pets in order to reduce demand.
8. Interventions, such as raising awareness and targeted enforcement, to change behaviour and suppress demand.



Recommendations

Improve cooperation and information exchange

9. Put in place harmonized national databases of illegal Cheetah trade incidents to support counter trafficking efforts across the Horn of Africa region.
10. Create a centralized inventory of confiscated Cheetahs (and their offspring in captivity), which should be continuously updated/expanded in cooperation with HAWEN in all countries holding such Cheetahs and including all holders.
11. Improve international cooperation and transboundary conservation within the range of *A. j. soemmeringii*, including protection of prey species and habitats, under the auspices of international conservation conventions and consideration of the establishment of transboundary conservation areas.



Recommendations

Improve protection and conservation

12. Provide support to HAWEN to allow it to fulfil its function to combat illegal trade in *A. j. soemmeringii*.
13. Ensure that the ACI POW is implemented in full, particularly the three Results and five Activities relating to illegal trade in Cheetah under Objectives 6 and 7
14. Improve understanding of the anthropogenic drivers of poaching of cheetah and its prey and its impacts on population dynamics to inform meaningful management and conservation strategies.
15. Improve capacity in *A. j. soemmeringii* Range States for monitoring Cheetah, for wildlife protection in general, and for combatting illegal trade in Cheetah specifically.
16. Consider use of confiscated animals within a sustainable *ex situ* conservation Cheetah breeding population as a potential source population for future reintroductions or reinforcements. This could include, for example, allowing confiscated individuals to become part of an international *ex situ* breeding programme.



Thank you



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