



African Lion © Jacques-André Dupont

## BIG CATS UNDER CMS

Four cat species are covered by the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). They have been added due to their poor conservation status, vast home ranges and high numbers of transboundary populations.

The **Cheetah** (except for the Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe populations) and the **Snow Leopard** are listed on CMS Appendix I, meant for species that are endangered. With some very limited exceptions, any take of these species is prohibited.

The **Leopard** and **Lion** are listed on CMS Appendix II, meant for species that have an unfavourable conservation status and that require or would significantly benefit from international cooperation (Uganda and South Africa have submitted reservations on the listings).

Apart from being listed on its Appendixes, the CMS Conference of Parties has adopted a number of conservation measures for the species.

The **Snow Leopard** and **Asiatic Cheetah** are covered by the Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI), providing for measures to increase prey populations, combat illegal trade and establish protected areas and corridors amongst others.

All African carnivores are covered by the Joint CMS-CITES African Carnivores Initiative (CMS Decisions 12.55-60, 12.61-12.66 and 12.67-12.70) that seeks, with the support of IUCN, to implement conservation measures for the species ranging from the development of action plans and strategies to establishing species inventories, addressing human-wildlife conflict and awareness raising of Government authorities.

The work on African Lion was born out of the discussion of African Lion Range States in Uganda in 2016, resulting in the '**Entebbe Communiqué**'.

## Species Facts

### Snow Leopard:

Snow Leopards, also known as the “Ghost of the Mountains” are the top predator in their harsh Asian mountain environments. They are an indicator species, which can thrive in undisturbed habitats, under good protection measures for ungulates, and good management. Snow Leopards range from Russia in the north, to India and the Himalayas in the south. They probably number fewer than 10,000. The terrain makes survey work difficult so the figures are the best estimate experts can give.

### Leopard:

Leopards are highly adaptable to different environments and widely distributed throughout Africa and Asia, but populations have been dramatically reduced over the last decades. Habitat fragmentation, prey loss, and conflicts with farming are the main threats. Leopards have lost 48-67 per cent of their historical range in Africa, 83-87 per cent in Asia, and 70 per cent on the Arabian Peninsula. Depending on the environment, Leopards can play either a mesopredator or apex predator role, controlling prey populations.

### Lion:

Lions are apex predators, critical to ecosystem stability. They live in matriarchal social structures, occupying open woodlands and thick bush. Lions are thought to currently occupy only 8 per cent of their historical range. Threats to Lions include habitat loss and conversion, prey base depletion, human-Lion conflict, and use of body parts in traditional medicine. The loss of this top predator would have widespread impacts on nature.

### African Cheetah:

The fastest land animal, the Cheetah was once also one of the most widely distributed animals. It is now Africa’s most threatened big cat. They have large home ranges and are semi-nomadic, requiring protection across vast territories. Today, the Cheetah remains in only 9 per cent of its historical range, the remaining free-ranging populations found in small, fragmented areas in 29 African countries.

### Asiatic Cheetah:

The Asiatic Cheetah is under great threat: there are only an estimated 50 mature individuals, found in the Kavir desert region of Iran. It is threatened by lack of prey, habitat fragmentation, highways, and conflict with local farmers. Unless urgent action is taken to save the Asiatic Cheetah, it will be extinct in the very near future.

# BIG CATS OF CMS

## The Joint CMS-CITES African Carnivores Initiative (ACI)

ACI will pool existing resources and streamline conservation efforts, including NGO-led initiatives and existing IUCN strategies.

Big cats in Africa suffer from some of the same threats:

- 1) Habitat loss and fragmentation;
- 2) Conflict with humans;
- 3) Depletion of the prey base;
- 4) Unsustainable or illegal trade practices.

### How will the ACI help?

The African Carnivores Initiative will enhance conservation efforts of the big cats in Africa by:

- Concrete, coordinated conservation programmes for the target species, with local and regional projects implemented across their African ranges;
- Policy guidance and recommendations for Range States;
- Collaboration with other conservation initiatives and organizations.

The added value of addressing the four species together and joining forces of CMS and CITES will include:

- Increased conservation means for all four species by pooling funds and expertise;
- More equitable deployment of resources amongst the four species;
- Avoidance of duplicative activities and associated costs;
- Coordinated and consolidated support to Range States in implementing conservation measures;
- More effective and immediate conservation actions across the range of the four species.

Range States are urged to work through the ACI to implement CMS and CITES resolutions and decisions relating to the targeted species, as a way to increase efficiency and effectiveness of their actions.

## The Central Asian Mammals Initiative (CAMI)

CAMI provides a common international framework to address threats to migratory mammals in the Central Asia region.

### What does CAMI do for Big Cats?

Apart from **Snow Leopard** and **Asiatic Cheetah**, CAMI also provides for conservation measures of their important prey animals: Argali, Chinkara, and Goitered Gazelle. Conservation measures such as sustainable hunting have been agreed for the Argali sheep- a major food source for Snow Leopard.

In order to improve the movement of **Snow Leopard** and **Asiatic Cheetah**, their migration routes and barriers to migration were mapped. The maps can now be used by Governments to amend infrastructure and allow the free movement of animals.

Given the perilous situation of the **Asiatic Cheetah** CAMI calls for increasing the number and size of protected areas in Iran, improving habitat connectivity, identifying migration corridors and, surveys for potential habitat. Support has been offered to the Iranian Government to address the situation as a matter of urgency.



Cheetah and Leopard © John Birch

## About CMS

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, works for the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals worldwide through negotiation and implementation of agreements and species action plans. It has 126 Member States (as of 1 March 2018).

CMS engages all relevant stakeholders in addressing wildlife crime in concert with all other aspects of wildlife conservation and management.

## CMS Instruments

Animals receive protection under CMS through listing on its two Appendices, through global or regional agreements and through action plans.

## Contact



UNEP / CMS Secretariat

UN Campus

Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1

D-53113 Bonn, Germany

Tel: (+49 228) 815 24 01/02

Fax: (+49 228) 815 24 49

E-mail: [cms.secretariat@cms.int](mailto:cms.secretariat@cms.int)

[www.cms.int](http://www.cms.int)

For more Fact Sheets please visit: <http://www.cms.int/en/publications/factsheets>



<https://www.facebook.com/bonnconvention>



<https://www.twitter.com/bonnconvention>