

THE CHEETAH OF THE ALGERIAN SAHARA
(As at 2 November 2018 / Prepared by the Secretariat)

Summary:

The Presentation in the Annex of this document was presented to the 1st Meeting of Range States for the Joint CMS – CITES African Carnivore Initiative by Algeria. It contains an update on the conservation status of the Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) in the Algerian Sahara, and discusses population trends and threats to cheetah populations in West, Central and Northern Africa.



Convention on International Trade in Endangered
Species of Wild Fauna and Flora



[Convention on the Conservation
of Migratory Species of Wild Animals](#)

First Range State Meeting of the Joint CMS-CITES African Carnivores Initiative (ACI1) Bonn Germany, 05 - 08 Nov 2018

The cheetah of the Algerian Sahara
(*Acinonyx jubatus hecki*)

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ALGERIA,

The cheetah of the Sahara (*Acinonyx jubatus hecki*) presents nowadays major stakes for the conservatives of animal species. Although all species require large spaces, the cheetah is the one that needs bigger ones to thrive,

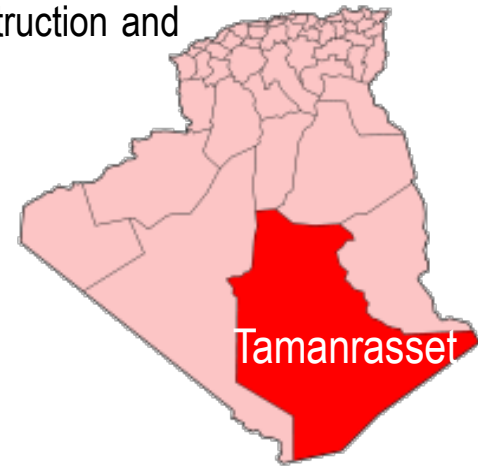
At a time when demographics are invading the natural biotopes of wild life species, the critically endangered Cheetah Critically Endangered is often the first to suffer serious consequences, resulting in its disappearance in the wild nature

As Man encroaches on the last wilderness, Cheetah are particularly sensitive to the destruction and fragmentation of habitats which are often the first species to disappear.

With an area of 2,381,741 km², Algeria contains a diversity of wild life species significant.

Indeed, the wilaya of Tamanrasset covers an area of 557,906 km² (area greater than that of metropolitan France: 543,965 km²).

Cultural Park of the Ahaggar only, presents a surface of 45.000 Km². (4,500,000 Ha).
The second largest national park in Algeria.



The wilaya of Illizi covers an area of 284,618 km² (+1/2 of France).
The Tassili n'Ajjer contains 138,000 km² (+ 5th of France)



$$\text{Tassili n'Ajjer} + \text{Ahaggar} = 45.000 + 138.000 = 183.000 \text{ km}^2$$

Area of distribution

Historically, cheetahs' range of distribution extended throughout the entire territory with the exception of the coast line.

The cheetah is a generalist species, and is able to survive in many environmental conditions, from the Sahara desert to dense vegetation, as long as its prey is available.

The numbers of the species in the whole of Tassili and Hoggar are very limited, We thought that it is possible that these species are already extinct.

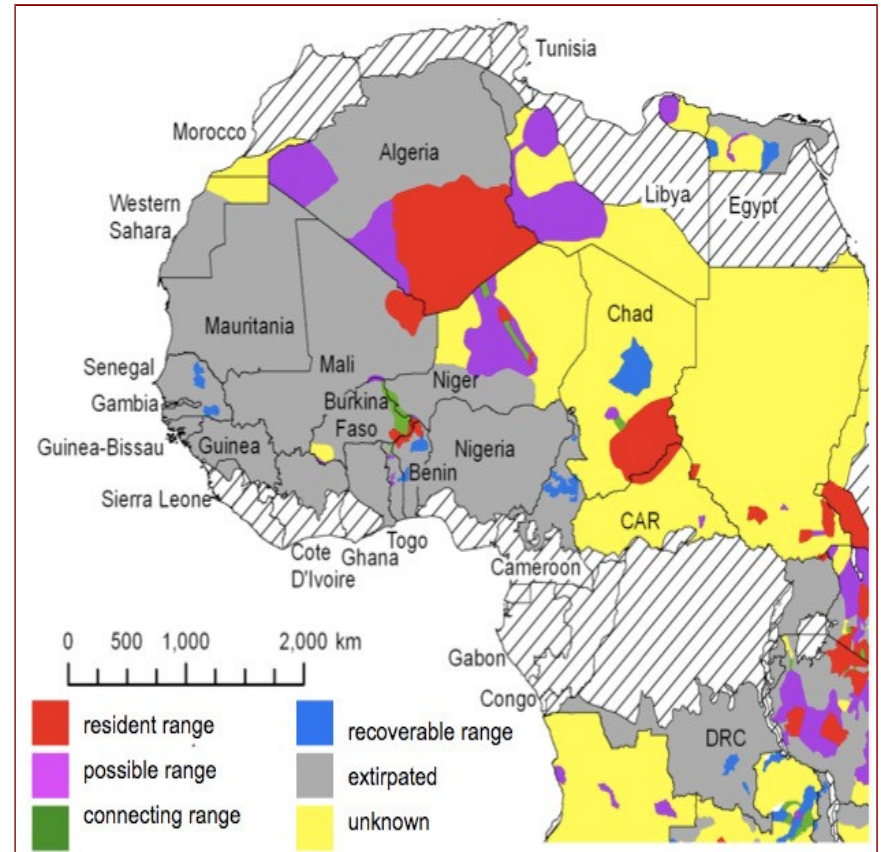
However, according to interviews with local people, it is still possible to observe the species in remote areas.



The current range of the cheetah as well as the area of residence of the species are much smaller today than they've ever been historically.

Although the species are still alive, or could potentially be rehabilitated, in other locations, it is now considered extinct in most of its historical range.

However, Algeria, Niger and Libya all have large areas of potential area for the species. In this habitat, a census of the species is therefore imperative.



Knowing that the maximum density of cheetahs is 1/1000 km².

At present, all these individuals are part of the subspecies *Acinonyx jubatus hecki*, which is currently classified as a Critically Endangered Species on the IUCN Red List (Belbachir, 2008),

The results of a genetic analysis could reveal that the population of Algeria / Mali / Niger and Burkina Faso are perhaps the only population of this still viable subspecies.

In addition, establishing the genetic identity of these threatened populations seems urgent

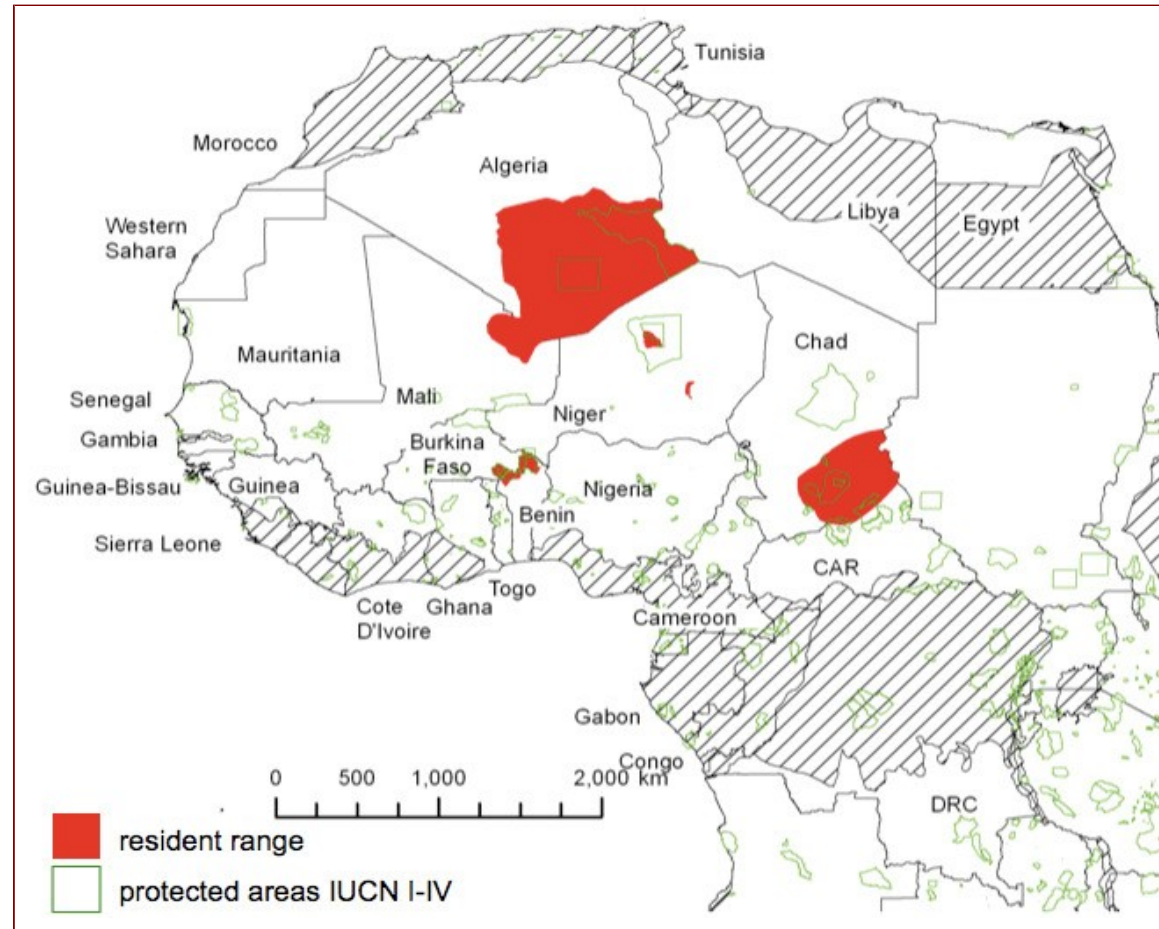


Photo: Belbachir,F

PROBLEMATICS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CHEETAH

The problems currently encountered in Cheetah management in Algeria are as followed:

- Few recent information available concerning the Cheetah in the Sahara, as well as the numbers, the exact distribution, the migratory movements ...;
- Lack of specialists in management, monitoring and rearing of cheetah in semi-captivity that can provide specialized training to managers and technicians of protected areas concerned by the rehabilitation of Felida;
- In Algeria, there is still no Cheetah breeding in captivity or a rehabilitation program for these species.
- Although translocations of groups of individuals may occur in a natural environment conducive to capture, however, the technicality and experience of capturing wild animals from the wild remain unknown;
- Lack of experience in financial packages in the implementation of cat rehabilitation projects ,

Cheetah observation report by the natives



Hoggar region

Period	location	Composition
15/12/2011	Torha	Mal
07/03/2012		+ female folowed
05/11/2011	IDLES- Est	Mal
15/12/2012		+ femal folowed
MAI à Aout	AMGUID BATHA TRAGHMEN	3 Males 2 Females 4 Cubs

Period	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008	Year 2009	Year 2010	Year 2011	Year 2012
Fréeuencies	2	4	1	2	1	20	30	15

Tassili region

Period	location	Composition
16/09/2009	Tafassasset	1 Female with 2 Cubs
2010	ANHEF (Plateau du Tassili)	4 adults
2011		5 adults
2012		5 adults



Périodes	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Frequencies	1	1	7	4	3	4	5	5

On the tracks of Cheetah



















REGRESSING FACTORS OF CHEETAH POPULATIONS



Photo: Cheetah released, "Tamanrasset 2008"

REGRESSING FACTORS OF CHEETAH POPULATIONS

The causes of the decline of Cheetah populations in the Sahara can be summed up in two factors:

1) NATURAL FACTORS

The influence of the drought periods experienced between 1980 and 1990 in southern Algeria and which greatly reduced the productivity of environments and consequently the regression of prey populations including herbivores such as: gazelles and mouflons.

This resulted in a migration of the Cheetah population from areas where it was relatively protected in search of more suitable areas.

This migration may expose populations to new dangers as they cross in areas of high human occupation

2) HUMAN FACTORS

21) Environmental degradation

The human population and herds have increased, leading to a serious degradation of natural environments (cutting, overgrazing), resulting in a decrease in their productivity, increasing the impact of drought periods, and an increase in disturbances. In recent years, many herds have been transported by pastoralists to temporarily favorable pastures, and particularly in the vast corridors of southern Algeria, whereas in such environments, large fauna could, during these favorable years, reproduce in many areas a relative quietude

22) hunting and poaching The emergence of modern fire arms, the construction of an important road network (tracks and roads), and the development of means of transport, especially off-road cars, have led to an intensification of hunting. Intensive hunting of protected species considered pre-dominant prey of the Cheetah, such as Gazelles and bighorn sheep

23) destruction of habitats The degradation of the environment and the intensification of hunting and poaching have led to a sharp decline in the populations of large herbivores, preferential prey of the Cheetah, which has had to partly fall back on the camel and sheep herds. The presence of the animal has therefore been intolerable by nomadic pastoralists, resulting in a further increase in hunting pressure against it

24) Tourism

The current impact of tourism on local fauna, especially in the Saharan regions has some negative effects on populations with reduced numbers.

This is the case of the capture of Fennec for sale to tourists. Also, the visits of the tourist sites in particular in the natural regions (beds of oued, the Guelta) disrupt the activities of the local fauna considerably.

A fundamental factor in the regression of the species is the collapse of the populations of dorcas gazelles, which constitute an essential prey of the Saharan cheetahs.

The Cheetah is often observed in areas where gazelles are abundant. However, cheetah can consume smaller prey and survive in areas where gazelles are absent.

According to many local accounts, the cheetah attacks small livestock (goats and sheep), as well as dogs



Cheetah relationship with the indigenous population

Nomads and Touareg transhumance in the region, do not tolerate the presence of the species around their camp and do not hesitate to shoot the animal as soon as it approaches or attacks their livestock.

Breeders in the region consider it a potential plague because of the losses suffered by their livestock, particularly the chameleons.



Photo: Chamelon attacked by a cheetah

CONSLUSION

The geographical distribution of cheetahs in West, Central and Northern Africa has contracted drastically over the past 100-200 years. Historically, their range was 12 million km², but today, now, it covers only 9% while still being able to shelter resident cheetah populations.

Algeria and Chad, support the vast majority of cheetahs in this region, comprising more than 88% of the species' area of residence.

In addition, almost 80% of cheetahs' area of residence is outside protected areas. All populations are likely to be cross-border and, as such, depend on international cooperation for their survival.

This shows the importance and emergency of ensuring that cheetah conservation efforts are put in place as soon as possible, before more habitat is permanently lost or fragmented.

The cheetah of North Africa is one of the last wild felids with caracal (*Felis cervale*) and wild cats (*Felis margarite*) populating these areas.

The deterioration of habitats, the poaching of prey species will cause the irreversible decline of the Cheetah.

Implementing an action plan for the conservation and rehabilitation of the Cheetah, deploying the means likely to strengthen cooperation and benefit from the experience of each of the actors involved in the conservation of animal species, is important and necessary.

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National action plan for Cheetah and african wild dog Algeria

http://www.cheetahandwilddog.org/WP/staging/9849/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/national-action-plan-for-cheetah-and-african-wild-dogs_algeria_2015.pdf