Tsavo Cheetah Project

The Cheetah - Why They Need Protection

The cheetah (Acinonyx jubatus) is the last surviving member of the Acinonyx genus and is listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN. Once ranging across Africa and southwestern Asia, cheetahs now occupy less than 10% of their historic range.

Built for speed, cheetahs are extraordinary hunters. With their lean bodies and long legs, they can reach 112 km/h, making them the fastest land animal.

Key Adaptations

- **Powerful cardiovascular system:** A large, muscular heart and strong arteries rapidly circulate blood during intense chases.
- **Streamlined skull:** A small head, short muzzle, and enlarged nasal passages maximize oxygen intake while minimizing weight.
- **Semi-retractable claws:** Unique among wild cats, these claws provide traction, while tough paw pads allow tight, high-speed turns.

Threats to Survival

Cheetahs face growing threats—nearly all driven by human expansion:

- **Habitat loss & fragmentation:** With an average home range of ~800 km^2, cheetahs are extremely sensitive to shrinking landscapes.
- **Conflict with livestock owners:** Most cheetahs live outside protected areas, heightening risk of retaliation after livestock depredation.
- **Roads & vehicle collisions:** Highways crossing cheetah habitat cause frequent mortalities and disrupt movement.
- **Human disturbance:** As naturally skittish animals, even vehicle presence can interrupt hunting, alter resting behavior, and lead mothers to abandon cubs.

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The Tsavo Conservation Area

Spanning over 25,000 square kilometers, Kenya's Tsavo ecosystem includes Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks—two of the most important strongholds for cheetahs in East Africa. The region forms part of the greater Maasai Mara–Serengeti system, supporting one of Kenya's largest remaining cheetah populations.

However, the landscape is increasingly fragmented. The A23 highway and expanding settlements threaten connectivity between wildlife populations and increase conflict with communities. Maintaining functional corridors between Tsavo East and West is essential to preserving genetic diversity.

Since 2011, the Tsavo Cheetah Project has partnered with numerous landowners, ranches, and conservancies to reduce conflict, protect movement pathways, and promote coexistence.

About the project

Our Approach

The Tsavo Cheetah Project combines non-invasive research, community engagement, and landscape-scale conservation to ensure the long-term persistence of cheetahs in Tsavo. As human development increases, promoting coexistence is critical to preventing further population decline.

Objectives

- Identify individual cheetahs using camera traps to monitor population size and movements.
- Verify livestock predation events and provide practical strategies to prevent conflict and reduce retaliatory killings.
- Engage local communities through education, coexistence training, and public outreach.
- Collaborate with ranches and conservancies to strengthen monitoring and protect wildlife corridors essential for long-distance movement.

You can help

By supporting the Tsavo Cheetah Project, you directly protect one of Africa's most endangered big cats and the ecosystem that sustains them. Your contribution fuels science-based conservation, supports local communities, and preserves biodiversity.

Every dollar goes directly to fieldwork that makes a measurable impact.

TCP Wishlist

- Camera trap package (camera, security case, cable lock, SD card, batteries): $280
- Monthly salary for a Kenyan research & conservation officer: $500
- Vehicle fuel & field operations for one day: $50

Scan the QR Code or visit
felidaefund.org
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Our partners

Kenya Wildlife Service • Taita-Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association
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