



# Gujarat's Banni Grasslands Ready for Cheetah Reintroduction

[Source: TH](#)

[Banni Grasslands](#) in Gujarat, a designated site under [Project Cheetah](#), is now ready for **cheetah** reintroduction with a **600-hectare enclosure**, **rising herbivore populations**, and necessary **infrastructure**.

## Banni Grasslands

- **About:** Banni is **Asia's largest grassland**, located near the [Great Rann of Kutch](#) in Gujarat.
  - The Banni Grasslands **emerged from the sea** due to **tectonic activities**.
- **Vegetation:** Vegetation is **sparse** and largely **rainfall-dependent**. It is dominated by **low-growing plants, forbs, and graminoids**, many of which are **halophytic** (salt-tolerant), along with **scattered trees** and **scrublands**.
  - It is also known for the mysterious "**Chir Batti**" or **ghost lights** that appear at night.
- **Ecosystem:** Banni features a unique blend of [wetlands](#) and **grasslands**, coexisting side by side.
  - Key species include **Banni buffalo, Kankrej cattle, Indian wild ass, camel, and horse**.
- **Cultural Significance:** Banni is home to **several semi-nomadic communities**, such as the **Maldharis** (silvipastoralists).
  - **Maldharis (keeper of animal stock)** are a **tribal herdsman community** living in **Banni and Gir Forest** regions. They rear **sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes, and camels**.
- **An Ideal Habitat for Cheetah:** The grasslands closely **resemble the cheetah's natural habitat in Africa**, with vast expanses of [grasslands, savannahs](#), and **scrublands**, making it a perfect site for the big cats.
  - The Gujarat Forest Department has set up a breeding center and enhanced the prey population (chital and sambar) to support the cheetahs.

## Cheetah

- The **cheetah**, the **world's fastest mammal**, is the **only large carnivore extinct in India (1952)**.
- Unlike other big cats, it **does not roar**, but uses **chirps, barks, and stutter barks** to mark presence and territory.
- Cheetahs are **solitary** and mark territory through **urine sprays, cheek rubbing, and tree scratches**.

# Cheetah

**Common Name** - Cheetah

**Scientific Name** - *Acinonyx jubatus*

- *Acinonyx jubatus jubatus* (African Cheetah)
- *Acinonyx jubatus venaticus* (Asiatic Cheetah)

## Reintroduction of Cheetah to India:

- The "Action Plan for Introduction of Cheetah in India" was released by MoEF&CC at the 19th meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) (January 2022).
  - Such a plan was first proposed in 2009.
- In September 2022, eight cheetahs landed in India from Namibia.
  - The 8 cheetahs have been relocated to the Kuno-Palpur National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
- The relocation of cheetahs to India from Namibia is the world's first inter-continental large wild carnivore translocation project.



Slightly brownish and golden skin; thicker than the Asiatic Cheetahs

More prominent spots and lines on the face

Found all over the African continent

**IUCN Red List Status - Vulnerable**



## African Cheetah

Slightly smaller than the African ones.

Pale yellowish fawn coloured skin - more fur under body, belly specifically.

Found only in Iran; the country claims there are only 12 of them left. Year 1952 - Asiatic Cheetah officially declared extinct from India.

**IUCN Red List Status - Critically Endangered**



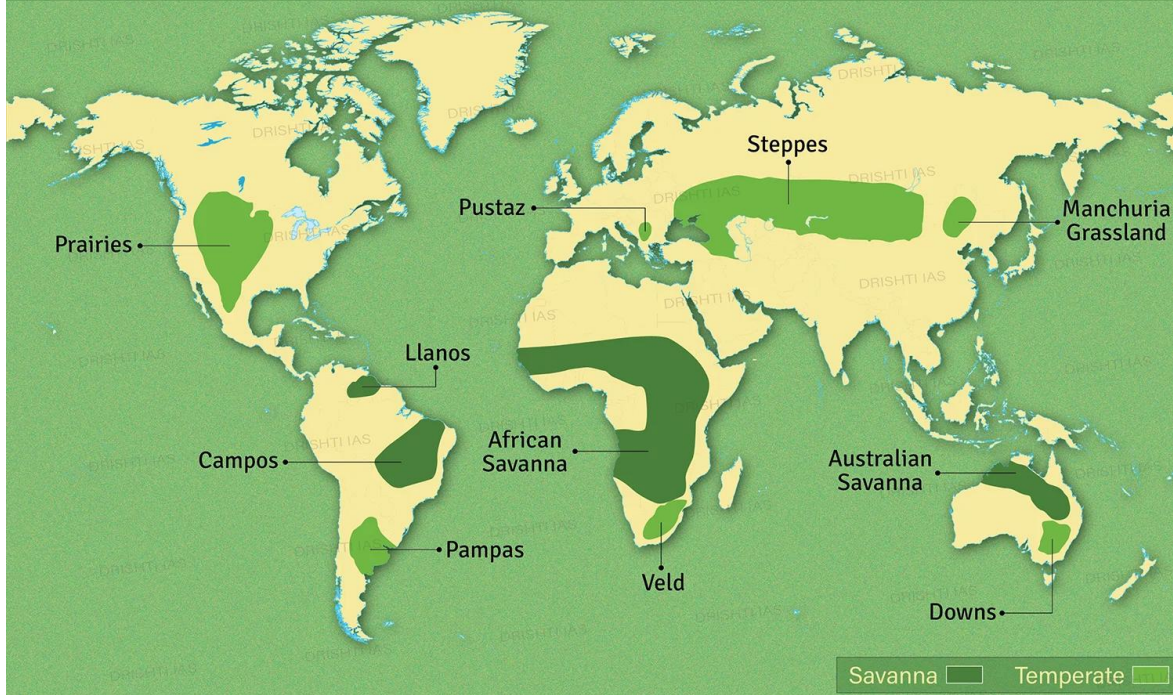
## Asiatic Cheetah



**Drishti IAS**



# GRASSLAND OF THE WORLD



## FACTS

- There are **two main kinds of grasslands**: tropical and temperate. Examples of **temperate grasslands** include Eurasian **steppes**, North American **prairies**, and Argentine **pampas**. **Tropical grasslands** include the **hot savannas** of sub-Saharan Africa and northern Australia.
- Tropical grasslands have dry and wet seasons that remain warm all the time (**temperature: 25°C to 30°C**). Temperate grasslands have cold winters and warm summers with some rain (**below 0°C in winters to 32°C in summers**).
- **Wildfires are vital for grasslands' existence**; they prevent woody plants from spreading and enable the grass to re-grow thicker and healthier.



**Read More: [One Year of Project Cheetah](https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/gujarat-s-banni-grasslands-ready-for-cheetah-reintroduction)**

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