



# Project Cheetah and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

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## Why in News?

Madhya Pradesh plans to introduce a **female cheetah** to [Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary](#), aiming to establish it as a **second home for cheetahs** after [Kuno National Park](#), as a part of [Project Cheetah](#).

## What is Project Cheetah?

- **About:** India launched Project Cheetah in 2022 to **reintroduce cheetahs**, extinct in the country for over 70 years.
  - Operated under [Project Tiger](#), Project Cheetah is the **world's first intercontinental large wild carnivore translocation project** and implements the **Cheetah Action Plan**.
- **Objective:** Establish breeding populations of cheetahs in **safe habitats across historical range**.
  - Use cheetahs as a **flagship species to restore open forests and [savanna ecosystems](#)**.
  - Promote eco-development and ecotourism to improve local livelihoods.
  - Enhance community awareness and reduce [human-wildlife conflict](#).
- **Implementation and Governance:** The [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#), under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, implements Project Cheetah in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
  - As a statutory body NTCA established the **Cheetah Project Steering Committee** in 2023 to supervise, evaluate, and advise on the project's implementation.
- **Achievements:** **8 cheetahs from Namibia and 12 from South Africa were relocated to Kuno National Park, where they exhibited natural behaviors.**
  - The birth of Namibian cheetah cubs in India after 75 years is a significant milestone in the reintroduction effort.
  - Over 350 '**Cheetah Mitras**' are involved to educate locals and mitigate human-wildlife conflict.

## What are the Key Facts about Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary?

- **Location:** Situated in northwestern Madhya Pradesh, bordering Rajasthan, within the **Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests ecoregion**.
- **Ecosystem:** Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary features savanna, open grasslands, dry deciduous forests, and riverine areas. It is recognized as an [Important Bird and Biodiversity Area \(IBA\)](#).
- **Topography:** Includes hills, plateaus, and the **Gandhi Sagar Dam** and the Chambal River (tributary of the Yamuna) bifurcates the sanctuary into two nearly equal parts.
- **Flora:** Dominated by **Khair, Salai, Tendu**, and other dry deciduous species.

- **Fauna:** Home to **Chinkara, Nilgai, Indian Leopard, Hyena**, and more.
- **Historical Sites:** The sanctuary includes sites like **Chaurasigarh, Chaturbhuji Nala rock shelters, Bhadkaji rock paintings**, and **Hinglajgarh Fort**.
- **Ideal Habitat:** The savanna ecosystem and abundant wildlife make it an ideal site for cheetah reintroduction, similar to **Maasai Mara** in Kenya (a national reserve in Kenya known for its savanna wilderness and wildlife).



# Cheetah

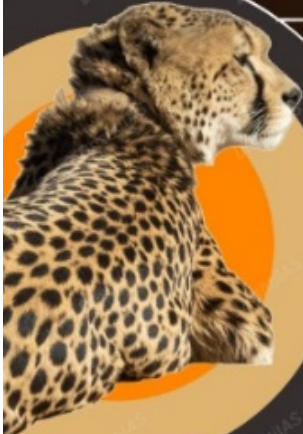
**Common Name** - Cheetah

**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**

## Did you Know?

- Cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) are part of the **felidae family** and are among the oldest big cat species.
- They are the **world's fastest land mammals**, found in parts of Africa and Asia.
- **Male cheetahs live in coalitions** or with siblings, while **females are mostly solitary** except when raising cubs.
- The **gestation period is between 90 to 95 days**.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Consider the following: (2012)**

1. Black-necked crane
2. Cheetah
3. Flying squirrel
4. Snow leopard

**Which of the above are naturally found in India?**

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (b)**

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/project-cheetah-and-gandhi-sagar-wildlife-sanctuary>