

CHEETAH IN IRAN

Cheetah are believed to be increasing in Iran, according to a Red Data Book Report form filed by Masood Mowlavi and forwarded to Cat Group member M.A. Rashid by the Director of the Natural History Museum in Teheran, Dr Kh. Ammarlooi.

Mr Mowlavi's report states:

"Population - The Asiatic cheetah was thought to be on the verge of extinction in Iran about two decades ago, but, due to sound conservation practices for this species and its habitat, it has made a remarkable comeback in recent years. Although the exact number of cheetah is not known, it is believed to be increasing in Iran. Khosh Yeilagh Protected Area in northeastern Iran supports the highest population of the Asiatic cheetah in the world, group size of one to nine having been sighted by various Iranian investigators there.

"Threats to survival - When the population of the cheetah's natural prey, the gazelle, is reduced to the point of extermination, either by over-hunting or habitat destruction, there will be a big threat to the survival of the cheetah in that area.

"Conservation measures taken - This species is legally protected by law in Iran, and hunting is prohibited.

"Conservation measures proposed - Ecological investigations into the status of the species are required as a basis for its better conservation.

Dr Ammarlooi has since written to say that two cheetah have been sighted recently in Kavir National Park in Varamin, and that there are several in Touran Protected Area. He reports only one captive in Iran, a female in Mashhad zoo.