

CATS IN DJIBOUTI

Hundreds of leopard and cheetah skins smuggled from Somalia and Ethiopia are being sold annually in curio shops in Djibouti city, according to a reliable source.

Despite a ban on trade, peddlars in Djibouti offer baby cheetahs, and sometimes baby leopards, which must have been smuggled in from neighbouring countries. They are bought by local people and tourists. Most suffer from poor nutrition and ill treatment and soon die.

The source reports that a leopard has been observed in the mountains near Tadjourah, and half a dozen are living in the Moussa Ali mountains on the border with Ethiopia. Cheetah have almost complete disappeared from Djibouti, where they were still common 10 years ago. They are shot at sight or poisoned by nomads who accuse them of eating goats. Eight to 10 cheetah survive in northern areas, and may criss-cross the border with Ethiopia. Serval are seen especially at night. Very few caracal have been seen, and skins have not been noted in Djibouti shops.

The report says that poachers are using automatic weapons and are destroying an increasing number of cats, while forests are fast disappearing.
