

International Agreement Essential for Cheetah Conservation

International agreement will be essential for the success of any conservation strategy for cheetah because many of the remaining populations are in remote areas, often along and across international boundaries, writes Paule Gros in the winter 1991 issue of Cheetah News.

Gros reports that her surveys in Africa show that habitat destruction is, perhaps, the most important threat to the cheetah. But, at the same time, cheetah are being killed because of livestock predation in Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. The explosion of human populations and settling of previously nomadic people in remote dry areas, such as northern Kenya or Uganda's Karamoja Province, is now having an impact on what were generally considered relatively undisturbed cheetah populations. Prey is disappearing because of

increased local hunting, as well as direct killing for the skin trade, because of livestock predation and even for food.

Gros is carrying out a worldwide survey of cheetah distribution in collaboration with Tim Caro, of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, University of California (Davis). The aim is to assess the problems of cheetah survival in order to devise a plan for effective conservation in the wild. The first phase of the project covered Botswana, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, followed by Kenya and Uganda. The next phase will deal with Tanzania, Zambia and southern Zaire, followed by a detailed biological analysis of the data. Long-term plans are to cover the entire African continent and the few regions in Asia that might still have cheetah.