

WHAT IS MEANT BY DOWNLISTING

The cheetah is listed as an Appendix I species (endangered or vulnerable) by the World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of fauna and flora (CITES). An Appendix I listing includes all species threatened with extinction which are or may be affected by trade. Appendix I species enjoy the greatest level of protection since their trade may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. The guiding principle here is that export of such specimens must not be a threat to the survival of the species, and not for commercial purposes.

Cheetahs in Namibia are classified as a protected species as they are believed to be locally abundant. Because of this, in 1992 CITES granted an annual quota to Namibia of 150 animals. This quota allows for the export of trophy hunted cheetahs and live export into internationally recognised zoological facilities and is subject to certain requirements. The purpose for granting the CITES quota was to reduce indiscriminate catching and killing of cheetahs and is based on the principles of sustainable use.

However, as the species is listed as endangered internationally, restrictions are placed on the import of this species by some countries, depending on their legislation. To date the import of cheetahs, as trophies or live into the United States is prohibited. For several years, efforts have been underway to down-list the cheetah from endangered to threatened on the United States Endangered Species Act which would allow for the import of cheetahs into the US.

But, down-listing the cheetah in the United States will have far reaching repercussions, consisting of an ongoing legal battle between the animal rights parties in the US and those who want to utilise this species. If a down-listing is granted or not granted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Department one of the two interest groups will sue the United States government. This legal battle will take years in litigation and will stop any imports of trophies into the United States. These legal battles could also negatively affect tourism to Namibia as negative press coverage may be used by interest groups to stir the emotions of people who are uninformed about the issues of sustainable use. All of this will affect the cheetah's survival as well.

There is however, another alternative within the US Endangered Species Act that will not result in years of litigation in court, namely a quota system. A quota system is legal under a special ruling that allows permits for scientific purposes, enhancement of propagation of a species or survival, or for incidental taking. This is where the import of trophy hunted cheetahs would be allowed. Even with this special ruling within the US Endangered Species Act, the Namibian Government will have to provide proof that certain requirements will be fulfilled to ensure that this species will be managed for survival for future generations. This is the main purpose for the COMPACT and the National Cheetah Census. This is not a small task, but a large endeavour that will take the commitment of all farmers, professional hunters, NGO's and the Government.

CCF recognises that cheetah trophy hunting is one of the management tools that can assist in sustainably managing the cheetah population. Trophy hunting of cheetah alone will not

cause a threat to the survival of the cheetah. The biggest threat to the cheetah's survival is the continued indiscriminate trapping and killing of cheetah. Therefore the continued indiscriminate removal and killing of cheetahs combined with trophy hunting of cheetahs could become a problem for the species' survival.

CCF has demonstrated its support of sustainable use through, for example, being instrumental in promoting the NAPHA COMPACT, which was developed through the involvement with the Safari Club International (SCI) in 1994. CCF assisted with the writing and designing of the NAPHA cheetah brochure, and hosted an IUCN Population and Habitat Viability Analysis Workshop (PHVA) in 1996, which identified the need for a Census on cheetahs and a workshop to help develop Census techniques. CCF has put a lot of time, money and energy into promoting this approach so that an ethical and scientifically sound sustainable use program can assist in cheetah management.

CCF supports the export of trophies of cheetahs from Namibia, and supports a quota as a part of a special ruling within the US Endangered Species Act, but not the United States down-listing because of the possible damage it would cause to Namibia by the United States public. Also, at present there is not enough information known about the cheetah population in Namibia to understand what level of utilisation is sustainable. One of the first steps to gain this information, which is recognized by all parties concerned, is determining an accurate estimate of the population. The agreed method is through a Census programme. This is now underway and will be long-term, but still lacks the support it needs to make it successful. For the purpose of sustainable utilisation, it is important that NAPHA members support the census, as members will benefit in the long-run through sustainable use of this species. The Census must also be supported by the rest of the Namibian farming community and anyone else who has a stake in the utilisation of this species.

CCF believes that the professional hunting fraternity should be the leaders in this Census being both landowners and farmers. Professional hunters and hunting guides should feel ethically bound to sign the COMPACT and support the Census and that this should not depend on the availability of one limited export market. We feel that hunting organisations worldwide need to assist Namibia by encouraging Namibian hunters, most of who are farmers as well, to cooperate with the Census, signing the COMPACT and supporting its objectives.

LIVE STOCK GUARDING DOG WORKSHOP TO BE HELD – ALL ARE WELCOME

CCF is planning a Livestock Guarding Dog Workshop. We are hoping that all current dog owners will attend and share information with each other. The Workshop will be held at Otjibamba Lodge in Otjiwarongo on the 21th of July. For more information please contact CCF.

Please fill out the included form and mail back to CCF.