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Keywords: 1EG/Acinonyx jubatus/Arabia/cheetah/distribution/extinction/mammal/Middle East/ North Africa/status

Abstract: After a brief description of the species, the cheetah is now extinct in the Middle East (including Arabia to Iran, Pakistan and India), except for a small population south of the Caspian Sea. It is almost certainly extinct in Arabia. It is very rare in Egypt, possibly extinct. It is restricted to the Western Desert in and around the Qattara Depression (tracks and skins evidence). Its current population is unknown but very low. The last records of specimen alive dated of 1993 and 1994.

Après une brève description de l'espèce, le guépard est maintenant éteint au Moyen Orient (incluant l'Arabie à l'Iran, le Pakistan et l'Inde), sauf pour une petite population au sud de la Mer Caspienne. Il est fort probablement éteint en Arabie. Il est très rare en Egypte, vraisemblablement éteint. Il est restreint à l'ouest du désert dans et autour de la dépression de Qattara (empreintes et signes de présence). Sa population actuelle est inconnue mais très faible. Les dernières observations de spécimens vivants datent de 1993 et 1994.

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A Field Guide
to the
Mammals of Egypt

Richard Hoath

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Illustrations by the author

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Associated Species: Many mammals, particularly the rodents, can be found in similar habitat, even sharing burrows with other species. When this has been recorded, associated species are given.

Notes: Any useful additional information, particularly of a taxonomic nature, is given under this heading. As stated above, this guide broadly follows the taxonomy of Nowak (1999), but where there are differences these have been noted. Differences with other important works may also be noted such as the taxonomic treatment of the hyraxes in Kingdon (1997) or the Small-spotted Genet *Genetta genetta* in Harrison and Bates (1991).

Similar Species: The key identification characteristics with species likely to give confusion are highlighted in this section.

The Maps

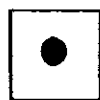
For every species described, there is a map showing the range in which the mammal concerned is likely to be found. These maps are based on published records augmented by reliable field observations.



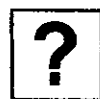
Gray shading indicates the area in which the species has definitely been recorded. The species may be expected in suitable habitat within this range according to the mammal's status as given in the text.



Black stippling indicates a historical range but one in which the species can no longer be expected, or a range in which the animal may now be found only in widely scattered pockets due, for example, to hunting, as in the Nubian Ibex.



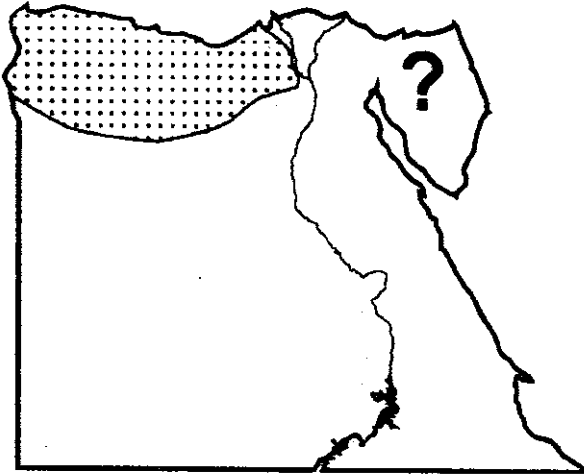
A black dot indicates an isolated record outside the normal range of the species, or a number of records from a very limited area, for example, one of the Western Desert oases.



A question mark indicates a record that has not been substantiated, is questionable for some reason, or that is very old and for which there have been no more recent sightings.

CHEETAH (HUNTING LEOPARD) *Acinonyx jubatus* (Schreber, 1776)

Pl. 14



Cheetah
(*Acinonyx jubatus*)



Monotypic

Arabic: *Fahd siyad, Shita*

Identification: Length 175–220cm; Tail 65–80cm; Weight 40–60kg. A large, slender, small-headed cat, leopard-sized, but built on greyhound lines. Above, flanks and outside of legs buffish to yellow covered with solid, round, dark spots never arranged in rosettes as in the Leopard. Below, paler

with more diffuse spotting. Fur generally short and dense, but longer below and with an erectile mane along the shoulders and back. In the cubs, this is larger and distinctly pale, a pattern said to provide protection through mimicry of the Honey Badger. Head proportionately small with flat top and small ears. Head densely spotted, chin white. Most distinctive feature is the blackish 'tear mark' running from the

eye down the side of the face. Muzzle short. Tail long and full, broader at tip than base. Spotted above for the basal half, latter half ringed with up to 6 blackish rings, the final one being the broadest. Tail tip white. Claws only semi-retractile.

Range and status: Formerly over much of Africa outside the rainforests, now almost entirely south of the Sahara. Also formerly over much of the Middle East, including Arabia to Iran, Pakistan, and India. Now extinct in this region, except for a small population south of the Caspian Sea. Almost certainly extinct in Arabia. In Egypt, very rare, possibly extinct. The Egyptian population is probably the last remnants of the Cheetah north of the Sahara (though 2 were report-

edly shot in Libya in 1980). Restricted to the Western Desert in and around the Qattara Depression. Its current population is unknown but very low. Hunting, habitat disturbance, and reduction in prey populations (e.g., Dorcas Gazelle *Gazella dorcas*) have brought the population down to a critical level. Records from North Sinai lack verification. Recent records include a female and 3 cubs shot by Bedouin hunters in 1993 and a female and 2 cubs in November 1994. No Qattara Cheetah has been photographed live, evidence coming from tracks and skins. Its subspecific status is unknown, but the Egyptian population may be genetically important for the long-term survival of the species (due to the genetic uniformity of the Cheetah as a species). Protected by Egyptian Law, listed by the IUCN as vulnerable, and on CITES Appendix I.

Habitat: Open plains and savanna to semi-desert. In Egypt, known from acacia groves in the Qattara Depression, the Mediterranean coastal desert, and, historically, the sandy deserts of North Sinai (two reported in 1946 in Harrison and Bates [1991]).

Habits: Nothing known about the Egyptian population. Elsewhere, chiefly hunts by day using a termite mound or similar raised area as a lookout position. Hunts by running the prey down with a burst of speed up to 100kmph sustained for little more than half a kilometer. Diet in Egypt likely to be gazelle, hare, birds, and small mammals. Hunting is by sight. Occupies a home range that varies with food abundance and population density. In Egypt, likely to be very large. Sociability complex. Female generally solitary, except when with cubs or during mating. Young males more sociable, forming bachelor groups. Sociability in Egypt unclear given very low population. Gestation 91–95 days. Cubs in Egypt found in April/May but also November. Calls include a twittering contact call, hisses and snarls when angry, and purrs.

Notes: Hafez (1993) included the Serval *Felis serval* on his *List of the Mammals of Egypt*, but gave the distribution as “Suakin, south of the Sahara.” As Suakin is in Sudan, and there are no records from modern Egypt, the species is not included on the Egyptian list.

Similar species: The Leopard is much more thickset with a larger head and spots arranged in distinct rosettes. Within the Cheetah’s historical range, there is only one old record from the Western Desert.