Cheetah

Task #1
Animal Research

Climate	• Hot temperatures average 65-85°F • Dry • Can tolerate a wide range of temperatures
What covers their body? How is this helpful?	• Covered in yellow/tan fur with black spots • Fur helps them to blend in with their environment • Fur thickens in the winter and thins in the summer - helps regulate body temperature
Social Dynamic	• Males may live in groups of two or more • Females live alone, unless raising cubs • No other mammal species has this social dynamic
Appearance	• Black stripes under eyes • Long slender body with long tail • Claws that cannot be retracted • Height: 2-3 ft. / Weight: 75-140 lbs.
How do they move? How would that help them in their habitat?	• Cheetahs are the fastest land animal and can run up to 70 miles per hour • This helps catch their prey • When not hunting, cheetahs sleep, rest in the shade, or patrol their territory
How do they care for their young?	• Mothers care for their young by themselves • Mothers teach their young how to survive • Cubs stay with them for 16 to 24 months
What do they eat? What adaptations do they have to support their diet?	• Cheetahs are carnivores; eat small to medium sized animals (hares, impalas, gazelles) • Cheetahs need to rest up to 30 minutes before eating, leaving their food vulnerable for other animals to steal • Very strong jaws
Habitat	• Grassland • Shrub lands • Savanna • Temperate to hot deserts

Task #2

Cheetah Needs in a Zoo

After learning what cheetahs need in the wild, students are prompted to write things that cheetahs would need in a zoo. Below are suggested answers, but students are encouraged to be creative.

- Temperature controlled housing that can be heated or cooled
- An elevated hill or platform so cheetahs have a vantage point to view entire habitat
- Shallow pool or stream
- Space that allows for fast acceleration
- Ample space to house multiple animals
- Trees and grasses
- Different types of substrate to walk on (sand, grass, rocks)
- Shade source

Cheetah Enrichment

Suggested Enrichment:

- **Environmental Enrichment-** Varying barriers for cheetahs to hide behind or inside of (logs, trees, bushes, fake termite mounds, large rocks), substrates for digging or hiding food, higher points for scanning, heated rocks, misters, and cheetah run mechanisms such as a cable with a pull system
- **Food Enrichment-** Changing feeding schedules and/or feeding locations, scattering or hiding food, bones, and whole or partial carcasses
- **Manipulative Enrichment-** Plastic balls, kong toys, cardboard boxes, burlap bags, tires, towels or blankets, and feathers
- **Sensory Enrichment**- Introducing new smells such as spices, liquid odors on cloth, or prey animal feces
- **Social Enrichment-** Interaction with other cheetahs and training with animal care specialists

Things to avoid:

- Continuous use of the same form of enrichment
- Small enrichment that could be ingested (strings, screws, or soft plastics)

Task #3
Cheetah Conservation Status

Conservation Status: Cheetahs are listed as a Vulnerable Species by the IUCN.

Countries found: Cheetahs inhabit a broad section of Africa. The two strongholds remain in Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa, and Nambia and Botswana in Southern Africa. There is a small population found in Iran.

Has the animal's range changed over time? Yes, the cheetah's range has changed significantly over time. Once found throughout Africa and expanding into Asia, today's range is 10% of what it used to be.

Did your animal's population change? Yes, it has decreased.

Threat: Habitat loss, poaching and human conflict (for example, farmers protecting their animals) are the main threats contributing to cheetah's population decline.

Historical Range

Current Range

Historical / Current Range: The range of cheetahs has greatly decreased, primarily due to poaching, habitat loss, and conflicts with humans.

Task #4
Cheetah Diet

Cheetahs are carnivorous predators, meaning they hunt for the meat they eat. In the wild, they would mainly hunt for small to medium savanna animals like gazelle. They may not eat gazelle at the Zoo, but they do get ground meat and carcasses such as lamb and deer. Using enrichment, our animal care staff offers our cheetahs their meals in different ways to keep them active both mentally and physically. Your students may not have a lot of variety when it comes to feeding carnivores, but that doesn't make the job of feeding them any less challenging.

Extension Activity

Students can use the extension on page 41 to determine the diet for each cheetah for the entire week. Make sure to use different amounts than previously used in the student guide.

Task #5
Habitat Design

Students are encouraged to design a zoo habitat that satisfies the natural behaviors of cheetahs. Below are a few suggestions.

Natural Behaviors: Running, walking, scanning, surveying, scratching, socializing with other cheetahs, exploring, hunting, hiding, sunning, climbing

- Cheetahs don't require a set amount of outdoor space; however, it is recommended to have variation in both horizontal and vertical spaces in their area.
- Cheetahs, both males and females, need high points to scan their environment. Raised places such as high rocks, termite mounds, tree stumps, terraces, platforms, or any artificial structure that is elevated should be available.
- Hiding areas should also be provided. This could be achieved with tall grasses, shrubs, and shelters. Trees can also be added for shade, but they must be fenced off or be far enough away from the fence line to prevent climbing.
- A source of water must be present and must be shallow or fully drained, with cubs present.
- Indoor spaces should be available for each individual cheetah and should be at least 20 sq. ft.
- Barriers (i.e. fences) should be around 8 ft. with an overhang towards the enclosure at a 45 degree angle. Glass, solid wall, or wire mesh barriers are recommended.

Cheetah Diet Extension Activity

Use the blank diet chart to determine the diet for each cheetah for the entire week. Make sure to use different amounts than previously used. When planning the diet for one of the cheetahs, remember the following:

- Each cheetah is fed approximately 14,000 g each week.
- Each morning feeding is between 600 g -700 g. Each afternoon, feeding must be between 500 g -1,500 g.
- Cheetahs are given an animal carcass to share between the group once a week. Each cheetah eats about 3,000 g of meat from this feeding.
- Cheetahs receive bones instead of meat one day a week to give them additional vitamins and keep their teeth healthy. The weight of the bones is not counted in their 14,000 g weekly total.

Starting Weekly Meat (14,000 g)	**Day 1**	**Day 2**	**Day 3**	**Day 4 (Bone Day)**	**Day 5**	**Day 6 (Carcass Day)**	**Day 7**
Morning Feeding	Daily Starting Meat: 14,000 g Morning Feeding: Amount Remaining:	Daily Starting Meat: Morning Feeding: Amount Remaining:	Daily Starting Meat: Morning Feeding: Amount Remaining:	Daily Starting Meat: Morning Feeding: Bones Amount Remaining:	Daily Starting Meat: Morning Feeding: Amount Remaining:	Daily Starting Meat: Morning Feeding: 3,000 g Amount Remaining:	Daily Starting Meat: Morning Feeding: Amount Remaining:
Afternoon Feeding	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining:	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining:	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining:	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining:	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining:	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining:	Starting Meat: Afternoon Feed: Amount Remaining: 0 g

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