



## Cheetahs in Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

**For Prelims:** [Cheetah Reintroduction Plan](#), [Kuno-Palpur National Park \(KNP\)](#), [CITES](#), Project Cheetah, Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary.

**For Mains:** Challenges Associated with the Translocation of Cheetah in India, Importance of Biodiversity, Genetic, Species, Ecosystem.

[Source: IE](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, the Madhya Pradesh Government has informed that it has completed its preparations for the **reintroduction of the cheetahs** from Africa in the **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (GSWS)**.

- It will be the second home for cheetahs in India, after the [Kuno National Park \(KNP\)](#).

### Project Cheetah

- **Phase-1** of the project started in 2022, to restore the population of cheetahs, which were declared **extinct in the country in 1952**.
  - It involves the translocation of cheetahs from **South Africa** and **Namibia** to **Kuno National Park**.
  - The project is implemented by the [NTCA](#) in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, and [Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#).
- Under **Phase-2** of the Project India is considering sourcing cheetahs from **Kenya** due to similar habitats.
  - Cheetahs will be translocated to [Kuno National Park](#) and **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary** (Madhya Pradesh).

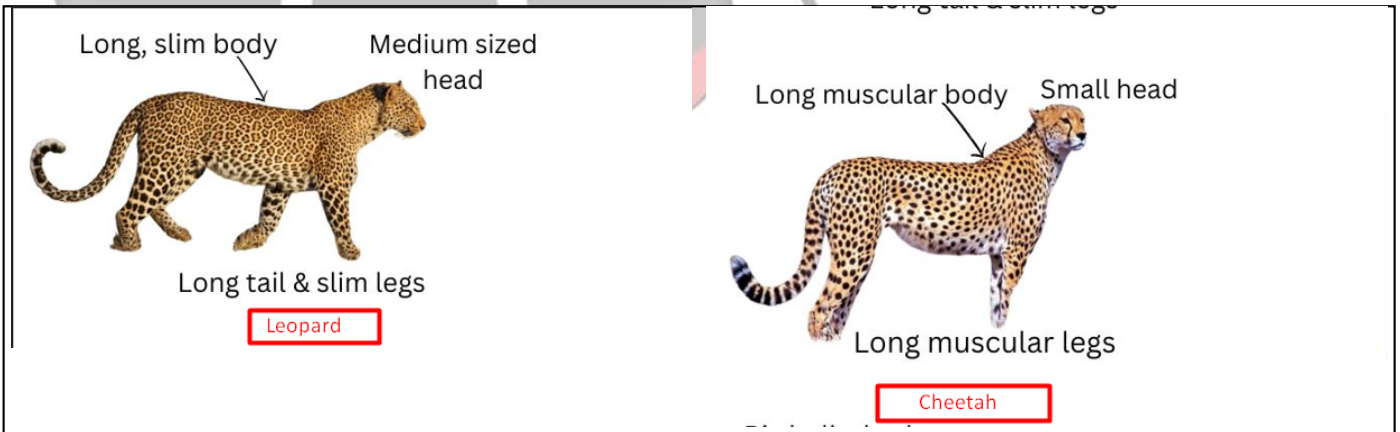
### What are Key Facts About Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary?

- **Location:**
  - Notified in 1974, encompassing the districts of **Mandsaur** and **Neemuch** in western Madhya Pradesh, bordering Rajasthan.
  - The **Chambal River** bifurcates the sanctuary into two nearly equal parts, with the Gandhi Sagar Dam situated within the sanctuary.
- **Ecosystem:**
  - Its ecosystem is characterised by its **rocky terrain** and **shallow topsoil**, which supports a **savanna ecosystem**.
  - This comprises **open grasslands** interspersed with **dry deciduous trees** and shrubs. Additionally, the riverine valleys within the sanctuary are evergreen.

▪ **Ideal Habitat for Cheetahs:**

- The sanctuary's resemblance to the **Maasai Mara**, a renowned national reserve in **Kenya** known for its savanna wilderness and abundant wildlife, highlights its suitability for cheetahs.

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**Some Facts about Cheetahs**

- **Breeding and Maturity:** Cheetahs breed throughout the year, with a peak during the **rainy season**. Females reach sexual maturity at 20-24 months, while males mature later at 24-30 months.
- **Gestation and Litters:** The gestation period lasts about 90-95 days, with **typical litters**

consisting of 3-5 cubs.

- **Vocalizations:** Unlike other big cats **like lions and tigers, cheetahs do not roar**. They communicate through various vocalisations, including high-pitched chirps or barks.
- **Territorial Behaviour:**
  - Cheetahs are generally **solitary** and use multiple methods to mark their territories, such as **scratch marks on trees or rocks and scent marking by spraying urine or rubbing their cheeks** on objects.
  - They also use **vocalisations like the "stutter bark"** to warn other cheetahs of their presence and establish territory.
- **Speed and Hunting:**
  - Cheetahs are the fastest land animals, capable of reaching speeds up to **120 km/h in short bursts** and can accelerate from **0 to 100 km/h in just 3 seconds**.
  - They use a unique adaptation called "tripping" with their semi-retractable claws to trip their prey.
  - Despite their speed, their **hunting success rate is only about 40-50%**.
- **Protection Status of Cheetah:**
  - **Vulnerable** in [IUCN Red List](#)
  - **Schedule 2 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.**
  - **Appendix I of CITES.**



# AFRICAN CHEETAH VS ASIATIC CHEETAH



## AFRICAN CHEETAH

- 🐾 SCIENTIFIC NAME:  
Acinonyx Jubatus
- 🐾 DISTRIBUTION:  
Across Africa from North-west Africa, East Africa, & Southern Africa
- 🐾 SIZE:  
Slightly bigger build with sturdier legs and neck
- 🐾 SKIN:  
Light brown to golden brown fur color, thicker than the Asiatic ones
- 🐾 IUCN RED LIST STATUS:  
Vulnerable



## ASIATIC CHEETAH

- 🐾 SCIENTIFIC NAME:  
Acinonyx Jubatus Venaticus
- 🐾 DISTRIBUTION:  
Only 12 Asiatic cheetahs, 9 males, and 3 females are left in Iran
- 🐾 SIZE:  
Slightly smaller and slender than the African cheetah
- 🐾 SKIN:  
Buff to light fawn color bordering pale yellow skin, has more fur underbelly and back of neck
- 🐾 IUCN RED LIST STATUS:  
Critically Endangered



### What are the Challenges in Making Gandhi Sagar a Viable Cheetah Habitat?

- **Insufficient Prey Base:** Current prey numbers (**chital, blackbuck, chinkara**) are insufficient for

cheetahs. Increasing the number of prey animals for cheetahs to hunt is crucial for their sustainable survival.

- A population of **about 350 ungulates are required for a single cheetah coalition family**. Ungulates are members of a diverse clade of animals, primarily big mammals with hooves (like deer).
- The leopard in GSWS could pose a threat to cheetahs through competition for the same prey.
- **Change of Habitat:** Cheetahs relocated from Kenya to India might grow thicker fur for the **African winter, which isn't needed in India's climate**.
  - This can cause discomfort and make it harder for them to adjust until they adapt to the new environment.
- **Proximity to Human Habitation:** Unlike Kuno, Gandhi Sagar has highways and human settlements located right outside the protected area boundary, which could present challenges.
- **Vulnerability to Infection:** The final decision on cheetah translocation will be made after the monsoon season, as the cats may be vulnerable to infections during this time.

## Kuno National Park

- It is located in **Madhya Pradesh**.
- It was initially established as a **wildlife sanctuary in 1981**.
- It was later designated as a **national park in 2018**.
- It is situated within the **Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forests**.

### Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the challenges and implications of the reintroduction of cheetahs in India. How does this initiative impact biodiversity conservation and ecosystem balance?

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Consider the following: (2012)**

1. Black-necked crane
2. Cheetah
3. Flying squirrel
4. Snow leopard

**Which of the above are naturally found in India?**

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (b) 1, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

**Ans: (b)**