

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of International Conservation
Combating Wildlife Trafficking Program
Species Conservation Catalyst Fund
Active Projects – Cheetah

Since FY2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) has awarded funding to four projects totaling \$3,625,773 to combat poaching and trafficking of cheetah through the Combating Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) Program's Species Conservation Catalyst Fund. This funding leveraged an additional \$545,370 in matching funds to support critical conservation efforts for cheetah. Projects are located in at least four, transit, or consumer countries, with the potential to expand to others based on project outcomes.

ETHIOPIA

Award # F22AP03472

Countering Cheetah Trafficking from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula. In partnership with the African Wildlife Foundation. The Horn of Africa (source) and Arabian Peninsula (destination) regional cooperation that is essential to effectively disrupt cheetah trafficking networks has been minimal and ad hoc, constrained by limited resources, low prioritization and a complex and multi-layered political situation that can make even routine law enforcement activities and communication challenging. The Somali Regional State (SRS) in Ethiopia has been identified as a cheetah trafficking hotspot where cubs are trafficked out via neighboring Somaliland and on to the Arabian Peninsula. Enforcement interventions initiated to date include judicial and prosecutorial training for Ethiopia's enforcement officials. Major gaps remain in enforcement capacity particularly on identification, detection, and interdiction of wildlife contraband; crime scene management; weakness in collaboration among existing laws, policies and international agreements. Lack of a centralized database for collecting data on confiscation and illegal cheetah trafficking crime cases is a hindrance to effective prosecution of IWT cases in Ethiopia. This project will address several critical areas that have previously had insufficient focus: the importance of working with the entire criminal justice system, especially prosecutors and judges; the need to catalyze and create formal and informal relationships between national law enforcement agencies in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa; the continuation of efforts to promote the work of regional mechanisms for facilitating increased collaboration and coordination to combat wildlife crime via Wildlife Enforcement Networks (WENs); the requirement to establish common mechanisms for dealing with the large number of live cheetahs seized, with an emphasis on handling, care evidentiary security and repatriation; and the need to establish a centralized database to house all information on cheetah trafficking through Ethiopia. Specific activities include: 1) Undertaking a desk-based assessment to gauge current regional systems for law enforcement cooperation and information sharing and make recommendations for improvement; 2) Organize Peer-to-Peer visits between Saudi Arabian National Center for Wildlife (NCW) staff and counterparts in Ethiopia (Federal and Somali Regional State) and Somaliland and one delegation from the Saudi Arabian

NCW to attend the HAWEN member meeting; 3) Support to the Horn of Africa Wildlife Enforcement Network (HAWEN); 4) Support capacity building for live cheetah confiscations; 5) Carry out ground-truthing of cheetah trafficking cases in Somali Regional State in Ethiopia to get an overview of the number of cases, number of prosecutions and conviction rates; 6) Support the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Agency (EWCA) to establish a centralized data base to house all information on cheetah trafficking through Ethiopia and monitor cheetah trafficking cases in Somali Regional State; 7) Increase capacity for handling confiscated live cheetahs.

Period of performance: 10/01/2022 - 09/30/2026

USFWS: \$ 692,089 **Leveraged funds:** \$129,868

MULTIPLE - HORN OF AFRICA

Award #F22AP03526

Combating Illegal Cheetah Trafficking: An Adaptive Management Strategy for Building Regional and National Capacity in the Horn of Africa. In partnership with Colorado State University. Between 2010-2019, more than 3,517 cases of seized or marketed live cheetah have been documented, primarily trafficked through the Horn of Africa and to the Arabian Peninsula where they are sold as pets. Despite the high number of reported live cheetah, it is unknown where they come from. This project seeks to confirm the presence of free-living cheetah, as well as assess the status of prey species and competing predators, through systematic surveys that will assist with creating an updated cheetah range and habitat map in the Horn of Africa. Information obtained through the surveys will serve to prioritize activities in regions and/or cheetah sub-populations at greatest risk, which will guide planning and development of management and conservation strategies. Specific activities include: 1) Conduct systematic surveys of rural households and pastoralists on the presence and commonality of cheetah, potential prey species and other predators in the immediate area, and develop species distribution models to create updated range and habitat maps of cheetah in East Africa and identify priority areas with a high probability of undocumented free-range cheetah; 2) use camera traps in targeted areas to confirm cheetah presence and estimate population densities; 3) host annual workshop for wildlife official to engage in adaptive management processes; 4) Assist and train wildlife officials in conducting cheetah/wildlife surveys; 5) assist wildlife officials to develop / update national cheetah plans; 6) conduct surveys to understand the drivers of cheetah poaching and trafficking as well as people's attitudes, motivations, and behaviors toward cheetah and other wildlife; 7) Establish outreach and engagement strategies where cheetah populations are found to occur; 8) Collaborate with Jigjiga and Hargeisa Universities to generate academic materials and programs on wildlife management and wildlife crime.

Period of performance: 10/1/2022 - 09/30/2025

USFWS: \$ 1,000,000 **Leveraged funds:** \$0

Award #F22AP03606

Creating systems to monitor wild cheetahs and determine drivers of illegal trade in the Horn of Africa. In partnership with the Cheetah Conservation Fund. The goal of this

project is to provide robust scientific data to governments in Somaliland, Somali Regional State (SRS) of Ethiopia, and Puntland (Somalia) to enable development of data-driven National Conservation Plans to reduce cheetah trafficking, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict, and to improve animal care, welfare, and law enforcement practices in the Horn of Africa (HoA). Specific activities include: 1) conducting camera trap surveys to estimate population density and occupancy of cheetahs, their prey, and competitor carnivores in the Awdal Region, Somaliland, and to determine the density-occupancy relationship for cheetahs in Awdal and apply it to other regions in the HoA where less intensive camera trap surveys will be conducted to gather occupancy data; 2) to build the capacity of Somaliland, SRS of Ethiopia, and Puntland governments by training their staff to conduct occupancy surveys for long-term monitoring of cheetahs and other wildlife, which they will then implement in their own jurisdictions with local community engagement; 3) work with Dr. Angela Fuller, Cornell University and Leader of the New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, who will mentor a postdoctoral researcher in deriving the occupancy-abundance relationship for the first time in cheetahs, and in developing a user-friendly Graphical User Interface (GUI) tool which will be used by HoA government staff to enter and analyze survey data which will also allow governments to model the data collected through this project and create new datasets and obtain updated models, thus building their capacity for long-term trend monitoring of cheetahs; 4) obtain genetic data on cheetahs in the HoA from cheetah scat collected in the same areas as the camera trap surveys to estimate genetic structure at the landscape level. This genetic data will help identify the sources of cheetah cubs that are trafficked; 5) analyze cheetah scat with a new molecular technique to understand their diet and therefore actual versus perceived human-wildlife conflict; 6) train Masters' students from Amoud University (Somaliland), Puntland State University (Puntland) and Jijiga/Haramaya Universities (SRS Ethiopia) to model prey and carnivore populations; and 7) build capacity of local veterinary doctors and students to care for confiscated cheetah cubs and to collect forensic evidence to assist conservation planning and law enforcement.

Period of performance: 10/01/2022 - 09/30/2027

USFWS: \$ 1,000,000

Leveraged funds: \$18,000

SAUDI ARABIA

Award # F22AP03602

Catalyzing cheetah conservation through law enforcement and demand reduction efforts in the Arabian Peninsula. In partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The purpose of the project is to leverage IFAW's trusted relationships in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to blend law enforcement capacity building with baseline research into the drivers of demand and initial efforts to tackle it. By addressing both the institutional priorities of national law enforcement agencies and developing the formative research and pilot campaign to better understand and address demand, the project will seek to navigate the inherent, complex political challenges and create a model for sustained engagement with states that can be adapted to other contexts and species.

Expected project outcomes include improved interagency, national, and regional collaboration to address cheetah trafficking, improved capacity to combat cheetah trafficking online and at border points, improved understanding of the drivers of cheetah ownership, and improved communications of the risks of cheetah ownership to eventually reduce demand for cheetahs in Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula. Specific activities include 1) Conducting a multi-agency law enforcement needs assessment with Saudi Arabia's National Center for Wildlife (NCW) and convening workshops for using open-source intelligence for investigating wildlife cybercrime, as well as for multiagency training courses to address wildlife trafficking through border points; 2) building strategic multi-agency partnerships across government agencies; 3) initiating a big cat confiscation network; 4) hosting a judicial sensitization symposium; 5) developing baseline research on the rate of consumption and/or the social, cultural, economic, political factors that drive demand for cheetah; 6) based on those baseline data, develop strategic activities to reduce consumer demand of cheetah.

Period of performance: 10/01/2022 - 09/30/2027

USFWS: \$933,684 **Leveraged funds:** \$397,502