CHEETAH BREEDING PROJECT

This is the centres main focus. It's been a long and lengthy process but we have started with the first phase of this project.

We currently have 8 cheetahs at the centre that we shall use for breeding. They were all born into captivity but they were not all hand-raised so we keep them in beautiful enclosures but away from the public eye in order to keep the environment as natural as possible. Some of these cheetahs belong to us and others visit from time to time. Breeding in captivity is incredibly difficult. We have currently had DNA tests done on all our cheetahs that are part of the breeding program as we want to establish which male and female cheetahs should be paired together in order to introduce an even stronger bloodline. We are currently waiting for these results.

The difficulties of breeding in captivity:

They are exceptionally sensitive to stress, vulnerable to infectious disease and can suffer dietary problems in captivity. Cheetahs do not breed well in captivity and it is extremely difficult to return any captive-bred cat to the wild as they do not have the skills needed to survive. Scientists' limited understanding of cheetah biology has made this task extremely difficult. Cheetahs are markedly different from all other cats in anatomy and behaviour.

Cheetah breeding is difficult in captivity, as males and females live separately in the wild and females are picky in partners. The husbandry of captive cheetahs is very different from any other felid. Males & females are nomadic by nature, not coming into contact with each other until the female is ready to accept the male. The 30% mortality rate among newborns also lowers breeding success. Until recently, it was not well understood why cheetahs reproductive cycle was so irregular. New research has found that a specific bark of a male cheetah triggers the female reproductive system to release eggs. According to a report published in National Geographic News, male cheetahs turn females on, literally. This is being seen as a primary reason why the cat finds it difficult to breed in captivity. Due to the fact that there are so few left, there is a very small gene pool and therefore a high incidence of mutations and low fertility. The lack of genetic diversity with the global cheetah population makes it more susceptible to ecological and environmental changes and disease threats.

Aim

We are looking for similar centres that are involved in cheetah breeding in captivity to work with us so that we have a larger pool of cheetahs in order to find good mating partners.

Vision

We are in need of a big sponsorship to be a part of and sponsor our program. At present we do not have any 'big' businesses that are involved at our centre. We are urgently looking for vast expenses of land to release the cheetahs into. Once cubs have been born, we will leave them with their mothers and once they have matured and learnt the necessary survival skills we hope to release them into a 'protected wild' where they have no natural predators and where, if necessary, medical care is available. There will be minimal human interaction. We understand the difficulties and challenges we face but with the correct approach and research we believe that we will make a difference for future generations.