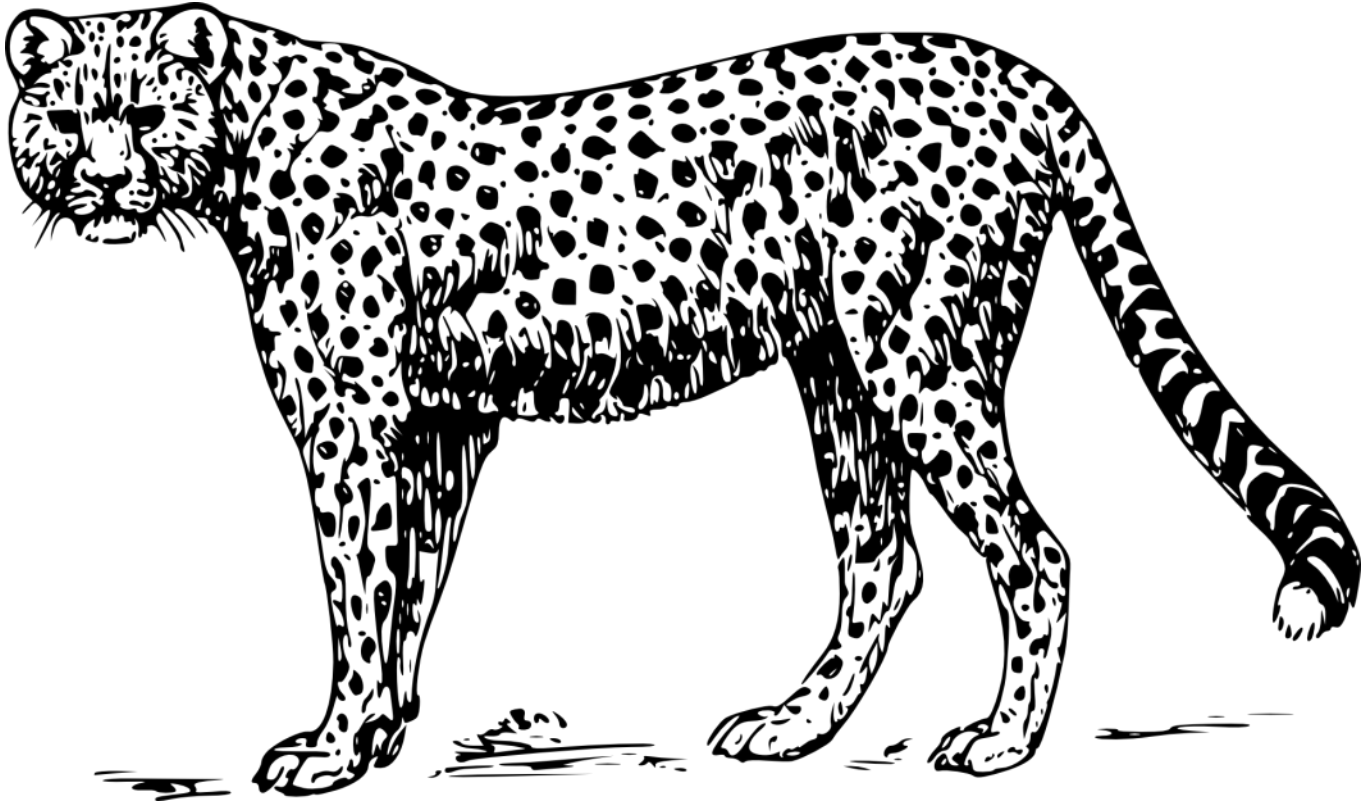
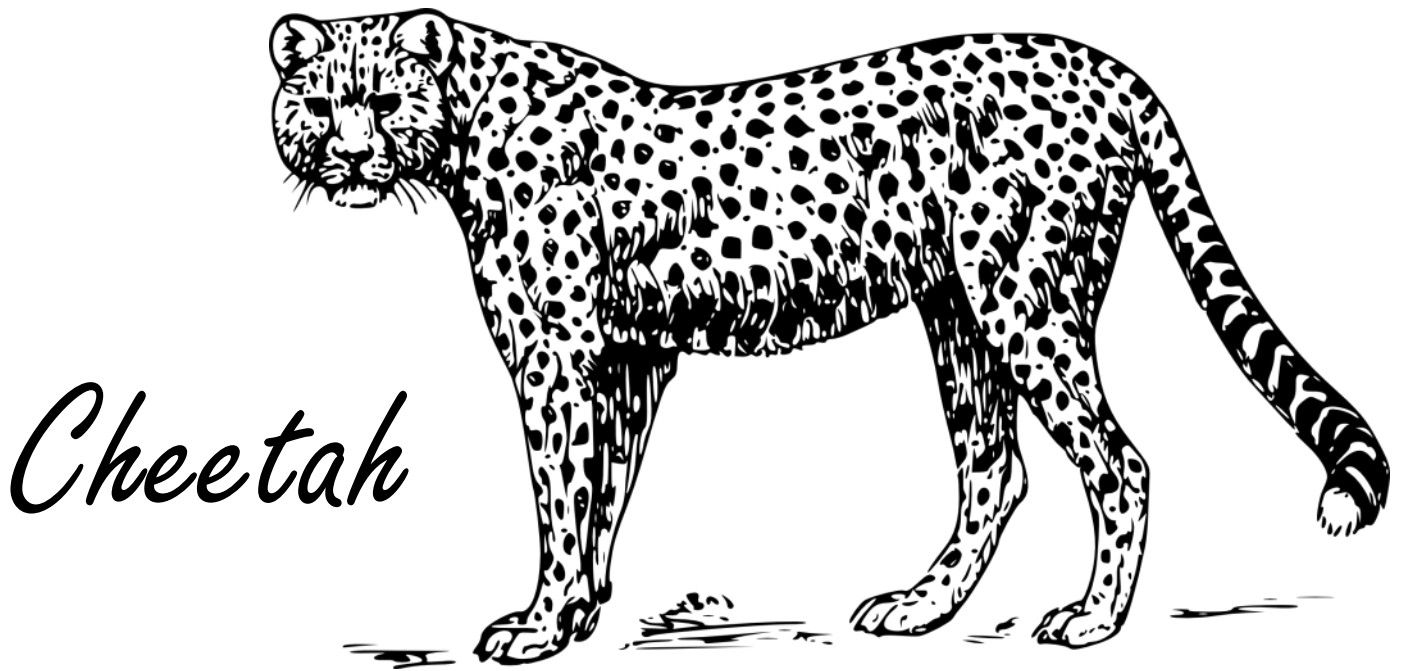


Cheetah



Cheetahs can run faster than any other animal on land, but they can't run fast for very long. They get too hot and must stop.

Cheetahs hide in grass and wait for prey. When an animal comes near they jump out of the grass and knock it over. They kill it, and take it away to a safe place to eat.



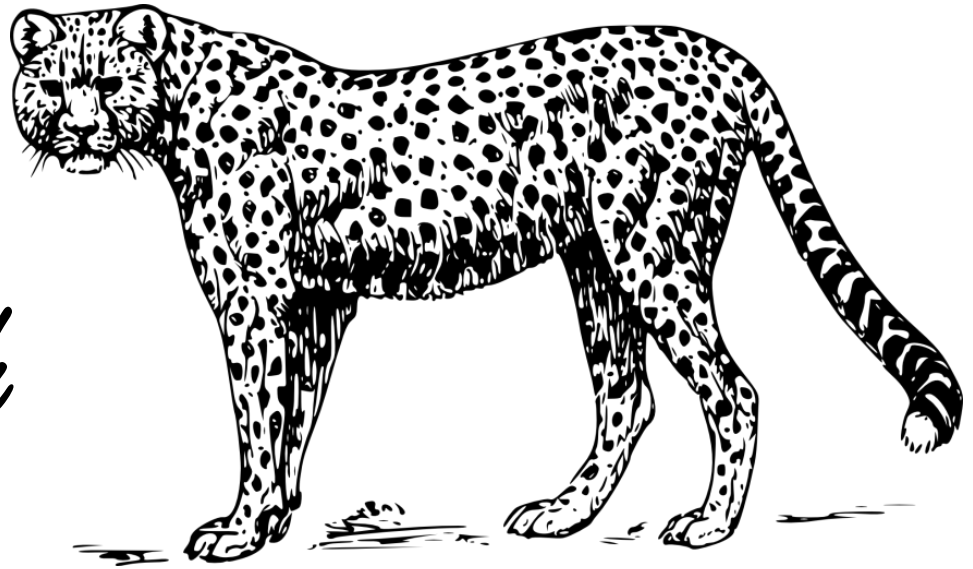
A cheetah is made for speed. Its long legs, light bones, and short coat make it the fastest land animal in the world! It can run up to 70 miles per hour for a short way. If it runs too far, it gets hot and runs out of breath. Then it has to stop.

A cheetah hides in the tall grass and bushes of the savanna. It watches for prey with its great eye sight. When the prey is close enough, the big cat explodes towards it and knocks it over. Once the prey is down, the cheetah grabs its neck and chokes it to death. Then it drags it off into a shady place to eat. Cheetahs eat up to 30 pounds of meat at each kill. Then it can go for 2-5 days before it eats again.

Female cheetahs hide their cubs for a month after they are born. The cubs can crawl, turn their heads, and spit, but they can't see for ten days. When they are five and half weeks old, the mother brings them to her kill. From then on they follow her unless she is hunting. The family eats together. The mother licks her cubs' faces after eating. Cheetah cubs are very playful. They chase, box, wrestle, and play tug-of-war. They climb trees, stalk, pounce, and ambush.

Cheetahs live by themselves. Females may stay in their mother's territory, but they don't live with her. Males leave their mothers when they are almost two years old. They may live with their brothers, and travel many miles away from their birth homes. They work together to help each other survive. Lions prey on cheetahs, and large eagles often kill cheetah cubs. Savanna life is hard.

Cheetah



A cheetah is built for speed. Its long thin legs, light weight bones, and short coat make it the fastest land mammal in the world. It can go from 0-60 miles an hour in just 3 seconds, and it can run as fast as 70 miles per hour, although it can only maintain that speed for short distances before it gets too hot and breathless to go on. A cheetah hides in the tall grasses and shrubs of the savanna, watching his prey with his excellent eye sight. When the prey is within 50 yards, the big cat explodes towards it, attempting to knock it down by crashing into its side or jumping onto its back. Once the prey is down, the cheetah grabs onto its neck, crushing the wind pipe, and choking it. It may take 4-5 minutes for the prey to die. Once it's dead, the cheetah drags it off into a shady hiding place to eat. Cheetahs eat about 30 pounds of meat at each kill, and don't return to their kills later to feed. After a full meal, a cheetah can go for 2-5 days before it needs to eat again. Females caring for their cubs have to kill more often. One observer counted a female cheetah with cubs killing 31 gazelle and a hare in 35 days!

Female cheetahs give birth in areas with plenty of cover. They hide their cubs for the first month of life. The cubs are born blind, but they can crawl, turn their heads, and spit. When they are five and half weeks old, the mother leads them to her kill. From then on they follow her unless she is hunting. The family feeds together. The mother licks her cubs' faces after eating. When the cubs are 6 months old, the mother brings live fawns and hares for them to practice catching and killing. They usually are able to get their own food by the time they are 15 months old.

Cheetahs live on their own. Females often settle in their mother's territory, but don't live with her. Males leave their mothers when they are 17-23 months old. They usually live in pairs or small groups, often with their brothers, and travel many miles away from their birth territories. Working in teams gives them a survival edge in the harsh world of the African savanna. Lions prey on cheetahs, and large eagles often feed on cheetah cubs.

When meeting other cheetahs, the animals sniff each other, lick faces, and rub cheeks. Cheetah sounds are very different from those of other cats. Their chirps, yelps, and yips can be heard a mile away. A mother uses a high pitched roar (churring) to call her cubs to a kill. They bleat when they are in trouble, and moan, growl, snarl, and hiss when they are angry. When they are happy and content they purr, just like house cats.

Cheetah cubs are very playful. They chase, box, wrestle, and play tug-of-war. They climb trees, stalk, pounce, and ambush. Females remain playful for life.