



CHEETAH & LEOPARD: ENVIRONMENT

NEWS: Madhya Pradesh plans a new home for cheetahs, but leopards will have to move out first

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh is being prepared for India's cheetah reintroduction initiative, with measures like prey base augmentation, predator management, and habitat restoration. The plan focuses on ensuring a sustainable cheetah population through genetic diversity, monitoring, and coordination with nearby sanctuaries for future expansion.

Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary and Cheetah Reintroduction

1. Location and Ecosystem:

- The Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Mandsaur and Neemuch districts of Madhya Pradesh.
- The Chambal River flows through the sanctuary, dividing it into two nearly equal parts.
- The terrain includes rocky outcrops, grasslands, dry deciduous forests, and riverine patches with evergreen vegetation.

2. Suitability for Cheetahs:

- The savanna-like ecosystem resembles Kenya's Maasai Mara, making it an ideal habitat for cheetahs.
- Open grasslands interspersed with trees provide hunting grounds, while prey availability supports a sustainable population.

3. Prey Base Augmentation:

- To support 6-8 cheetahs initially, 1,500 prey species (like chital, blackbuck, and nilgai) will be introduced.
- Monitoring tools include distance sampling, camera traps, and radio-collaring to ensure prey density and behavior align with cheetah requirements.

4. Predator Management and Leopard Relocation:

- Leopards (approximately 70 in number) in the sanctuary pose a potential threat to cheetahs.
- Leopards within a predator-proof fenced area (64 sq. km) will be relocated.
- GPS collaring of at least 10 leopards will aid in studying their movement and interactions.



5. Cheetah Selection and Monitoring:

- Cheetahs will be sourced from African reserves, ensuring genetic diversity and minimal human imprinting.
- Genetic analysis will maintain a robust gene pool and prevent inbreeding.
- Monitoring will include profiling individual cheetahs, using infrared cameras, and conducting scat analysis.

6. Long-Term Vision:

- The fenced area will serve as a breeding site and a source for future cheetah translocations.
- Nearby sanctuaries, like Bhainsrorgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and Mukundara Hills Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan, are potential sites for future expansion.



Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/from-evaluating-lineages-to-relocating-leopards-the-action-plan-for-madhya-pradesh-next-home-of-the-cheetah-9730767/>