

Saving Big Cats

Jaguars and other wild cats are in danger of dying out. What can be done to help them?

Some big cats are in big trouble. They are **endangered**, or at risk of dying out. The main threats to these animals are **habitat**¹ loss and illegal hunting. Can endangered big cats be saved? Wildlife experts hope so. They are trying to protect the cats by teaching the public about the problem and making laws to keep the animals safer.



photos.com

Sumatran Tiger

Sumatran tigers live on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. They are the smallest **species**² of tiger. Fewer than 500 are alive today.

Snow leopards have spotted fur that is white in the winter and yellow-gray in the summer. They live in the mountain ranges of Asia. Only about 4,000 to 7,000 remain in the wild.

Jaguars have yellow fur with black rings and spots. Most live in the rain forests of Central and South America. About 15,000 jaguars are left in the wild.

Cheetahs are the world's fastest land animals. Most cheetahs live in Africa. Within the past 100



photos.com

Jaguars roam the rain forest floor.

¹ **habitat**: the place where a plant or animal naturally lives and grows

² **species**: a group of living things of the same kind and with the same name

years, the number of cheetahs living in the wild has dropped from 100,000 to fewer than 12,000.

Cheetah Cubs!

Good news for cheetahs at the Saint Louis Zoo!

Three cheetah cubs are growing up at the Saint Louis Zoo in Missouri. The cubs were born in November [2006] and are now almost five months old. [They were five months old in April 2007.] They are the first litter to be born at the zoo in more than 10 years. "The cubs are doing great," the zoo's cheetah expert, Steve Bircher, told *ScienceSpin*. "They are very active. They are playing with each other and with mom."

By raising cheetah cubs, the zoo is working to save cheetahs from dying out. The zoo is also supporting efforts to protect cheetahs in the wild. "We want children to be aware that cheetahs are endangered," says Bircher. "It is important to protect their habitat."