



CARACAL



DESCRIPTION

Caracals have short, reddish-brown fur on their back and flanks, which is set off by the white fur on the chin, throat and belly. Most notably, long tufts of black fur top the caracal's ears, which are long and slender. There are many theories about the function of the ear tufts. The tufts may help keep flies out of the cat's face or help to camouflage the caracal in tall grass by breaking up the outline of the cat's head. However, the most widely accepted theory is that the cat twitches its ear tufts as a way to communicate with fellow caracals.

DIET

Primarily birds, rodents and small antelopes.

BEHAVIOUR

Although mainly terrestrial, they are excellent jumpers and climbers. Caracals are the fastest felids of their size. They are supremely acrobatic and can leap agilely 3m into the air to bring down prey, such as guinea fowl, on the wing. Caracal's hunting style is very distinctive, using both paws independently of each other, catching multiple birds at once, such as catching multiple birds from the air. Like the rest of the small cats, caracals may purr when content and make a variety of other meows, growls, and hisses to express their mood.

THREATS

Populations of caracals are dropping rapidly as a result of conflict with humans. Greater understanding of caracal populations and improved strategies for coexistence with people are essential for their survival.



WILD CAT
CONSERVATION
CENTRE

FAST FACTS

Scientific Name: *Caracal caracal*

Conversation Status: Least Concern

Body Length: 83 - 123cm (incl. tail)

Weight: 9 - 18kg

Gestation: 69 - 78 days

Number of Young: 1 - 6

Habitat: Woodlands, savannahs and in scrub forests, avoiding sandy deserts.

Distribution: Range along the African continent, up through the Arabian Peninsula through northwest India.



Distribution ■