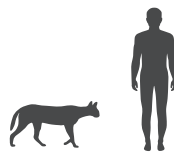


# SERVAL



## DESCRIPTION

Servals have an elongated neck, very long legs, and very large ears on a small, delicate skull. Their coat is pale yellow, with black markings consisting either of large spots that tend to merge into longitudinal stripes on the neck and back. The underside is whitish grey or yellowish. Their skull is more elongated than most cats. The ears are broad based, high on the head and close together, with black backs and a very distinct white eye spot. The tail is relatively short, only about one third of the body length, and has a number of black rings along it.

## DIET

Rodents, birds, reptiles, frogs, insects and other species smaller than they are.

## BEHAVIOUR

Servals locate prey in tall grass and reeds primarily by sound and make a characteristic high leap as they jump on their prey, striking it on impact to prevent escape in thick vegetation. They also use vertical leaps to seize bird and insect prey by "clapping" the front paws together or striking a downward blow. From a standing start a serval can leap 3m vertically into the air to catch birds. They listen for their rodent prey. Once they have a position fixed on the animal, they leap with all four feet off the ground and pounce on the prey. Their success rate of pounces is 50%, much higher than most cats.

## THREATS

Human conflict is a key threat to servals, hunted by farmers when they prey upon poultry and poached for their pelts.



## FAST FACTS

**Scientific Name:** *Leptailurus serval*

**Conversation Status:** Least concern

**Body Length:** 59 - 92cm

**Weight:** 12 - 18kg

**Gestation:** 67 - 79 days

**Number of Young:** 1 - 4

**Habitat:** Well-watered savanna long-grass environments, particularly reed beds and other riparian habitats.

**Distribution:** Servals live throughout most of sub-Saharan Africa (except the central African rainforest), the deserts and plains of Namibia, and most of Botswana and South Africa.

