

Using dogs to find cats

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Detection dog searching for cheetah scat. Credit: Dave Hamman

Investigators are using specially-trained detection dogs to determine the numbers and distribution of cheetah in a region of Western Zambia. The research represents the first demonstration of this strategy for wide-ranging species that are often threatened.

While traditional [survey](#) methods failed to detect any cheetah, using [dogs](#) specially trained to locate scat and other signs allowed the team to detect cheetah presence throughout the survey area. The researchers estimated a density of 5.9 to 6.6 cheetah per 1000km².

"With the alarming global decline of cheetah, we need new methods to be able to monitor and evaluate the remaining populations, many of which are in very remote ecosystems where traditional survey methods are challenging at best," said Dr. Matthew Becker, lead author of the *Journal of Zoology* study.

"With this study, detection dogs once again demonstrate they are a powerful conservation tool and an important ally for threatened African carnivores like [cheetah](#)."

More information: *Journal of Zoology*, [DOI: 10.1111/jzo.12445](https://doi.org/10.1111/jzo.12445)

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