Caracal (*Caracal caracal*)

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

The caracal is a strongly built cat with a long, slender body covered in short hair that is reddish brown with white around the belly, chin, and throat. A ring of white surrounds the eyes, and a black line runs from each eye to the nose. The caracal has pointed ears with black tufts on the ends and legs that are long and powerful. They have short tails and small heads.

**Fun Facts:**

1. A caracal’s ears are controlled by about 20 muscles.
2. Caracals are such accomplished jumpers that they are able to catch birds from the air.
3. The name caracal is derived from a Turkish word, “karakulak,” meaning “black ear.”

**Habitat**

The caracal inhabits a variety of habitats from semidesert to relatively open savanna and scrubland to moist woodlands and savanna regions with lower rainfall.

**Diet**

Small to medium-sized mammals (including antelopes), birds, reptiles, invertebrates, fish, and some plant matter; also known to scavenge

**Predators**

Lions, Leopards, Hyenas

**Behavior**

Caracals are said to be nocturnal but are often seen during the day. Social behavior is limited to courtship and mating. They are extremely fast runners, labeled as the fastest cat of their size. They are also skilled jumpers, making vertical leaps several feet high to catch birds. When they hunt antelopes for food, they suffocate them with a strong grip on their throat or muzzle. The caracal produces a range of vocalizations including meows, growls, hisses, and coughing calls.

**Breeding**

Caracals breed year-round. After a gestation period of 62 to 81 days, females give birth to a litter of one to four kittens. Births peak during the rainy season. After 45 days, kittens start to eat meat and are fully weaned after four to six months. Kittens remain with their mothers for about a year.

**Size**

Length: 62-91 cm

Height:45 cm

**Weight**

10-18 kg

**Life Span:** up to 12 years

**Gestation period:** 62-81 days

**Average number of offspring:** 1-4