Serval (*Leptailurus serval*)

**Conservation Status:** Least Concern

A small cat species, servals have many characteristics of domestic cats. They are strongly built with long legs, long necks, and tall, pointed ears. Their coat is tawny with black spots, which sometimes causes people to misidentify them as young leopards or cheetahs. Their tail is short, reaching a total length of about one-third the head-body size.

**Fun Facts**

1. Servals are native to more than 35 African countries.
2. Servals can jump up to 10 feet in the air.
3. Serval kittens often “play with” their food; they will toss rats, mice, and birds in the air if they are not immediately killed.

**Habitat**

Servals are most commonly found in grasslands or reed beds, but also spend time in forest brush, thickets, marshes, and streams within their home range.

**Diet**

Small rodents, birds, reptiles, frogs, and insects

**Predators**

Hyenas, leopards, wild dogs

**Behavior**

Servals are primarily solitary animals, only coming together to mate and sometimes to temporarily travel, hunt, or rest when they happen to encounter each other. They hunt during the early morning and late afternoon and rest at mid-day and at night as well. They catch most of their prey by leaping high into the air and pouncing. They mark their territory by spraying urine, rubbing the side of their face (which contains scent glands) on the ground or brush, defecating, and by making marks or scratches in the ground.

**Breeding**

The serval’s mating system is based on core territories with larger shared hunting ranges. Servals come together in pairs for a few days when the female is in heat.The serval gives birth to a litter of one to five kittens after a gestation period of between 65 and 75 days. Servals reproduce annually, year-round in the tropics, from December through March in southern Africa.

**Size**

Length: 67-100 cm

Height: 55 cm

**Weight**

8.7-19 kg

**Life Span:** 20 years in captivity

**Gestation Period:** 65-75 days

**Average number of offspring:** 1-5