

Serval

Leptailurus serval



Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Carnivora*

Family: *Felidae*

Characteristics:

The serval is 23 to 36 inches long and 17 to 24 inches tall at the shoulder. Males are slightly larger than females but otherwise have identical body shape and coloring. A medium-sized cat that is slender with long legs, a short tail, small head, long ears and an extra-long neck. The coat is tan with black spots of varying size and shape ([San Diego Zoo](#)).

Behavior:

Servals are solitary and prefer to live in the tall grass and reed beds along rivers and streams that run through savannahs and forests. Because of their habitat close proximity to water, they actually like to play in the water. They are [extremely agile](#) and are great at jumping and climbing ([Animal Diversity Web](#)).

Reproduction:

As solitary animals, servals only come together to breed and males will mate with many females. Mating occurs most often in the spring and after a gestation period of 10 to 11 weeks, servals give birth to 2 to 3 kittens. The kitten are weaned at around 5 months old and stay with mom for about one year ([Animal Diversity Web](#)).

Diet:

Wild: Rodents, small birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians
Zoo: Feline diet, bones

Conservation:

People in Africa often confuse servals as “baby cheetahs” because of the spotted coat which has led to a high level of poaching for their pelts. They have also historically been captured for sell on the black market pet trade. Farmers also consider them a threat to poultry. Because of the threats they face, they are rarely seen near large human population areas ([African Wildlife Foundation](#)). However, because of the size of their native range they are classified as Least Concern by IUCN.

FYI:

Servals are built for height rather than speed. The elongated neck allows them to see over the tall grasses in which they live while the long legs are “spring loaded” to jump and catch unsuspecting prey ([Arkive](#)).



Range & Habitat:

Tall grasses, reeds of savannahs and forests along waterways; mostly south of Sahara desert



Lifespan: up to 20 years in captivity and 10 in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Can jump 10 feet in the air and catch a bird in flight ([see video](#))

IUCN Conservation Status:

Least Concern

