

## Caracals

The Caracal (*Caracal caracal*) is a species of wild cat native to Africa, Middle East, Central Asia and India. It is easily recognised by its robust build, long legs, a short face, long tufted ears, and long canine teeth.

This article will further give details about the Caracal within the context of the Civil Services Examination.

### Characteristics of Caracal

The caracal is a moderately sized cat with a robust build, short face, long canine teeth, tufted ears and long legs

Its prominent feature included long black tufts on the ears, two black stripes from the forehead to the nose. The eyes appear to be narrowly opened due to the lowered upper eyelid, probably an adaptation to shield the eyes from the sun's glare

The caracal is a slender, moderately sized cat characterised by a robust build, a short face, long canine teeth, tufted ears, and long legs.



Further Characteristics of Caracal is given in the table below:

Characteristics of a Caracal	
Shoulder Height	40 - 50 cm
Head to Body Length	Males: 78–108 cm Females: 71–102.9 cm
Tail Length	Males: 21–34 cm Females: 18–31.5 cm
Weight	Males: 7.2 and 19 kg

	Females: 7 and 15.9 kg
Latin Name	<i>Caracal caracal</i>
Habitat	Africa, India, Central Asia, Middle East
Average Lifespan	16 years

## Behaviour of the Caracal

The Caracal is mainly nocturnal and is also highly secretive making it difficult to observe. They are also territorial and may live alone or in pairs. A typical carnivore, it preys upon small mammals, birds and rodents.

Along with catching birds in midair it can also run down and kill its prey at long distances.

They will feed from a variety of sources, but tend to focus on the most abundant one. Grasses and grapes are taken occasionally to clear their immune system and stomach of any parasites.

Larger antelopes such as young kudu, bushbuck, impala, mountain reedbuck, and springbok may also be targeted. Mammals generally comprise at least 80% of the diet.

## Conservation of the Caracal

The caracal has been listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List since 2002. But its population numbers vary in the 50 countries it is distributed in. It's thought to be close to extinction in North Africa, critically endangered in North Africa, but stable in Southern Africa.

The threats it faces are retaliatory killings from livestock farmers and hunting for pet trade in the Middle East. Another threat they face is destruction of habitat through expansion of human settlements.

African caracal populations are listed under CITES Appendix II, while Asian populations come under CITES Appendix I. In many countries such as Pakistan, India, Jordan, Syria, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan etc.

In South Africa, the caracal is considered Least Concern, as it is widespread and adaptable to a variety of habitats. It is tolerant to human-dominated areas, although it has been persecuted for many decades.

In India, Caracals are mainly found in the Ranthambore National Park

