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Contact: Chad Yelton, 513-503-3266

Cincinnati Zoo Cheetah Breaks World Record *Runs 6.16 Seconds in Her First Attempt*

CINCINNATI, OH (September 9, 2009) - "Sarah," the Cincinnati Zoo's eight-year-old female cheetah, is now the world's fastest of all land mammals. Today, Sarah earned her spot in the record book when she crossed the finish line in the 100-meter sprint with a time of 6.16 seconds in her very first attempt, breaking the previous mark of 6.19 seconds set by a male South African cheetah named Nyana in 2001. **Then, in her second attempt she broke her own record with a time of 6.13 seconds.** (*For comparison, the Fastest Human on Earth, Jamaican Sprinter Usain bolt, recently posted a 9.58 in the 100-meter dash.*)

"Sarah is a wonderful animal and a wonderful symbol of hope for all cheetahs," said Cathryn Hilker, Founder of the Cincinnati Zoo's Cat Ambassador Program. "It's really great for Sarah to have the honor as the fastest in the world, but I also hope this record-breaking run helps to raise awareness of the plight of the cheetah."

Cheetahs are built for speed. Their flexible spine allows their front legs to stretch far forward on each stride, covering 20 to 22 feet in one stride, about the same distance as a racehorse. But cheetahs are so much faster—the fastest racehorse runs 43 miles per hour, while cheetahs can run at speeds of up to 70 miles per hour. Cheetahs are off the ground more than half of their running time! Their claws are hard and sharp like cleats, giving them great traction when they run.

Cheetahs are endangered and their population worldwide has shrunk from about 100,000 in 1900 to an estimated 9,000 – 12,000 cheetahs today. The Cincinnati Zoo has been dubbed "The Cheetah Capital of the World" because of its conservation efforts through education, public interpretation, and the captive cheetah breeding program. The Zoo's Regional Cheetah Breeding Center is one of only four similar facilities in the United States managed by the Species Survival Plan. Since 2007, four out of only eight cheetah cub litters born in North America were born in Cincinnati, more than anywhere else in the world. In total, there have been 37 cheetah cubs born in Cincinnati.

Since 1980 the Cincinnati Zoo's "Cat Ambassador Program" has taken African cheetahs to schools and programs around the U.S, Canada, and Central America to spread the word that cheetahs are running for their lives. In addition, each summer the Zoo takes 22 school teachers to the Cheetah Conservation Fund's headquarters in Namibia for a two-week conservation field study. Since 1990 the Cincinnati Zoo's "Angel Fund," named after our first cheetah ambassador, "Angel," has directly supported cheetah conservation in Africa. From

South African & Namibia in the south, up through Kenya & Tanzania in East Africa, The Angel Fund has contributed more than \$1 million in support for cheetahs in the wild.

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