



Serval

The serval is a wild cat found in **Southern Africa** and also known as **tierboskat** (Afrikaans for 'tiger-forest-cat'). It is the sole member of the genus **Leptailurus**, whose name may have been constructed from a medieval Greek word meaning 'fine, delicate'. By contrast, the name 'serval' might have derived from the Medieval Latin words 'Lupus cervalis' (meaning 'deer-like wolf') or from its Portuguese equivalent 'lobo-cerval', which refers to the Iberian lynx. The serval is a slender, medium-sized cat which stands 54–62 cm at the shoulder and weighs 9–18 kg. The serval has the **longest legs of any cat** relative to its body size. Active in the day as well as at night, servals tend to be **solitary** and limit social interaction. Both sexes establish **wide home ranges** (up to 30 km), which they mark with feces and saliva. Servals are **carnivores** whose staple food are small-sized animals such as rodents, birds, and reptiles. While hunting, the serval uses its sense of hearing to locate the prey: to kill small prey, it **leaps** over 2 m above the ground and then lands on the prey on its forefeet, before finally killing it with a bite on the neck. They are natural born killers, as kittens begin hunting on their own at six months; they also gain independence very soon, as they leave their mother aged 1 year.



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