

Reclaiming the Grassland for the Cheetah: Nature, Knowledge, and Power in Twentieth Century India

BY

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12 noon to 1:30 p.m.



GHAZALA SHAHABUDDIN is a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Ecology, Development and Research (CEDAR), Delhi. She has published extensively in scientific journals in the areas of conservation biology, ornithology, and wildlife policy. Her book, *Conservation at the Crossroads: Science, Society and the Future of India's Wildlife* (Permanent Black, India, 2010), examines the science and politics of nature conservation in India. She has co-edited two other books: *Nature Without Borders* (Oxford University Press, 2014) and *Making Conservation Work: Securing Biodiversity in this New Century* (Permanent Black, 2007).

About the Lecture:

The Asiatic cheetah reintroduction plan sparked lively and often rancorous arguments on the pros and cons of attempting to revive the population of a large carnivore that had been missing from the Indian landscape for over half a century. The ecological merit of trying to revive cheetah populations in India was debated, not just between government and civil society but also amongst scientists themselves. Local activists feared it might deepen existing park-people hostilities in India. Some saw it as an assertion of regional identity on the part of influential biologists, inspired by the concept of “rewilding”— first conceptualized for North American landscapes, which aims at recreating Pleistocene-like ecology. This lecture attempts to trace the history of thought and imagination on cheetah reintroduction, and explores the uneasy alliances amongst the constituencies of science, conservation, knowledge, and power through the medium of the cheetah.

VENUE: CASI – 3600 Market Street, Suite 560 (5th floor) Philadelphia, PA 19104-2653

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