

CHEETAH INTEREST GROUP

Newsletter 1, 2002, May 2002

The Cheetah Interest Group was borne out of the Global Cheetah Action Plan workshop held in South Africa during 2001 to unite the work being carried out worldwide to conserve cheetah. 53 Participants from 11 countries attended the workshop and developed projects and action steps for continued and improved cheetah conservation. The Cheetah Interest Group is a tool established at this forum which aims to support and facilitate the efforts of all cheetah conservationists through communication, collaboration and integration.

NATIONAL CHEETAH MANAGEMENT PLAN (NCMP) – SOUTH AFRICA

Deon Cilliers

The NCMP was brought into existence about two years ago after farmers in the Thabazimbi district approached De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre for a solution to their cheetah problems. All relevant role players including organised Agriculture, Provincial Authorities, National Authorities, NGO's such as the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Hoedspruit Breeding Centre for Endangered Species and De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre were present at the meeting. Other role-players such as PHASA, Safari Club International and Academic Institutions also became involved in the project. The NCMP was managed as a De Wildt Project for practical purposes. At a recent NCMP general meeting held at De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Centre during November 2001, it was decided to take a bold step forward and to establish the NCMP as an independent body focussing on the conservation and management of the free roaming cheetah in South Africa. A management committee for the new NCMP was nominated at the general meeting and the first NCMP steering committee meeting was held during December 2001.

Problem Cheetah Relocated

Two male cheetah from the Tolwe area in Northern Province were recently relocated

onto Shambala Game Reserve owned by Mr Douw Steyn. The two male cheetah were relocated with a female cheetah onto the reserve and their movements, habits etc. will be monitored on a daily basis by Shambala staff as part of their large predator monitoring program. This relocation is of great importance for future releases, as the male has been fitted with a steel plate in the hind leg due to a break caused by an injury in the boma two months prior to the release. Three cheetah, one adult female and two 10-month-old cubs were relocated to Kwandwe Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape in January 2002. The manager of Kwandwe collected the cheetah at Eastgate Airport and the cheetah were flown to Kwandwe where they were released into a holding boma. People interested in relocating cheetah onto their properties are urged to make contact with the NCMP in order to be placed onto a database for future relocations. Tel / Fax: + 27 (0)12-546 0403, Cell: 0828531068, ncmp@dewildt.org.za www.dewildt.org.za/ncmp

Thabazimbi Cheetah Population Study

Kelly Wilson, a post graduate student from the Centre of Wildlife Management- Pretoria University, has been doing a population survey of the free roaming cheetah in the Thabazimbi area for the past two years as an M.Sc. project. Kelly first received a lot of antagonism from the farming community in Thabazimbi, but soon through her perseverance managed to change attitudes

tremendously. Kelly has now covered the entire Thabazimbi district and is busy analysing the data she collected. The NCMP as well as the formal conservation bodies anxiously await her thesis, as this is the first in-depth study to be done on the free roaming cheetah population in SA for the past 15 years. The NCMP will try to persuade Kelly to continue with similar studies throughout the natural distribution range of the cheetah. This information is extremely important for the future management and conservation of the cheetah as a sustainable natural resource. The NCMP recently presented Kelly Wilson with a donation to purchase equipment required for scat analysis.

Any organisations or individuals that is interested in financially supporting this population survey should contact Vanessa Bower of the NCMP at + 27 (0) 12 5041278.

UPDATE ON FUNDING REQUESTS:

Dusty Lombardi reports that requests for funding proposals were sent out to all field researchers that attended the 2001 Cheetah meeting. Eleven proposals were completed and returned and the north American cheetah SSP has formed an "ad hoc" committee to evaluate and prioritise the proposals for the SSP. The SSP is now in the process of finding funds for the proposals. An additional request was sent out to researchers for *ex situ* conservation work and to date only one researcher submitted a proposal.

Take a look at this web site for a report on the Global Cheetah Action Plan workshop held in 2001!!!!

<http://www.colszoo.org/Conservation/2001/consnews/cn8.html>

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Funding opportunities are always there and the latest comes in the form of grants being available from the Roger Williams Park Zoo. They are currently accepting proposals for the **Sophie Danforth Conservation Biology Fund of the Rhode Island Zoological Society**. Annual awards of up to \$1000 are granted to conservation programs that protect

threatened wildlife and habitats worldwide. Field studies and other projects that demonstrate a multi-disciplinary approach to biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, as well as projects that involve in-country collaborators, receive highest funding priority. Environmental education programmes, development of techniques that can be used in a natural environment, and captive propagation programmes that stress an integrative approach to conservation are also appropriate. Deadline for submissions is May 31, 2002 and grant recipients will be notified by September 3, 2002. Proposal guidelines and additional information are available on the Roger Williams Park Zoo Website at www.rogerwilliamsparkzoo.org in the Conservation section, or may be acquired by contacting Stacia Martin at smartin@rwpzoo.org

WASSENAAR WILDLIFE BREEDING CENTRE NEWS- NETHERLANDS

Jan Louwman

A female cheetah **Xena** (#3425) came from the Colchester Zoo, England to the WWBC for an attempt to get her pregnant and with success after being mated by **Beau** (#4048). Because of the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth disease however, Xena could not be sent back and so she gave birth in Wassenaar to a litter of 3.2 of which 0.1 died at an age of 2 days. When the cubs were 3 months old, the mother and cubs returned to Colchester where they are all doing fine.

In February 2002, a male **Nairo** (#2510) went on loan to Münster Zoo, Germany, where he sired **Ukky** (#3119 born in Wassenaar). The female gave birth to a litter of 3.1.

Questa (#2503) gave birth to a single cub **Odessa** whose sire was Beau. After handrearing this cub for 2 ½ weeks she died unexpectedly but later in the year Questa gave birth to another litter of 2.1. These cubs are doing fine and will move to other institutions at the end of 2002. Again the sire was Beau.

Another female **Hima** (#2923) gave birth to a litter, sired by Beau. It was her first litter (3.2) and after 2 days one male died. The other 2.1 are growing very well.

From Jaderberg Zoo, Germany, the female **Ira** (#3696) came to be mated and returned pregnant to Germany, later giving birth to a single cub.

Two females **Ngoma** (#4181) and **Nyika** (#4182), born in 2000, were sent to White Oak Conservation Centre in Florida, U.S.A and a littermate **Natcho** (#4179) was sent to Jaderberg Zoo, Germany, in exchange for a female **Bahati** (#4080), which was born there in 1999.

Three cheetah died during this period. Females **Knickohr** (#1993, 14 yrs.), **Princess** (#2256, 11 yrs) and our favourite breeding male **Zoefie** (#1619, 16 ½ yrs).

CHEETAH CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN KENYA

Martin Mulama, Kenya Wildlife Service

Two cheetah projects are currently running in Kenya. This is in an effort to understand the plight of cheetahs in Kenya. The two projects are being implemented in phases and the first phase for both projects is to gather the baseline information that will make the platform for the subsequent phases.

Masai Mara Cheetah Conservation Project

This project was conceived following continued reports from the tour operators indicating a decline of cheetah population in the Mara, cheetah being one of the favourite predator species in the tourism industry. The first phase is aimed at establishing baseline information about numbers and distribution of cheetah in Mara and its immediate group ranches, assess levels of harassment by tourists, and treat ailing individuals in the region. The project which was formally launched in August 2001 is funded by Basecamp Explorer A/S, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) East Africa.

Data on distribution and numbers comes mainly from field observations with the use of both digital still and video cameras. This information is later downloaded and the GPS locations mapped. Individual identification

and coding of all cheetah sighted is also done. To-date, 41 different cheetahs have been positively identified and a recognition file opened. A leopard killed 1 male cub and this brings the total to 40 individuals. Out of these, 60% are inside the reserve while the remaining 40% are outside the reserve. The structure of the 40 cheetah identified so far is 21 adult females, 9 adult males and 10 cubs.

Information on levels of harassment by tourists and or pastoralists is gathered through interviews and questionnaires from the tour guides, drivers and resident community. Some of the preliminary information from the questionnaires indicates that cheetahs occur mainly in singles or individuals although several families comprising of a female and cubs have also been recorded. The largest group recorded so far comprised a female with 4 cubs. Though the preliminary results indicate cheetah numbers that are slightly high than initially thought, there is still the need to develop more specific counting techniques. Bernard Ngoru who is assisted with a former CCF staff, Elena Chelysheva, is undertaking the project at the field level. The project is still going on.

Cheetah Conservation and Human Impact in Kenya

This project was also conceived with a broad aim of providing the much-needed information on cheetah in Kenya. The project is focussed on the farmlands and ranches in Naivasha - Nakuru area. It is affiliated to KWS and hosted at Soysambu ranch. The project formally started in February after a series of meetings and a project vehicle procured from the Susanne Garrison-Clise and the Bay Foundation.

The project is in its infancy stage and has so far been concentrating on interviewing farmers in the general project area and visited one of the local schools. The initial discussions of the Education component of this project have been done at a meeting with representatives from KWS, WWF, and Friends of Conservation, East African Wild Life Society and Wildlife Clubs of Kenya. The Education programme will allow a linkage of resources to promote understanding of the role of cheetah and other predators in the

fragile Kenyan ecosystem. The Education opportunities for students and the tourism industry have been targeted. Mary Wykstra-Ross presented the CCF Education model at this meeting.

The project is under Mary Wykstra-Ross of CCF Namibia and Cosmas Wambua, a former volunteer with KWS with strong skills in mapping and game count analysis is her assistant.

CHEETAH INTEREST GROUP WORKSHOP – JULY 2002, SOUTH AFRICA

Please pencil into your rapidly-filling diaries the 6th to the 9th of July 2002 and start making enquiries about flights to South Africa!!!! We will be convening another international meeting to formalise the Cheetah Interest Group and to develop the plans and projects initiated during last year's workshop. The CIG is YOUR tool, it is there to serve YOU and this is an opportunity for you to not only support it and give it impetus, but to ensure that your voice is heard in developing a group designed to represent you and your projects!!! More news will be forthcoming about this meeting soon, but in the mean time, please book off those dates and makes plans to meet again in Sunny South Africa!!!!

IN CLOSING

Thank-you to all those who contributed information for this first newsletter, I appreciate the time and effort you put into submitting the news items, and speak for everyone when I say that they make interesting reading – keep up the good work!!!! This newsletter is the first of many and they will, no doubt, develop in appearance, style and structure over time, so feel free to give suggestions and input. To

keep the document small enough to e-mail with ease to those living in remote areas, we have opted to not include pics – perhaps over time these can be posted onto the CIG web site, but for now, this tool will serve as a news report only.

Please start compiling updates and more news items for the next edition. We will aim to produce another newsletter by the middle of June, just before the CIG workshop but this obviously depends on the number of features we receive. I therefore need information from you all by the 7th of June, that gives you a month!!

Finally, a big thank-you from CBSG South Africa to **CBSG (USA), the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Vodacom, the Lomas Wildlife Trust, the Elizabeth Wakeman Henderson Charitable Foundation and the Davies Foundation** for supporting CBSG South Africa. Without this support, we would not be able to do any of our conservation projects, the Cheetah Interest Group work included. Thank-you also to the North American Cheetah SSP for their continued support of cheetah conservation and for funding last year's, and this year's workshops.

Best wishes,



Yolan Friedmann
Conservation Breeding Specialist Group South Africa
Endangered Wildlife Trust



**CONSERVATION BREEDING
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SOUTH AFRICA



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The role of CIG secretariat is currently held by Yolan Friedmann of the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group South Africa, based in South Africa. The features in this newsletter represent the various CIG members and their projects and their views do not necessarily represent the CIG secretariat or the editor of this newsletter.