

THE FAST TRACK

Newsletter of the Global Cheetah Forum



NEWSLETTER 3 DECEMBER 2004

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The Global Cheetah Forum was born out of the 2001 and 2002 Global Cheetah Action Plan workshops at which 66 participants from 14 countries met to unite the work being carried out worldwide to conserve cheetah. The results included the publication of a Global Cheetah Action Plan and the formation of the GCF. The GCF supports and fosters the development of progressive, collaborative conservation partnerships and facilitates effective communication and information flow between cheetah conservationists worldwide.

FROM THE SECRETARIAT:

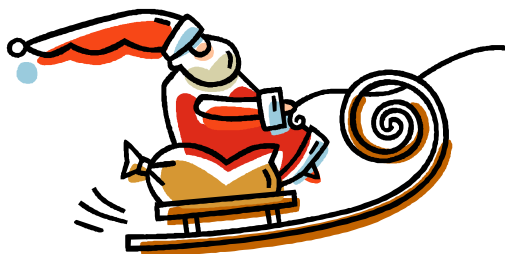
With the festive season on our doorstep, things are starting to wind down and we hope that Santa brings you all the goodies you desire.

This issue of the GCF Newsletter includes details of a DNA data base for captive cheetah using the services of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Animal Improvement Institute's Wildlife Biological Information System being coordinated by the National Cheetah Conservation Forum of SA (NCCF-SA). As well as a snippet from the Cheetah Conservation Botswana Update Newsletter, on their unusual sighting for wild cheetah.

Enjoy this, the last edition of The Fast Track for 2004 and please feel free to contact any of the contributing organisations or the secretariat for more information on any of these projects.

We wish you and your family a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year

Brenda Daly and Yolan Friedmann
CBSG Southern Africa
Endangered Wildlife Trust



NEWS FROM THE DE WILDT CHEETAH AND WILDLIFE TRUST (SOUTH AFRICA)



1. Radio Telemetry

Once again we have had some lovely sightings of our collared cats from the air. We were very lucky to see the coalition of two males on an ostrich kill with one of our sponsors, Alexander Pomeroy. He took some lovely photographs of the boys, who are as relaxed as ever around the microlight! This coalition split up for a couple of weeks but are now back together and back to old times again.





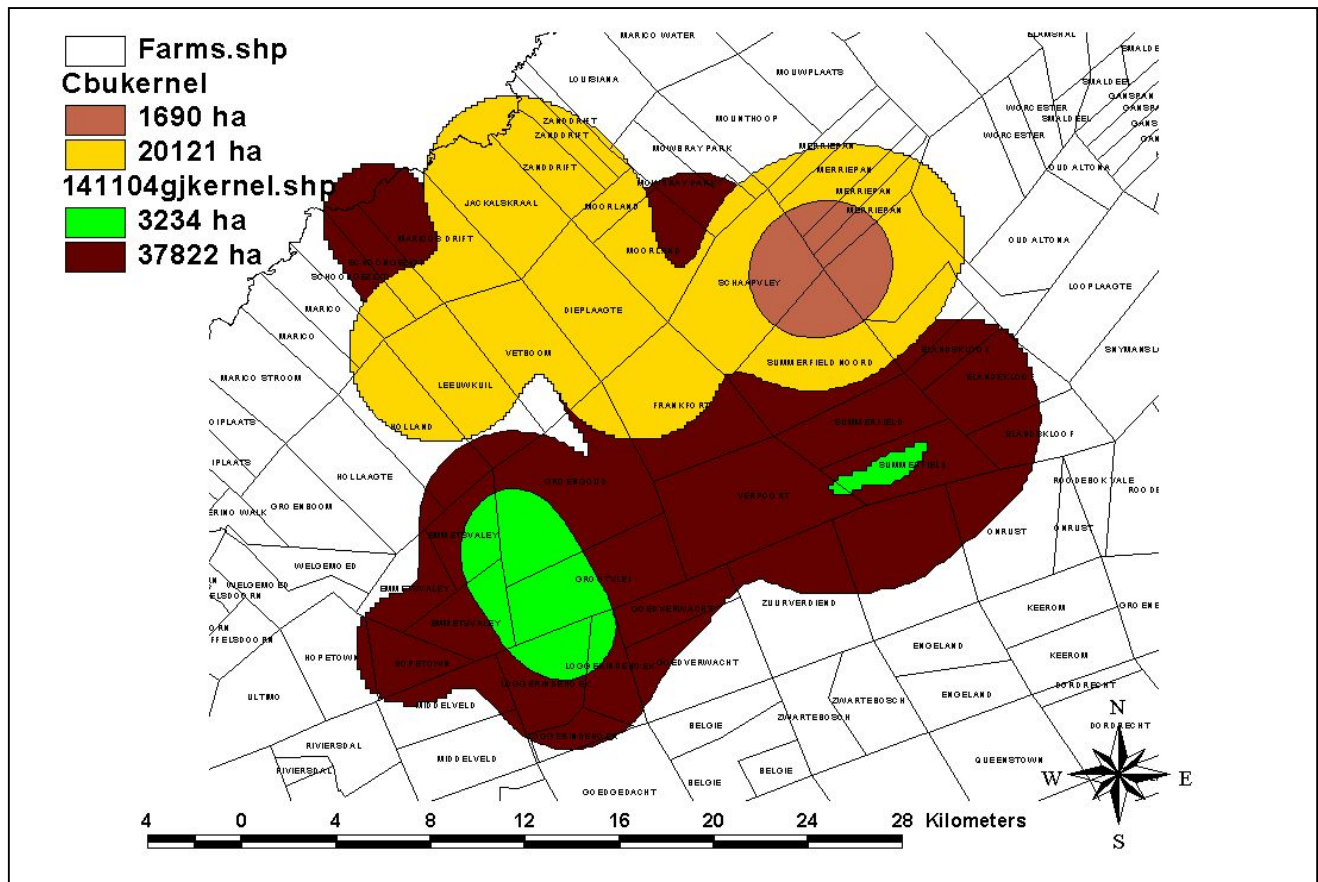
George and Joss on an ostrich kill. Photograph by Alexander Pomeroy

We are now starting to get an idea of the range use of these cheetahs as well as range overlap. The coalition of two is using approximately 400km² while the coalition of three is using just over 200km².

2. Camera Trapping

Our camera traps are not only useful for censusing, but also for getting an idea of where to place traps for collaring. We knew about a marking post that was being regularly used by the collared coalition of two males as well as the collared coalition of three males. We suspected that there was probably another cheetah using the post, but we were not sure. We put up a camera trap and got some lovely pictures of not only the radio collared cats but also another cheetah that is not collared – YET!!!

In the last newsletter we reported on a farmer that had continuously caught cheetahs at a marking tree for more than five years. After the capture of the last cat, the owners allowed us to collar and release him. We then put a camera up at the tree to see how many cheetahs are visiting the tree and how frequently. For the first four or five weeks, there were no cheetahs visiting the tree, however in the past month, two different cheetahs have marked there.



Range use of the coalition of two (brown) and the coalition of three (yellow).



Cheetah marking at a marking tree on the farm Mabulskop

FARMER OF THE YEAR

The De Wildt Wild Cheetah Project announced their farmer of the year for 2004 at De Wildt's year end gala dinner. The award could not be awarded to an individual, but rather to a group of owners who have been instrumental in the expansion of our project. They have in the past always captured and relocated cheetahs from their ranch using permanently set capture cages at a very active marking post. However, they decided to allow us to collar the last one they caught and we have also got camera traps out on their property. The trophy was given to Ian Anderson who represented the owners of the farm Mabulskop in the Lephalale district of the Limpopo province.



Ian Anderson, representing the Mabulskop owners, with Vanessa Bouwer and the trophy that he won as the De Wildt Wild Cheetah Project Farmer of the Year

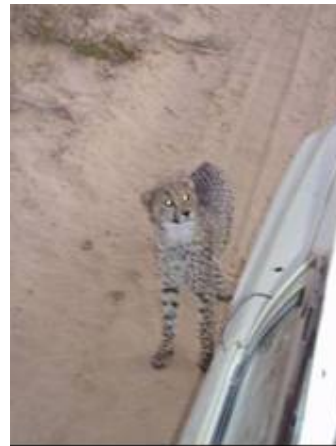
For more info, contact Kelly Wilson on wcmp@dewildt.org.za

CHEETAH CONSERVATION BOTSWANA (JWANENG RESEARCH CAMP)



We have been very busy monitoring our collared cats, carrying out a spoor survey to estimate density and attempting capture of any new cats in the reserve.

In June we were coming back from an unsuccessful mission to locate our 3 males. We were feeling a little disappointed at not finding them when up ahead in the road we saw cheetah. It turned out to be a mother with 5 young cubs of about 6 months old. As the vehicle approached they melted into the bush as usual. We stopped to climb onto the roof for a better look into the long grass. After several minutes 5 small cubs began to emerge from the bush back onto the road, where they proceeded to put on a display for us. Jumping, running and tumbling with each other. Mum looked on impassively from the safety of the trees.



They approached inquisitively closer and closer. One male cub was particularly brave and began circling the vehicle with a low growl, even stopping to sniff at the tyre. They stayed until the sunset then returned into the bush.

This is an unusual sighting for wild cheetah which are notoriously difficult to see and if spotted usually disappear as soon as they are able. (This is not the case in well known reserves where

predators are very habituated to people and vehicles, but cheetahs are generally very shy).

We then set out to attempt capturing and collaring the group. Setting the traps up in areas we knew they were frequenting. By August we had been successful in capturing the whole group. Samples and measurements of all were taken and mum was collared for monitoring

Thanks to veterinarians, Mark Bing and Jane Freeman for assisting us with the medical workups and for being predator friendly farmers! So far we have been getting good locations on the group; they have been staying in the reserve, much the same as our first mother with cubs. It will be interesting to see how their movements change as the cubs grow.

MICROLIGHT - Our microlight arrived last week, so we are all very excited! Ann Marie will be flying the plane and taking care of locating our cats once they leave the reserve. So far she's only done a couple of test flights, as it's important to familiarize yourself with a new plane before starting aerial work. The model coincidentally is named the Cheetah with a Rotex 912 engine, purchased from Rainow Aircrafts in South Africa. Funds were generously donated by the Howard Buffet Foundation. This will revolutionise our monitoring capabilities and we'll be able to cover a much larger area than ever before.



This is a snippet from the Cheetah Conservation Botswana Update Newsletter, for more information or a copy of the newsletter please contact [Rebecca Klein](mailto:Rebecca.Klein@cheetah@mokolodi.com) on cheetah@mokolodi.com



NATIONAL CHEETAH CONSERVATION FORUM (SOUTH AFRICA)



To date the NCCF-SA has relocated 105 problem cheetahs through the compensation-relocation programme. These cheetahs are radio collared and relocated to areas where they are wanted, cannot get out and are monitored on a daily basis. If it were not for the relocation programme, most of these cheetahs would have been shot on sight. Of these 105 cheetahs, 68 went through the De Wildt Wild Cheetah Project and the rest via the Hoedspruit Centre for Endangered Species.

These relocations have been very successful and several females have given birth and raised cubs. All relocated cheetahs are sampled for genetic purposes and form part of a meta-population management plan. One male fondly known as Klippiess, was fitted with a cell phone collar and relocated to the Hoedspruit Air force base near the Kruger National Park. He somehow managed to escape, but because the area is very cheetah friendly and none of the neighbouring landowners objected, it was decided not to recapture him.

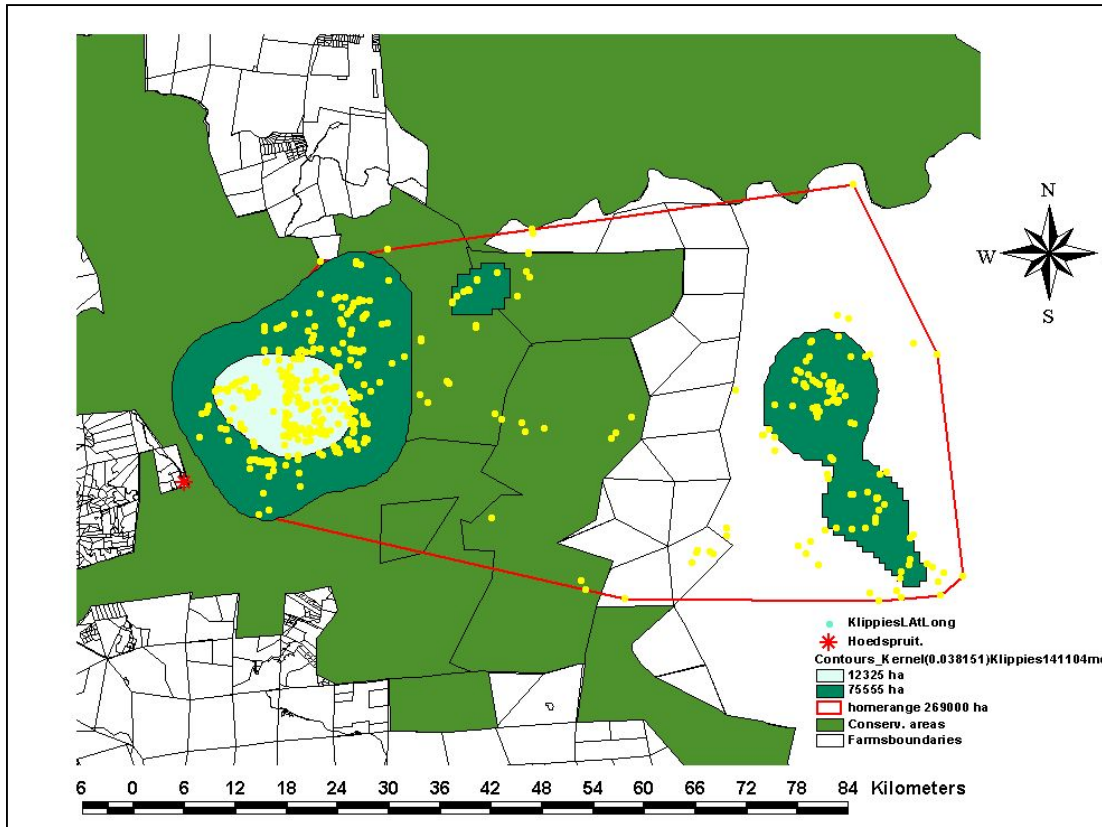
The De Wildt Wild Cheetah Project took over the responsibility of monitoring him and are getting some very interesting information. He is moving over a very large area and has even gone on a few excursions into the Kruger National Park as far as Satara. His range size using the minimum convex polygon method is 2 690km².

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please send your contributions to brendad@ewt.org.za

SUPPORTERS OF GCF

Columbus Zoo
North American Cheetah Species Survival Plan
St Louis Zoo
AZA Conservation Endorsement Fund
Endangered Wildlife Trust



Range use of a relocated male cheetah fitted with a cell phone collar in the Hoedspruit area of the Limpopo province of South Africa. The white areas in the eastern part of his range is the Kruger National Park in the Orpen-Satara area.

The NCCF-SA has several working groups that focus on issues related to cheetah conservation. One of these is the Captive Breeders working Group. This group is chaired by Rob Hall of the Congo.

NCCF-SA Contacts:

Chairman: Gerhard Verdoorn: e-mail: neshier@tiscali.co.za & tel: +27 82 446 8946

Secretary: Kelly Wilson: e-mail: wcmp@dewildt.org.za & tel: +27 82 477 4470

SA Captive Breeders get on board

Coming from a breeding facility that is not camped out in the back yard of a wild cheetah population the activities of the National Cheetah Conservation Forum of SA (NCCF-SA) provided an ideal opportunity for our organization and others to get involved more effectively and directly on a national level in conserving our spotted friends. Since the formation of a Captive Breeders Group as a sub-committee of the NCCF-SA the link between in-situ efforts and ex-situ programs has not only proved to be essential but also of

great significance to the long term conservation of the cheetah.

The most significant project initiated by the group to date is the formulation of a DNA data base for captive cheetah using the services of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) Animal Improvement Institute's Wildlife Biological Information System. Although the project is still in its infancy stage, our long term goal is to log samples from as many of the captive cheetah in the country as possible, DNA profile these samples, then use the results to better manage the national captive population. The data base can further be used as a valuable tool by our National Conservation Authorities to ensure that any cheetah being traded with or moved between facilities are indeed of captive origin. It is here where we hope to crack down on the illegal trade of wild cheetah, which is currently having a negative impact on our free roaming population.

Other projects on the go by the group include the development of the Cheetah Husbandry Manual and an increase in public awareness through the

use of posters and presentations under the banner of the NCCF-SA. Many of the captive facilities in SA have a huge capacity of visitors, both local and international, who can be educated and enlightened as to the plight of the cheetah today.

The NCCF-SA has developed into an exceptional group of diverse role-players working towards a common goal. The Captive Breeders Group members currently participating in the forum is estimated at only half the number of breeding facilities currently in the country. It is hoped that through the positive influence of our group we can improve on this capacity which can only benefit the long term goals of the NCCF-SA and ultimately the cheetah survival in its natural habitat.

For more info, contact Rob Hall, Cango Wildlife Ranch on robhall@kingsley.co.za

AND ON ANOTHER NOTE: THE AFRICAN LION WORKING GOUP

The ALWG was founded in October 1999 at Warm Baths, SA - during the AGM of CBSG. Dr David Wildt, Deputy Chair of CBSG was the facilitator of a three-day discussion about the African lion and its conservation status. Some 15 people attended the meeting, and became founder members.

After a teetering start, with so many new things to get a grip on, especially getting to know the members, spread over the world, the attempts to facilitate communication and provoke conservation-orientated discussions, resulted in many positive results:

- A workshop in Limbe, Cameroon, to facilitate a better understanding of the unique management problems of central-west Africa;
- Another workshop in Uganda;
- A letter to DWNP, Botswana, to warn against the negative impact which an abrupt hunting ban on lions may have;
- AGM at Willem Pretorius Game Reserve in the Free State province of SA, where some members met for the first time;
- A firm stand against a safari operator at Kariba, Zimbabwe, who believes that hyaenas are killing lion cubs and wants the hyaenas culled;
- Many hundreds of discussions about free-roaming lion population dynamics and management;
- Debate about hunting or not;

- The ever-present problem of human/lion cohabitation;
- FIV and if it is a deadly disease or not. The resulting FIV fact sheet;
- The ALD, (African Lion Database) the results of a continent-wide survey, the first ever of its kind, and the realisation that there are only between 16 500 and 30 000 lions left on the continent, compared to a guesstimate of 30 000 to 100 000 in 1994.

Today, ALWG includes the top lion researchers of the world, and a membership of 59 is maybe a good indication of the realisation that time is running out for the kingpin tourist attraction of the continent. Hopefully, through our endeavours to preserve this magnificent animal, we also succeeded to trigger interest in the conservation of the natural environment in its diversity.

We wish all our colleagues who dedicated their lives to conservation all over the world a peaceful Christmas and wonderful New Year.

Best wishes,

Sarel van der Merwe, African Lion Working Group (IUCN/SSC) on mwnatura@mweb.co.za

The GCF secretariat is currently held by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) Southern Africa and the Endangered Wildlife Trust, South Africa. The features in this newsletter represent the various GCF members and their projects and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the GCF secretariat or the editor of this newsletter.



CONSERVATION BREEDING
SPECIALIST GROUP
SOUTHERN AFRICA



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