

# THE FAST TRACK

Newsletter of the Global Cheetah Forum



## NEWSLETTER 1 AUGUST 2005

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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:

A warm welcome to the new members of the Global Cheetah Forum and we hope you contribute eagerly to future editions of this newsletter.

This issue of the GCF Newsletter includes news from Namibia, Botswana, Algeria and a re-collaring success story of George and Joss in South Africa.

We also have an article submitted to the associated editor of the Animal Keepers' Forum, to be published in the US by AAZK (American Association of Zoo Keepers). They are dedicating an issue of their publication to the cheetah as requested in December 2004 via the Cheetah List Serve. This article also forms part of a request made by Annie Beckhelling in December 2004 for current education projects to send details of projects being undertaken in 2005.

In the next Fast Track we hope to bring you an article on the piloting of the Anatolian Shepherd guard dog in partnership with De Wildt and Cheetah Outreach in South Africa as well as an article from Kat Bell on the Cheetah Outreach / De Wildt / Massey University cub nutrition research which should be available in October.

Another exciting announcement is that all Conservation Breeding Specialist Group Southern Africa reports are available for download from the Internet (<http://za.pdflibrary.ewt.org.za/>). Reports that will be of interest to readers of this newsletter include the Global Cheetah Conservation Action Planning Workshops Reports for 2000 and 2001 that were held in South Africa and the Global

Cheetah Monitoring Workshop Report held in Tanzania in June 2004.

Please feel free to contact any of the contributing organisations or the secretariat for more information on any of these projects.

*Brenda Dafy and Yolan Friedmann*  
CBSG Southern Africa  
Endangered Wildlife Trust

### NEWS FROM THE CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND (NAMIBIA)

#### THE LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION NAMIBIA (LCMAN) HOLDS AGM

The Large Carnivore Management Association held its 4th AGM and 16th General meeting on the 25 April. Dr. Mark Jago, well known Otjiwarongo veterinarian, was elected as the Chairman for the third consecutive year. Bonnie Schumann, Cheetah Conservation Fund staff member, was elected Secretary again.

The LCMAN's primary objective is to ensure the conservation of Namibia's large carnivores through collaboration with all stakeholders. As the farmer/predator conflict zone is a vital area of so much of what LCMAN is trying to achieve, it is gratifying to note that the Namibian Agriculture Union has re-committed its participation in LCMAN in the form of Mr. Jasper Brand.

During the past year LCMAN has continued to tackle a number of issues ranging from research to conflict resolution on farmlands. In his Chairman's Report, Dr. Jago stated that the need for a national cheetah census remains a priority and LCMAN has been proactive over the past year in taking the first steps towards making this a reality. The LCMAN currently has 15 members and in addition, meetings are open to and are attended by other interested parties.

Namibia is not only the "cheetah capital of the world" but also home to a host of other predators such as lion, leopard, wild dog and hyaena. As such the potential for human/predator conflict is great. It is only through collaboration with all stakeholders that practical solutions to this conflict can be found to ensure that both predators and farmers can survive on Namibia's farmlands.

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**CHEETAH NEWS  
A TAIL OF TWO CHEETAHS**

While testing trip cameras to be used in cheetah population estimates, the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) photographed two male cheetahs visiting the 64 hectare cheetah pen where 11 of our resident female cheetahs live. Shown clearly on these photo's was that one of the brothers had a severely injured tail. Almost a month later when photographed a second time the tail showed no signs of healing. Trap cages were set and the injured cheetah was caught the same night. Dr. Mark Jago at the Otjiwarongo Vet Clinic amputated the necrotic section, leaving only about 6 cm of tail.

As this cheetah had to be held in CCF's quarantine pens while his wound healed, his brother was also captured to ensure he did not leave the area. Much to our surprise, this very healthy cheetah weighed in at a record 60kg's, the heaviest weight CCF has recorded for a wild cheetah! Both have been released following healing of the tail to resume their lives on and around the CCF farms.

**NEMATODE DISCOVERED IN CHEETAHS**

A nematode (*Ollulanus tricuspis*), previously recorded in cheetahs in a zoo in New Zealand (paper published in the International Cheetah Studbook, 1998), was recently recorded in Southern Africa for the first time in cheetahs resident at CCF. These pesky little guys caused quite a headache for CCF staff, affecting the health of five cheetahs over a protracted period of time before being diagnosed by Dr. Emily Lane, a veterinary pathologist in South Africa. The diagnosis was made from stomach biopsies taken from the sick cheetahs. Symptoms caused by an infestation of this nematode include passing undigested meat in the faeces and vomiting, causing a chronic loss in weight and condition. The cheetahs gradually lose weight and their appetite is negatively affected.

Fortunately, following a specific deworming regime, all five cheetahs have shown a drastic recovery in health. Regular deworming will not eliminate this nematode and it does not show up in faecal floats as is passed on through vomitus. We are still puzzled as to where the infestation came from, given that all the other cheetahs on site appear unaffected. We suspected that Daisy and Rosy, two of the five sick cheetahs, picked up the initial infestation when they were held illegally and prior to being confiscated by CCF, in very small and unhygienic conditions on a farm near Omaruru. However, their brother showed no signs of health problems and gastric biopsy showed the nematode was not present in his stomach.

**INTEGRATED LIVESTOCK AND PREDATOR  
TRAINING COURSES HELD  
CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND, NAMIBIA**

During February the Cheetah Conservation Fund, in collaboration with the Namibian Wild Dog Project and the Namibian Development Trust, hosted two one-week training courses for 55 communal conservancy farmers and members. Held at the CCF Research Centre, the course included theory and practical training on a variety of aspects related to integrated livestock and predator management.

The objectives of the course were to provide all participants with an understanding of the economic and ecological value of predators as well as their behaviour and ecology; to train participants to correctly identify causes of livestock losses; to provide information on livestock husbandry and management to reduce losses to disease, poisonous plants, birthing problems and predators; to instill in all participants

a desire to protect and integrate predators into their farming and conservancy areas; to provide basic administrative and wildlife management skills; to instill in members the importance of their participation in the success of their conservancy.

Dr. Arthur Bagot-Smith and Johan Britz lectured and led practicals on the veterinary care, selection and husbandry of cattle, goats and sheep. Aspects such as herd productivity and record keeping were highlighted. CCF staff shared information with participants on, amongst others, predator identification and the use of livestock guarding dogs. Robin Lines of the Wild Dog Research Project tackled the difficult issue of wild dogs on farmlands and shared his research results with the groups. CCF ran similar courses two years ago and plans to run another three in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institute, Wilderness Safaris and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in July this year. These courses have proven to be very popular and CCF has had a very positive response to the content.

#### **NEW PUBLICATIONS FOR THE FARMER CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND, NAMIBIA**

Hot off the press comes "Geïntegreerde Vee en Roofdier Bestuur: 'n Gids vir die Boer". The English version of this book was published last year. Compiled by Mandy Schumann, this book tackles a wide variety of topics in a precise and easy to read manner and is a must for all farmers. The good news is that the book is available to Namibian farmers *free of charge* from Cheetah Conservation Fund. Members of the Global Cheetah Forum who are interested in obtaining a copy of these publications can contact CCF.

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#### **NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS**

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please send your contributions to [brendad@ewt.org.za](mailto:brendad@ewt.org.za)

#### **SUPPORTERS OF GCF**

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

## **CHEETAH CONSERVATION BOTSWANA (CCB)**



### **JWANENG RESEARCH CAMP**

The anthrax outbreak reported in the January issue of the Cheetah News Newsletter has been contained for the time being and Jwaneng Game Park has reopened.

Anthrax is a natural part of African ecosystems. It exists at low levels in the soil, occasionally flaring up when conditions are right. Namibia and Zimbabwe are also reported anthrax outbreaks. Although a natural population limitation, anthrax does pose a threat to cheetah numbers in affected areas. Cheetah are particularly susceptible among the big cats and usually get it from eating infected meat.

### **CAMERA TRAPS**

CCB have 4 camera traps set up around Jwaneng, thanks to the WILD Foundation and Sierra Club. After some initial positioning experiments we've had some good photos.



The following was taken in December 2004; one of the 2 cheetahs drinking has a CCB ear tag. They are approx 1 and 1/2 years old, and it turns out they are 2 of the cubs from ( 001- Jenny ) the first mother with 5 cubs that was caught back in October 2003.

## GHANZI RESEARCH CAMP

In January 2005 CCB announced the commencement of our new research camp in the Ghanzi farmlands. This area has long been known as a cheetah problem hotspot. For the last 2 years CCB have been making regular visits up to talk to farmers, but it became clear that a permanent presence was required. A generous offer was given by one of the livestock farmers in the area that we set up camp on his property.

Then to staff it, we had one of our past volunteers Dr Jennifer Zerbel and her husband Jay come out last November to get things moving. The camp is simple, with 3 safari tents and kitchen area. Along with an enclosure for temporarily housing cheetah. It will be an invaluable addition to the project. Allowing us to give a rapid response to farmers' calls for assistance, or to save an orphaned cat.

Educational programmes will also be started in the schools and workshops for farmers on how to live with predators with the minimum of conflict.

## MEDICAL UPDATE

CCB would like to start incorporating gastric endoscopy exams in our workup of wild caught cheetah before their release.

This information will be useful as gastritis is common in captive cheetah and a limiting factor in their survival in captivity. It is hoped the results found in the wild population can help understand this condition. Dr. Kyle Good was invited by DeWildt Cheetah Breeding Centre in South Africa to attend one of their annual endoscopy exam sessions last year to learn more about the procedure.



*Dr Kyle Good working on a wild cheetah.*

She found it very useful. Many thanks to the veterinarians on hand who were willing to share their knowledge. Now all we need is an endoscope! Anyone willing to contribute toward the endoscope will be most appreciated. Special thanks to DeWildt for their great hospitality and willingness to help. Dr Good is also busy collaborating with Dr Chanda Marobela from the National Veterinary Laboratory concerning anthrax in cheetah.

On the disease front, the samples we have collected so far will be sent to South Africa to investigate the prevalence of various diseases in wild cheetah. Many thanks to the Howard Buffet Foundation for assisting us with the costs of these procedures.

CCB will collaborate with Animal Research Centre in South Africa on genetic research. In order to add the Botswana perspective to what is known about the relatedness of these cats.

This is a snippet from the Cheetah Conservation Botswana Update Newsletter for March and April 2005, for more information or a copy of the newsletter please contact Rebecca Klein on [cheetah@mokolodi.com](mailto:cheetah@mokolodi.com) or visit the following website <http://www.cheetahbotswana.com/newsletters.htm> for full and back dated copies of the Newsletters.

## NEW MEMBERS TO THE GLOBAL CHEETAH FORUM INCLUDE:

Mary Wykstra-Ross, Mary is Programme Coordinator for the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Nairobi, Kenya and participated in the Global Cheetah Monitoring Workshop held in Tanzania in June 2004.

Mohammad S. Farhadinia, Mohammad is Director of the Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS) and also does work on Leopards, Iranian Small Felids, Wolf and Striped Hyaena.

Charlene Bissett, Charlene is a student at Rhodes University and is currently doing research on Cheetah, wild dog and lion.



## WILD CHEETAH PROGRAM AT DE WILDT CHEETAH AND WILDLIFE TRUST



### RE-COLLARING OF GEORGE AND JOSS

The battery life of the collars had nearly run out on the coalition of two male cheetahs, George and Joss, that we have been monitoring for almost two years. A capture cage was set at their favourite marking post in hopes of recapturing them to replace their collars, however the two were not falling for the same trap again – so to speak! It was decided to dart them from a helicopter... This was not an easy or cheap task but with the aid and sponsorship of John Bassi owner of Bassair Aviation and a leading expert in capture and animal rescue, we got the task underway early on a chilly Monday morning. Michelle Dobson and Kerrylee Groenewalt of British Airways, one of our sponsors came along for the ride and they were able to experience first hand just how valuable their contribution to our work is, as well as just how difficult it can be! The most worrying factor was that we had no idea where the cheetahs were as we had only been able to locate them once from the ground since the microlight accident. This could have made things very complicated as we would need permission from the landowners in order to dart the cheetahs on their property. We had already obtained permission from the landowners on whose farms the two boys normally move, but we could not know for sure where they would be on the day.

As it turned out, the cheetahs ended up on the land of a farmer who was new in the area and in an area where we had never found the cheetahs before. We went to the house and found the farmer, Steyn Marais, to ask his permission to dart on his property. Steyn said that we could do anything we liked as long as he could come along with us! The chopper got back in the air, only to find the cats had crossed into the neighbour's farm, Silent Valley. Luckily the owners Georgina and Jocelyn Jeurrisen were already with us (previous winners of the Farmer of the Year Award) and had no problem with us entering their property and darting them. The only problem was

that the gate for that farm was 30 minutes drive away. We decided to dart the cheetahs on Silent Valley, load the cheetah into the chopper and change their collars on Steyn's farm where the ground crew already was.



*From front: Kelly and Deon help Andre Uys and John Bassi to unload one of the darted cheetahs.*

Everything ran amazingly smoothly. Andre Uys, the vet, made two incredibly accurate shots into the cheetahs' rumps, loaded them and John flew them safely out.....an incredible sight as the helicopter passed overhead with a cheetah tail hanging from the open door.... Both Michelle and Kerrylee experienced first hand the difficult task of the vet darting two cats in thick bush..... Michelle could not believe the task of the pilot holding the cats in sight until the dart took effect as well as landing in an "opening".....which she described as a "hole in a tree". Both cheetahs were in lovely condition and one of them is huge! By this time several members of the farming community and their staff had arrived and they all had a chance to take pictures and stroke these magnificent animals. The cheetahs' collars were changed and George is now the proud owner of his own cell phone collar..... Kelly Wilson now receives regular sms (text) messages on his movements.

We took the cheetahs back to the farm where they had been darted and left them quietly in the cages overnight to recover from the drugs. The next morning they were released by Annie Beckhelling of Cheetah Outreach, local farmer Steyn Marais and Andrew Young of Silent Valley. Both cheetahs took off at speed into the thick bush and we are now monitoring them through the cell phone network!

## ALGERIAN CHEETAHS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



*Cheetah Joss being re-released on Silent Valley by Steyn Marais, a neighbouring farmer.*



*Cheetah George re-released by Annie Beckhelling of Cheetah Outreach and Andrew Young of Silent Valley.*

De Wildt would like to thank John Bassi and Andre Uys for an outstanding job in difficult circumstances. We would also like to thank Tim Neary for his coordination and support throughout the event. Georgina and Jocelyn Jeurrisen of the farm Silent Valley are thanked for their ongoing support for the project. The Management of Atherstone Collaborative Nature Reserve are thanked for allowing us to use their landing strip and hanger as a base. Finally a big thank you to Steyn Marais for allowing us to use his front garden as a helipad and veterinary clinic with absolutely no prior notice!!

In Algeria, Dr. Laurie Marker, CCF Director, joined a determined team of scientists from several agencies and set off into the desert to carry out a wildlife reconnaissance survey of the Ahaggar National Park. Focusing simultaneously on the distribution and relative abundance of cheetah and their prey base, the team explored little visited areas to the north and east of the Ahaggar massif within Parc National de l'Ahaggar. The trip also provided training for the Algerian team members in methodology and equipment use.

The team discovered good evidence that the Ahaggar continues to support an internationally important population of cheetahs. No estimates of population size can be made on present data, but the survey demonstrated an area of occupancy of at least 10,000km<sup>2</sup>. Information from other parts of Algeria suggests that cheetahs are found over a much wider area. Although the gazelle prey base was encountered at only moderate rates compared to more southerly dorcas populations, they are consistently distributed; in conjunction with barbary sheep, hares, and feral donkeys, they are likely to provide an adequate prey base without a need to include livestock in their diet. Local people mentioned that they considered cheetah a nuisance to camels, but not so much to small stock, which are protected by herding and guard dogs.

During the survey, 68 scat samples, most likely from cheetah, were collected and brought back to Namibia. Here volunteers have carefully washed the samples and used the remaining hair to identify whether cheetah hairs are present, thus confirming that it is indeed cheetah scat. The next step will be to have the confirmed samples analysed for genetic material in order to evaluate the Algerian cheetahs at a genetic level. This will be done at the National Cancer Institute in the USA, the same laboratory that has worked closely with CCF on Namibian cheetah genetic samples for many years. The remaining hair can also, at a later stage, be identified to establish the prey base of cheetahs in Algeria, as each hair can be identified to species level. This technique has been used here in Namibia to document cheetah prey selection.

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## EDUCATING THE AFRICAN NATION CHEETAH OUTREACH (SOUTH AFRICA)

**Annie Beckhelling**  
Founder/Director

"In Africa, Oddly, Animal World is *Terra Incognita*." So read a heading in the New York Times of an article by Marc Lacey, and those of us who have the privilege of working closely with African learners unfortunately can testify to the truth of this statement. Field workers and conservationists engage tirelessly to find solutions to cheetah challenges, but without the support of all the stakeholders of this elegant African predator, these efforts may prove to buy time for the cheetah but not a secure future. Each and every citizen who has the power to vote in countries where the cheetah still ranges free is an important stakeholder who can support or undermine *in situ* conservation efforts. We can equip citizens to make informed choices and build pride in their diverse African wildlife heritage - so critical to the survival of the cheetah. To this end, education is key. Southern Africa is home to many energetic programmes using the cheetah as a learning tool and introducing the uniqueness of this beautiful cat to farmers, learners and teachers.

Farmers, friend or foe, have the most direct impact on current cheetah survival rates outside of protected areas. Each project contributing to this article actively engages farming communities and shares information aimed at reducing farmer-predator conflict. Programmes include education about livestock and wildlife management techniques, the importance of biodiversity and a predator's place in a healthy ecosystem as well as relocating problem animals. These facilities also commented that farming communities express recognition of predator conservation but are reluctant to endure stock loss. Sharing innovative management techniques such as the Cheetah Conservation Fund's (CCF) Anatolian Shepherd livestock guard dog programme has a positive impact on farming communities and improves the cheetahs chances.

*Image1 - Anatolian protecting livestock from predators. (credit: CCF)*

Today's learners are Africa's future citizens and it is here that environmental education can have a powerful impact on perceptions and attitudes. Education outreach is an economical and practical way to carry information to schools. The 19,000 learners reached by CCF's outreach programme compared to the 3,000 visiting their excellent educational centre in Otjiwarongo in 2004,

demonstrates the value of this approach in countries where distances are vast and the cost of transporting numerous learners, even larger. Skilled presenters deliver curriculum linked lessons using the cheetah as an example, for subjects such as Science, Mathematics and language. With numeracy, literacy and sciences being key concerns in many emerging African democracies the ability to integrate lessons into those learning areas gives presenters better access to contact times with learners at schools.

*Image 2 - Laurie and Chewbacca show learners the value of a play tree. (credit: De Wildt)*

CCF has a multi-level programme and delivers a teacher's resource guide concentrating on biology. It also includes diverse other subjects such as Mathematics, English and Social Sciences, which can be taught conventionally during the school year. Another approach, "Meet The Cheetah," is a result of a CCF and Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden collaboration. This is a small, colourful and simple learning booklet teaching facts about cheetah through the medium of game activities and comic strip parables. This gift to students in Namibia becomes a treasured possession and informs by fun. The message on the back page however, underwrites the serious intent of this resource and relates the information to learning standards both in the United States of American and Namibia.

*Image 3, 4, 5 - Conventional learning and individual fun learning underwrites the conservation message in Namibia. (credit: CCF and Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden)*

Cheetah Outreach and The De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust in South Africa face different challenges. South African schools are mostly under resourced with little or no access to electronic or copying machines. Contact time with learners must be directed to the learning and critical outcomes set out in the education department's curriculum as well as skilling learners. Natural Science was chosen as the medium of AAWARE (Animal Awareness for World and Regional Education) active learning resource built by South African teachers and Cheetah Outreach. There being no other means of visually demonstrating, a full colour A1 poster pack accompanies the resource to assist the teacher delivering the lesson to set up the activity. With eleven official languages translation was another key issue. AAWARE is currently available in the 4 languages used by learners in the provinces in South Africa in which De Wildt and Cheetah Outreach conduct outreach programmes.

*Image 6, 7, 8 - Colourful posters supplement the natural science resource in South Africa.(credit: Cheetah Outreach)*

Mokalodi Cheetah Conservation Project in Botswana has two simple activity guide books (Cheetahs: the Shy cats aimed at learners aged 5-10 and another for the older 10-15 year old age group), and also conducts outreach programmes as well as receiving learners at their home facility. In Zimbabwe, Marwell Zimbabwe Trust has adapted CCF's teacher's resource to comply with Zimbabwe's learning standards. The resulting resource, "Living with Cheetah, Project for Primary School Children" will be demonstrated and distributed at teacher workshops.

Capacity building within the teaching community through workshops as well as fellowships in the United States of America in partnership with the Smithsonian Institute's National Zoological Park's Conservation and Research Centre, is also a crucial part of this wide kaleidoscope of effort. Indeed, reading the acknowledgement at the front of each resource underlines the power of partnerships. Each African facility and each American facility are acknowledged has a key role in the delivery of our environmental education promises.

*Image 9 - Jennifer Buff from SI-NZP CRC and Haily Summerford from Fort Worth, Texas were key presenters at this South African workshop. (credit: Jennifer Buff, Smithsonian)*

Often I reflect on an incident which occurred some years ago when I was sharing my home at night with a cheetah ambassador. Standing at the fence separating a local community from our home, stood a small boy. He never directed his gaze at me, but focussed entirely on the purring cheetah. To me his words are an eternal spur, "It's beautiful! What is it?". The power of the presence of a living, breathing predator to have an immediate and transforming effect is well known to those of us who have shared partnerships with these astonishing animals. As in America, our cheetah ambassadors are perhaps our most powerful allies. CCF's Chewbacca, De Wildt's Byron, Shadow at Cheetah Outreach, I salute you all.

*Image 10 - Charismatic Shadow enthraling learners at a local school. (credit: Cheetah Outreach)*

And what do our clients think:

"I want you to know how much I enjoyed you lerson (sic) and how you changed my life. By just

putting my hand on Byron my life changed in an instant"

Loato Mokoena

"I want to tell you that your education have change me. Your education have change me to respect animal and to take animals like a human being. Your message is very bueatiful. (sic) "

Mpho Tladi

"Byron the cheetah, God must bless you."

Thuli

*Image 11 - De Wildt's Handsome Byron. (credit: De Wildt)*

In Africa animal world is terra incognita no more.

For more information on the publication (Animal Keepers' Forum) as well as a copy of the article above which includes images please contact:

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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

