



Cheetah Tracks

The Newsletter of Cheetah Conservation Botswana



December 2006

Introduction



Happy New Year to everyone! In Setswana: Ngwago Mosha! It is with great excitement that we move into 2007. The last year has been incredibly full, with many successes for the project and for cheetah conservation. We released our three rehabilitated cheetah cubs into their Tuli training area and they have made great progress; we successfully introduced cellular GPS collars to monitor cheetahs on farmlands; we initiated a programme of mobile community workshops to take the predator conservation message further than ever before; our education programme continued to go from strength to strength, with the staging of the first teacher training workshops at Mokolodi and Jwaneng; and the 'Spirit of the Kalahari' DVD project has received much encouragement and support during the run up to its launch early in 2007.

A very inspiring 2006 has, in part, been due to our wonderfully dedicated staff, some with CCB from the beginning and others who have since brought new energy and enthusiasm. Many thanks to new staff members Thabang and Wabotlhe, and volunteers Vivien and Lorraine, for all your hard work and for fitting in so well with a consistently demanding schedule and ongoing challenges. Special thanks also go to all of our donors and supporters, who's encouragement and support makes it possible for us to continue with this vital work.

In November Kim Troy, an independent business analyst, came to assist with our strategic planning. This valuable and exciting process helped us to clarify and unify our goals. With clearly planned objectives, energetic staff and support from cheetah supporters the world over, we feel that the challenges ahead in 2007 and beyond will be met with increasing effectiveness.

So, on many a positive note, I'll leave it here and wish you all a very successful New Year. We look forward to bringing news to you from the field throughout 2007 as CCB continues to progress.

Thank You!

R. Klein



During a break in the filming of 'Spirit of the Kalahari', one of the performers gets to know Mokolodi cheetah, Letotse.

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Kyle in the cheetah enclosure at Mokolodi, during Duma's recovery from an anaesthetic administered for his x-ray and examination in September.

Jwaneng Research Camp



Elizabeth Travers and Jen Johnson (right), who's service with the project ended during 2006.



Lorraine Boast joined the project in August.



Nala in the Jwana Game park, patrolling with her cubs not far away, in September.

Right: The four sub-adults in Jwana Game Park during August.

In July and September we said farewell to Lizzie Travers and Jen Johnson. Lizzie, based at Jwaneng and Jen, based in Ghanzi, had each served with the project for a year. Their dedication and hard work had a significant impact and both were a tremendous support to Ann Marie in the operation of our volunteer programme, as well as in the sampling and release of captured cheetahs and in the rehabilitation of Decu, Gracie and Alice. In October we also said goodbye to Tom Johnson. Tom was volunteering with us for a year and enthusiastically applied his creative and practical abilities in support of our activities.

Lizzie and Jen's departure heralded the arrival of two new long term volunteers. Lorraine Boast and Vivien Kent arrived from the UK in July, Lorraine taking over Lizzie's duties at Jwaneng and Vivien tackling those of Jen, in Ghanzi. Lorraine and Vivien have settled into the project very quickly, soon becoming involved in the recovery of two cubs and in the translocation of cats captured on farms in Ghanzi. They've been kept very busy, almost since the word 'go'.

In September our short-term volunteers for the month, Brian Cluer and Charleen Gavette, from the United States', utilized their photographic and GIS skills to map and grid-out the Jwana Game Park, in Jwaneng. Using our ultra-light aircraft, flown by Ann Marie to its ceiling altitude of 11,000 feet, aerial photographs were taken of the park and the surrounding area over a total period of 6 hours. The results are currently being processed and will be extremely useful to our research programme.

The monitoring of Nala and her 4 cubs, which are now 10 months old, continues and the group is now spending more time out of the park - as Nala extends her territory with the traveling ability of her cubs. Our 4 sub-adults have been staying in the park while they are getting used to being on their own, though by the end of November, they had begun to venture outside. There has also been a sighting by the Conservation Officer of the park, at the Jwana water hole, of a 'new' female (with five 2 month old cubs). Though they have not since been seen, camera traps have been set in the hope of obtaining another visual on these new individuals, though there is a possibility that it could be the mother of our four sub-adults, returning, after a four month absence, with her new cubs.





Vivien Kent has taken over from Jen in Ghanzi and was soon involved in the translocation of three female cats, two of which are pictured below.



Preparing the new cheetah cub for surgery in Gaborone.

Below: Kyle examines the leopard cub in Ghanzi, before she was moved to our facilities at Jwaneng. The cub has been named Botshelo (having life).



Ghanzi Research Camp

Our operations in Ghanzi have stepped-up considerably. The last three months have been extremely busy, with approaches by the DWNP for our assistance in recovering orphaned cheetah and leopard cubs, translocating cats from farms, as well as relocating our own operation to another site in the area and having to cope with vehicle breakdowns.

The translocation of cheetahs from farmer's properties is not the optimal solution to human/predator conflict in all cases. Though sparing the cats life, removal creates a vacuum and opens up the territory for another predator (perhaps one that is actually a livestock predator) to move into. Removal is a short-term remedy, rather than the long term cure the farmer is seeking and we become involved in translocation if a captured cat might, otherwise, be killed.

In October, three female cheetahs (a mother and two 20 month old cubs) were moved to a Wildlife Management Area north of Kang – approximately 250km south-east of Ghanzi. On another farm, three males and a female were trans-located to the Central Kahalari. One of the males (a 3 year old named *Loeto*, meaning 'to journey') was fitted with a cell collar. Another male, recovered from a different farm, aged about 9 years old and named *Moeti* (meaning 'the traveller'), was also given a cell collar and released on a 'cheetah friendly' farm – where the farmer himself wants to learn more about cheetah movements and territorial range! CCB has been fortunate to meet a number of farmers who are willing to allow cheetahs on their farms. In the vast majority of cases, predators are not tolerated and tackling misconceptions that, for example, portray 'all predators' as problem animals, will continue to take considered and determined effort.

New Orphaned Cheetah & Leopard Cubs

With the assistance of the DWNP, an injured cheetah cub was taken into our care on the 25th September. The female cub, estimated to be +3 months old at the time, was held privately and was wearing a pet collar. She was immediately transported to Jwaneng by Vivien, before travelling to Gaborone for an x-ray and to undergo an examination by Kyle and Ann Marie. The cub, named Lyra, had sustained a fractured ulna and radius of her front-right leg and bite injuries to her left ear (probably caused by a dog attack). She was also suffering from the effects of starvation, dehydration, worms and ticks.

Thanks to the efforts of a private veterinary hospital in Gaborone, the cub underwent tricky surgery two days later to repair the fractures, using four steel pins. Lyra is recovering well and is being kept away from human contact.

Only a few weeks later, the DWNP asked for help with an orphaned leopard, also held in Ghanzi. The female cub, estimated to be four months old at the time, was captive in a small enclosure and had almost completely worn away her teeth by gnawing at the steel cage. Both cubs are recovering at our facilities in Jwaneng and we will keep you posted about their progress.

Community Conservation

by *Thabang Segaetsho*

'Days of co-existence....!'

Any debate about whether Community Conservation approaches work depends on the frame of reference. Community Conservation comes in such varied forms that it should not be recognized as a single approach but one presenting a range of options.

Since I took on the post of the Community Conservation Officer in June numerous activities have been performed. One main task is building a successful partnership with the people who own or live in a landscape shared with predators, through effective communication. One way of broadening the scope of communication with other community conservators is by attending forums and conferences, scheduled to address human/wildlife conflict. One of the events I attended at the Northern Tuli Game Reserve during July, concerned the status and distribution of large mammalian predators in the Shashe-Limpopo region of Botswana. Presentations about the plight of the cheetah and my role as Community Conservation Officer at conferences, such as those held in September by the Association of Environmental Clubs of Botswana (AECB) in Bobonong and Ngoma, form part of our community extension activities.

Farm visits and interviews with farmers and their staff are very effective in getting information on what management practices need to be incorporated. Usually, when a cheetah is suspected to be the culprit in the killing of domestic stock, certain clues have to be correctly examined and many circumstances taken into account.



Thabang Segaetsho



Thabang in discussion with community members.



Thabang and a farmer at Seole Farm, in discussion about diagnosing the causes of livestock deaths.



Thabang with stakeholders in Problem Animal Control, including representatives from the DWNP, the local Police and community officials.

Acting as a facilitator for the staging of workshops is also a key aspect of my role. In the southern part of Botswana, a joint-venture between Cheetah Conservation Botswana and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) means that I have already been able to cover areas that have included Kanye, Good Hope, Gasita, Moshaneng, Mabutsane, Hukunsi and Kang.



A community workshop in Good Hope.



Workshop participants in Moshaneng.



Wabotlhe Letubo

The theme for these workshops is 'Sharing land with Predators' and topics covered by them included:

1. *Understanding the importance of predators;*
2. *Correct identification of predator kills;*
3. *Reducing losses to predators (better farming management practice);*
4. *Livestock guarding animals.*

Villages in the areas surrounding the venues each send a representative and about 250 individuals have attended these workshops.

In October, together with my colleague Wabotlhe Letubo, I participated in a Gabz-FM radio talk show, hosted by Thabo Mogapi and Warona Setshwaelo. This was the second time that CCB has been given air time on the Gaborone radio station, on this occasion for a two hour slot. Further radio interviews are planned for national radio station RB1 and we are also currently developing plans for an appearance on Botswana Television next year.

In these critical times for many species the real question is not whether conservation should be encouraged within communities, but how. Conservation issues, like development, can be highly political and debates about what should be done and how to achieve success are inevitable. One challenge in Community Conservation is to ask who should be part of that debate and at what times. If participation is the key component, then let us all take part in preserving species like the cheetah and look forward to the days of co-existence we all wish to see.

Thabang

Education Outreach

by Wabotlhe Letubo

Education is the key to most concepts in life. The acceleration of conservation education in Botswana is led by the government's Education Department, which is working hard to plant the seeds of a conservation ethic here in both learners and teachers. Human conflict with predators regularly comes from misunderstandings about predator history and behaviour, resulting in the persecution we often see today. Given the nature of the threat to the cheetah, I feel that there has never been a more important time for us to promote the importance of predators and their true value to the nation amongst the youth in our schools and in communities across Botswana.

Since taking up my post in June, I have been working hand-in-hand with the Association of Environmental Clubs of Botswana (AECB). Many schools have an environmental club and the Association encourages and supports the operation of these across the country. I have been developing a good working relationship with the AECB, leading to invitations for me to attend a number of events on behalf of CCB



Predator presentation, to children at the Notwane Primary School in Gaborone.

These interactions with teachers have now also led to a request, from the Kanye Brigade, for the project to help them establish their environmental club.

Our programme of school presentations has also continued and since June I have reached 16 primary, 3 secondary and 1 tertiary school – a total of about 1000 learners. The presentations (lasting over an hour) are curriculum-linked and interactive, to include predator activities and games. The predator presentations have continued to prove so popular that other teachers are still calling us to make bookings at their schools.

Following the success of our first Teacher Training Workshop in March, the second event took place in mid-November, this time in Jwaneng. The workshop was again staged in partnership with Cheetah Outreach, at facilities made available to us by Debswana (Jwaneng Mine). Teachers from schools in both the Jwaneng and Kanye areas were, this time, invited to participate.



AECB participants with Wabotlhe.



Children always listen attentively to predator presentations.

The value of tourism and its dependency upon the environment and local ecology is linked to the future prosperity of every individual living in Botswana today. But most Batswana, for example, have never been face-to-face with a cheetah, nor any of the other predator or wildlife species that international tourists come here to see. Unfortunately, the exclusivity of many wildlife resorts (in line with the government's well-meaning 'high value-low volume' policy to help protect the wilderness) can exclude individuals in local communities. This is one reason why, for example, facilities such as Mokolodi Nature Reserve have such an important role to play in Environmental Education (EE).

One essential part of our own Education Programme is the provision of education materials to schools across the country, many of which are often under resourced. To that end, I have recently been able to make progress in the preparation of the first of two predator education books. *Cheetah: -A Predator Resource for the Students of Botswana* is designed for use by children at Secondary level. It contains information and activities about the cheetah, as well as the other major indigenous predators. The publication has been developed with the help of Cheetah Outreach and the Cheetah Conservation Fund, and is receiving generous support from Debswana (Jwaneng Mine). It is now being prepared to go to the printer.

Wabotlhe



Students from the University of Botswana's Environmental Club volunteered to help with work on the Predator Playground, during October. They were assisted by volunteers from the staff of Mokolodi Nature Reserve.



'Spirit of the Kalahari' DVD

Working in partnership with Lobone Creations and thanks to the efforts of Mike Matson (who has filmed and is editing the production), this educational DVD is nearing completion and is currently being edited in the UK. We are planning to launch the finished product at a special event early in 2007.

The DVD will be made available to local communities across Botswana, as part of our community conservation activities.

Decu, Gracie & Alice

Since arriving at their new location in the Tuli Block, the cubs have quickly settled and become comfortable in their new surroundings. Initially contained within the confines of an 800m² compound, identical to the one they left behind in Jwaneng, the cats were allowed into the secure 92 hectare enclosure in June to begin the second phase of their rehabilitation.

Only minutes after the gate was opened, Decu pursued and caught a steenbok in an open field.

All three cats have continued to make excellent progress and have learned a number of important lessons, particularly Gracie, who now knows that even a lame wildebeest may be too much for an inexperienced, adolescent cheetah! The cats are hunting about every four days now, taking impala, steenbok and warthog. Their hunting techniques have improved significantly and following an assessment of their performance, a decision has been reached about the next stage. Early in the New Year, with the blessing of the DWNP but subject to continued good progress, the cats will be fitted with cell phone collars and released into the main 9000 hectare farm. The collars will allow for continued monitoring, post release. The cats will be establishing themselves in the open farmland of the Tuli Block, with the advantage of being surrounded, in the most part, by cheetah friendly farmers.

The progress made so far has been greatly helped by the DeWet family and their staff, who have also invested funds and their own time and effort to support us in the rehabilitation of Decu, Gracie and Alice.



Decu explores the comparative freedom of the 92 hectare enclosure in Tuli.



Gracie displays her hunting capabilities, accompanied by Alice.

Right: Awaiting the final stage of rehabilitation.



Mokolodi Cheetah, Duma



Coaxing Duma into the box, in readiness for transportation to the surgery.



Duma in the x-ray room.

Mokolodi cheetahs, Duma and Letoatse, are well known locally and internationally and must be amongst the most relaxed and friendly of any cheetah ambassadors anywhere in the world. They are approaching 12 years-of-age and CCB continues to benefit from, both, its association with Mokolodi Nature Reserve and the availability for visits to their cats.

Project volunteers and staff often assist Mokolodi in taking care of Duma and Letoatse's daily needs and welfare, and in August it became clear that Duma wasn't quite his usual self. Closer examination found some swelling around his jaw and the decision was made to take Duma into town for an x-ray and a more thorough examination. These revealed an abscess in his mouth.

Everything went according to plan during the transportation and examination and by early afternoon Duma was back in the enclosure at Mokolodi with his brother. His condition has been successfully treated with antibiotics and both cats remain healthy, continuing to receive visitors on a regular basis.



Duma being transported by CCB back to Mokolodi Nature Reserve.

Botswana Consumer Fair

In August, together with Birdlife Botswana, CCB was invited by the Kalahari Conservation Society (KCS) to participate with them in the Botswana Consumer Fair, in Gaborone. This was a good opportunity for all three organizations to raise awareness amongst the local population about our collective environmental and species conservation activities.

CCB was represented by Brian Jones, Wabotlhe Letubo and Thabang Segaletsho during the course of the eleven day event. The response from local visitors was very encouraging and many expressed more than a casual interest in the project's activities. Some individuals were interested in volunteering and positive discussions were also held with members of the farming community, as well as education professionals.

We were successful in recovering our costs through merchandizing and the KCS/Birdlife Botswana/CCB stand also achieved 3rd position in our category, for Best Presented Stand at the event.



Wabotlhe at the KCS/Birdlife Botswana/CCB stand, during the Botswana Consumer Fair.

Rebecca Visits the USA

Rebecca was accepted for the 2006 ESRI Society of Conservation GIS Scholarships and in August she travelled to Los Angeles, to take part in three weeks of ArcGIS software training. These mapping programs are an incredibly effective tool for assessing home ranges, habitat use and movements of cheetahs, while relating this to many different factors, both physical and ecological. It is also an ideal database for storing CCB's research data.

Rebecca is now busy setting up a database of cheetah sightings and distribution, which will become one of the projects long term monitoring tools. Thanks to all the SCGIS staff for all your patience, knowledge and for providing a wonderful experience!

As well as the scholarship, CCB was once again invited to attend the WCN Expo in the San Francisco for the 4th consecutive year. As one of WCN's partners CCB has received a great deal of support from this exceptional organisation and its supporters, as well as from its staff and volunteers. A very huge Thank You goes to everyone at WCN, for your faith in the potential of CCB as an effective conservation project and for the support that has made such a significant contribution to the effectiveness of our work in Botswana.

The WCN Annual Expo was, again, inspiring and a great success. Hosting presentations by effective conservation projects operating in locations around the world, it provides CCB with the valuable opportunity to become well known globally and to attract the support of those people wanting to join us in our mission of cheetah conservation. Thanks to you all!

After the WCN Expo Rebecca and her mother, Trudie, travelled down to Fresno to visit the Sierra Endangered Cat Haven. With cats from all around the world, the centre raises awareness and educates the public as to the plight of endangered cats, generating much needed funds for other conservation projects in the process.

The organization has already supported CCB in the past and we hope that we will continue to benefit from their interest and support in the future. Many thanks go to Dale Anderson and Wendy Borelli at the Sierra Endangered Cat Haven. Dale organized an event at Los Angeles Zoo for cat conservationists, at which Rebecca gave a presentation, before paying a visit to Jackie Navaro, at Wild Wonders, to talk more about potential support for CCB. Thanks Dale, Wendy and Jackie for your hospitality, friendship and support!



Rebecca at ESRI, California.



WCN staff, after another successful Expo.



Rebecca with fellow conservationists, including Dale Anderson and Jackie Navaro, at Venice Beach, California, during the LA Zoo event.



PriceWaterhouseCoopers Awards

Our first Annual Report became a finalist in a national competition for the Best Published Corporate Reports & Accounts 2005/2006. Held by PriceWaterhouseCoopers, in association with the Botswana Confederation of Commerce Industry & Manpower (BOCCIM), the competition fosters high standards in formal company reporting. CCB was nominated for an award in the Not-for-Profit category.

Rebecca and Brian attended the formal ceremony in Gaborone on the 23rd November, where only three of the entrants in our category were nominated for an award. When the results were announced, our very first Annual Report had achieved 3rd place.

The judging panel commented that the finalists were nominated not only because their reports met all the criteria in the quality of their financial reporting, but also in their layout, design and the presentation of activities which put figures into context. "The finalists are here tonight because they stand out from the crowd", said one member of the panel.

The Annual Report will become the project's most important promotional document as CCB continues to grow and develop. We would, therefore, wish to see it become more widely available in printed form every year, especially here in Botswana. We are trying to obtain the support of a sponsor specifically to help us achieve this. If you think your company would be willing to sponsor the printing of our Annual Report, please contact Brian. brian@cheetahbotswana.com Our current Annual Report is available to view and download from our website.

Thank You & Happy New Year to...

... all our supporters and contributors, here in Botswana and around the globe, and most recently:

The Howard G. Buffett Foundation

Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN)

The United Nations Global Environment Facility

Debswana

The Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund

AZA Conservation Endowment Fund

ESRI

Animal Ark

WAZA

Toledo Zoo

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Bob Dawson & Robyn Innes

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