

# CHEETAH Tracks



The Newsletter of Cheetah Conservation Botswana

June 2007

## GRACIE & ALICE

The tragedy of two cheetah orphans

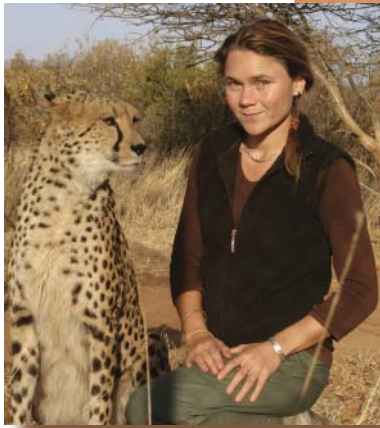


## *Spirit of the Kalahari* DVD Launch



THE HOWARD G. BUFFETT FOUNDATION





## Rebecca Klein

**T**hese last few months have been a whirlwind of events and activity. Great highs and good progress have, however, been contrasted by some devastating lows and this edition of *Cheetah Tracks* reflects the full range of experiences to which we can be exposed.

It is, of course, with much sadness that we have to accept the loss of our two rehabilitated cheetah sisters, Gracie and Alice. CCB is currently investigating the circumstances of their deaths with support of members of both the local farming community and DeWildt's wild cheetah programme, whom we thank for all their support. The actions of only one or two individuals have destroyed so much good work and though these events are a painful illustration of the situation faced by the cheetah population in this region, everyone at CCB remains determined and optimistic for the future.

*day-by-day, we all live and work with the highs and lows that come with searching for a resolution to human/wildlife conflict*

As many of you will know from our monthly update on the web site, this tragedy also follows the loss of our most recent cheetah orphan, Lyra. Despite progressing brilliantly for six months under the care of Kyle, Ann Marie and Lorraine at Jwaneng, this very distinctive character and fiery spirit died, probably from the effects of a heart condition, on the 2nd April.

In spite of these sad events there have also been some great successes! Together with our partner for the project, Lobone Creations,

CCB has not only completed production of the *Spirit of the Kalahari* DVD, but has also launched it at a special public event in April. The Howard G. Buffett Foundation has been instrumental in supporting not only the DVD project, but also many other programmes and initiatives within CCB. Our sincerest gratitude also goes to Mike Matson, a long time supporter of Mokolodi Nature Reserve and CCB, who filmed, edited and co-produced *Spirit of the Kalahari*, delivering not only something that we are all extremely proud of, but also something now generating a lively amount of interest across Botswana.

Key to such achievements are, of course, the contributions of our supporters, staff and volunteers. Thabang and Wabotlhe's community and education programmes have developed significantly this year, thanks to their hard work. Both are now gaining greater recognition in the communities within which they are working, resulting in a busy schedule and also greater effectiveness. Read on to discover more about their recent activities and achievements, including some important workshops. Thanks must also go to local volunteer, Tuelo Mokgethi, for assisting Wabotlhe with school talks and other educational activities.

At this point, I wish also to bring attention to someone at CCB who mostly stays out of the limelight, Brian Jones. Brian joined the project in 2005 and while his main responsibilities revolve around graphic and promotional design, preparing communications and marketing development, he in fact wears many other hats and this all adds up to a lot of late nights in the office. He works endlessly and with great dedication, doing a wonderful job in upgrading all our communication and promotional material, as well as our community and education resources, organizing and

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managing events, developing our merchandise, looking after volunteers and visitors to the project, as well as dealing with a whole host of project administration duties - the list goes on. He's even starting to help me with fund-raising! Brian's assistant, local volunteer Winnie Mookodi, joined the project earlier this year and has been a great addition to our team. We hope that Winnie will also stay on with CCB for the foreseeable future.

While welcoming another new local volunteer to CCB, Christopher Derman, who will be working in Ghanzi, we recently said farewell to international volunteer, Vivien Kent. Vivien has spent the last year in Ghanzi and has been busy conducting spoor surveys, discussing predator conflict issues with local farmers, and rescuing cheetahs on farmlands. Having successfully completed her year with CCB, she now returns to the UK to further her studies and interests in carnivore research - we wish her the best of luck for the future. Jwaneng researcher, Lorraine Boast, also from the UK, has been doing a great job monitoring Jwana Park game and providing invaluable assistance to Ann Marie. We are delighted that Lorraine has decided to stay with us for some time longer.

These are our people, the individuals who play an essential role in supporting and delivering our conservation initiatives for the nation of Botswana. They also promote the continuing growth of CCB itself, as well as our efforts to build local capacity. Day-by-day, we all live and work with the highs and lows that come with searching for a resolution to human/wildlife conflict, developing the tools and fostering the new attitudes upon which coexistence depends - the positive frame of mind which, in the long term and with your continuing support, can reduce cheetah losses and provide a much brighter future for more young cats like Gracie and Alice.

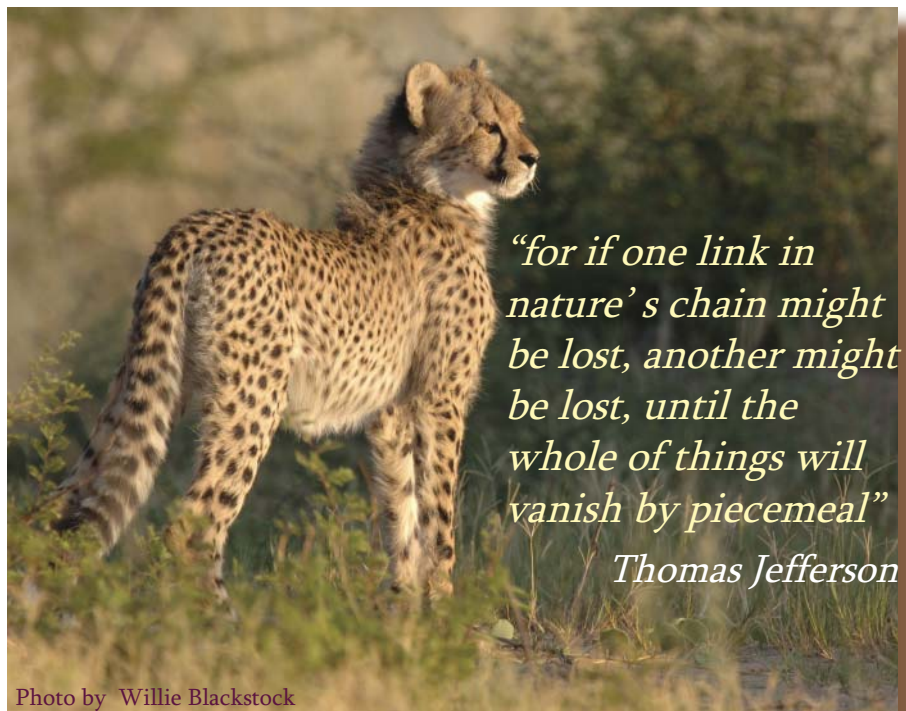
Re leboga thata!

*R. Klein*



CCB local volunteers *Tuelo Mokgethi* (top) and *Winnie Mookodi*

## CQ ConservationQuote



*"for if one link in nature's chain might be lost, another might be lost, until the whole of things will vanish by piecemeal"*

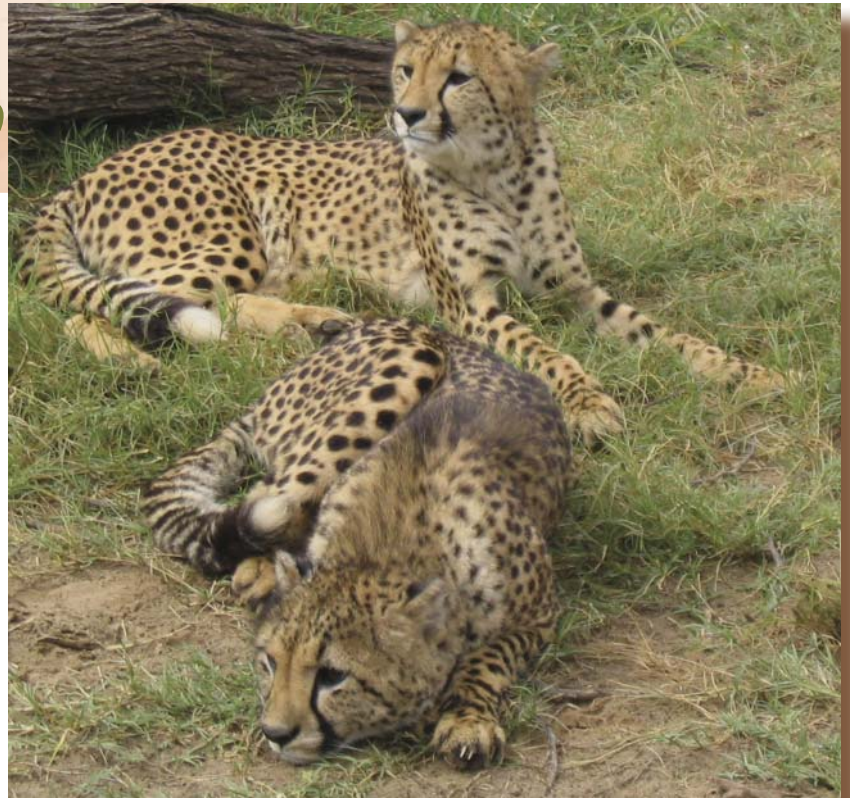
*Thomas Jefferson*

Photo by Willie Blackstock



# Gracie & Alice

Wild cub rehabilitation is a speculative, long term process and one not without risk nor guarantee. CCB created a programme for Decu, Gracie and Alice soon after their rescue in February 2005, aware that there were uncertainties to face and potentially significant hazards at every point along the way. The recent and tragic deaths of Gracie and Alice have occurred at a 'point along the way' which should have been the most satisfying for everyone who has in some way supported the programme for these cats - the point at which they had begun to prove that they can cope on their own and succeed in making their own way.



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Gracie and Alice (foreground) at Jwaneng prior to their relocation to the Tuli Block in May 2006.  
*Photo: Ginny Seamster*

Below left: Gracie at the farm, just four days before she was killed.



To lose Gracie and Alice now, in shootings, is of course a bitter blow. CCB received the reports of their deaths on Saturday 23rd of June, so investigations are continuing. In the weeks leading up to the shootings, CCB was monitoring the movements of the cats closely and visiting farmers adjacent to the South African border. All the farmers with whom Ann Marie had discussed the presence of Gracie and Alice (from the border to 30 km east into South Africa) were supportive and, to date, CCB has not received any reports or complaints that either was threatening or preying upon livestock.

Alice crossed the Limpopo into South Africa on the 2nd June, moving



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east from farm-to-farm for some 30 km until she was shot on the 6th June. We are as yet unsure why she left the farm, though it is possible that she was looking for males. Two days after Alice died, Gracie, some 50 kilometres away from her at the time, also left Tuli and began heading to the same location. Crossing the Limpopo on the 12th June, Gracie was shot on the 20th, her body lying by a roadside until recovered by a sympathetic farmer. Alice's body has not been recovered and though her collar is still functioning, it is not transmitting GPS coordinates.

We do not know what, if anything, inspired Gracie to change direction in favour of the location of her sister shortly after she had been killed. Coincidence? Maybe, or perhaps we still have something to learn about animal instincts and communication? The fact remains that the decision to pursue her dead sister also proved fatal for Gracie.

We know we have many friends and supporters around the world who are as shaken as we all have been by this tragedy. We are sincerely grateful for the messages of support that we receive and hope to be in a position to publish a full account of the lives and rehabilitation of Decu, Gracie and Alice at some point in the near future. In the meantime, please look out for our updates and reports.



## ...& Lyra

**A**s reported in our web site news update in May, our latest rehabilitation candidate died suddenly at our Jwaneng facility on the 2nd April.

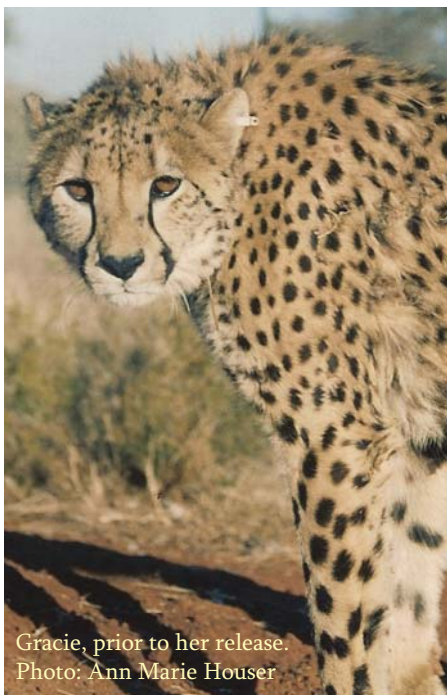
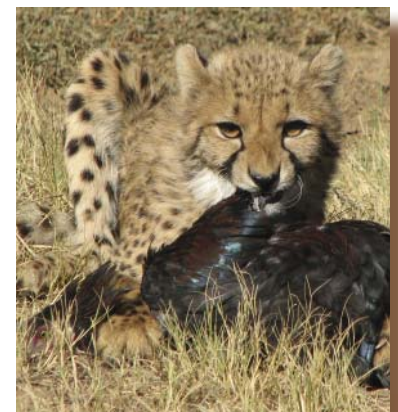
Orphaned in Ghanzi and taken in to CCB care last October, Lyra had a particularly tough start in life and had to undergo a lengthy surgical procedure shortly after being rescued, to repair a serious leg fracture.

Surprisingly tolerant of her leg brace and bandages, the fiery young cheetah went on to recover from the fracture and injuries believed to have been inflicted by poachers' dogs - often used in cases where mothers with cubs are pursued and shot, before the cubs are recovered for illegal trade or illicit breeding/unlawful hunting.

Lyra regained condition over the following months and was progressing well, but yet, on the afternoon of the 2nd April, was found under a tree in her enclosure and is thought to have died in only the previous hour or two. A necropsy performed by Kyle and Ann Marie the following day revealed that the cat had an abnormally small heart and while samples were taken and sent for analysis, we believe that Lyra died as a result of heart failure.



Lyra at our Jwaneng camp, recuperating after the ordeals of infancy and beginning the rehabilitation process. (Top & bottom: Vivien Kent)



Gracie, prior to her release.  
Photo: Ann Marie Houser



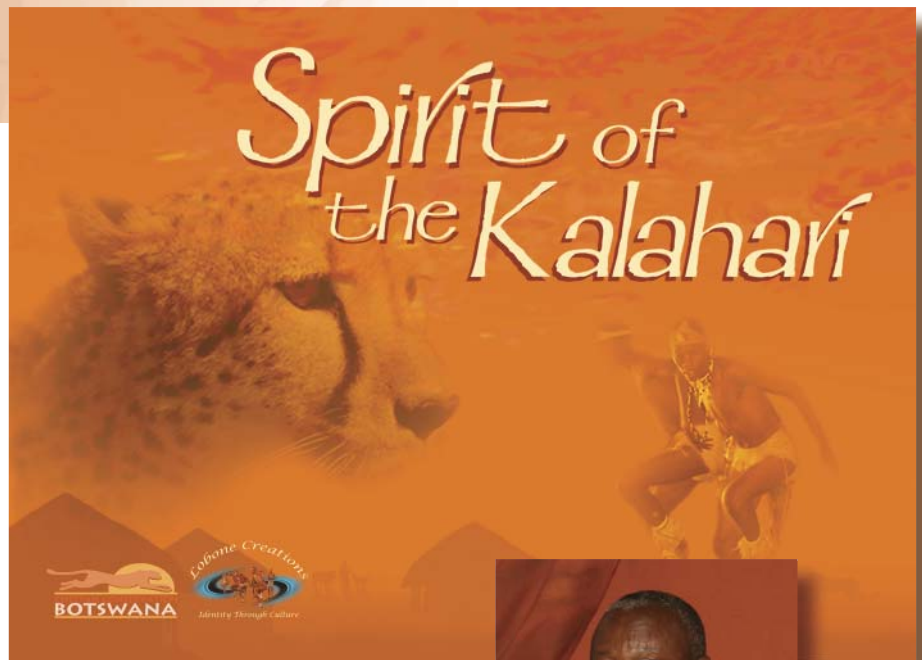
## DVD Launch

Together with our partners for this project, Lobone Creations, CCB launched the *Spirit of the Kalahari* DVD at a gala event on Friday the 13th April.

The celebration, held at Mokolodi Nature Reserve's Worlds View Centre, was attended by over 170 invited guests from the local community and supporting organizations. Guests included the Minister of Youth, Sports & Culture, the Honourable Moeng Pheto; the Mayor of Gaborone, the Honourable Henry Mothei; and the Director of the Department of Wildlife and National Parks, Mrs R. Mojaphoko. Visitors from South Africa, including the Mayor of Tabazimbi and the 1st Secretary for Political Affairs at the South African High Commission in Gaborone, also attended the launch event.

Guests were welcomed by Mr. Sedia Modise, chairman of the Board of Cheetah Conservation Botswana, and also with a performance by Dithakga tsa Mmino. Rebecca and Lydia Moate, Managing Director of Lobone Creations, then introduced the concept behind the production before treating guests to the first public presentation of *Spirit of the Kalahari*.

The production has been some two years in the making and the result of many hours of planning, preparation and creation by a small and dedicated team of individuals from both CCB and Lobone Creations. Filmed locally and telling the stories of two local farmers, who each use very different methods to manage their livestock and protect them from predators, the drama/documentary uses Setswana dialogue to reach into rural communities who share their land with predators. The contrasting practices and their outcomes which emerge from the film present options and alternatives for those involved in livestock



farming, alternatives which can not only reduce predator conflict, but also help to secure or improve rural livelihoods.

Speaking at the event, Minister Pheto described the launch proceedings as "...a true and wonderful show", stating that "the collaboration between these two organizations showed an important relationship between culture and conservation of natural resources". He then also went on to say that "the message and encouraging tone of this film would motivate people to think seriously and more positively about their environment". In his closing remarks and his message of thanks for the event, the Mayor of Gaborone, the Honourable Henry Mothei, talked about attitudes towards predators and gave an example from personal experience and of seeing how a cheetah was being threatened near his home. He stated that "...predators such as the cheetah are now endangered and we must protect them at all costs".

The launch event was also supported by members of the local business community, with a number contributing financially towards the costs of staging the celebration. Local companies also contributed goods and services, including Sanitas, who provided flowers, Showgroup Botswana



Top: Sedia Modise welcoming guests to the event and, centre, Lydia Moate introducing the DVD



Left: The *Spirit of the Kalahari* artwork and designs were created in house, by Brian Jones

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very kindly provided lighting equipment, and local printing company, Impression House, gave generous support by producing event programmes, *Spirit of the Kalahari* postcards, as well as the all important DVD wallets.

Before the launch proceedings were brought to a close with another performance by Dithakga tsa Mmino, Minister Pheto presented Certificates of Achievement to the performers who appeared in the film, as well as bouquets of flowers to Lydia and Rebecca.

*Spirit of the Kalahari* has now begun a journey across the nation. It is being shown to gatherings in affected rural communities and demand for copies is high. Such has been the positive comment and reaction to the DVD, that CCB and Lobone Creations are exploring the possibility of adapting the story for a theatrical production, to take on tour across Botswana.

We wish to thank the many supporting organizations and

individuals who have made the DVD production and the event staged to launch it possible, especially The Howard G. Buffett Foundation, the UNDP Global Environment Facility, Mokolodi Nature Reserve and of course, Mike Matson - who's production values and skills have resulted in something of which we are all especially proud and which is now such an important part of our community programme.



Top: Minister Pheto and the Mayor of Gaborone, Henry Mothei, speaking at the DVD launch.

Above: Performers of Dithakga tsa Mmino welcoming guests to the event.

Left: Minister Pheto presents tokens of appreciation to Lydia and Rebecca, flanked by Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Thabang Seathso.

Launch event photos: Ulf Nermark





# Community Thabang Segaetsho



The drama unfolds every time a cat is suspected of taking livestock. What is important to know before any kind of measures are taken, is what actually killed the livestock - not what the farmer found to be feeding on it. Getting this and other vital messages across is part of my community outreach challenge and comes back to how much people actually know about predators. Without that understanding, 'coexistence' is a term that can be difficult for people, otherwise, to adjust to. Now, with the programmes that CCB has put into place, the first reaction of people (to just kill predators) will, with time and education, fade away.

During the period since our last newsletter, community visits have been to the Good Hope area (where there are leopards and cheetahs) and include communities in Pitsane, Cwaanyaneng, Sekhutlane, Tshidilamolomo and Mabule. The purpose of these visits is to gather as much information as possible about their experiences of predators so as to analyse attitudes and the management strategies that different communities may be utilizing. In Lorolwane village for example, a mobile workshop was held at the Kgotla. Another was staged at Werda, in addition to a Problem



Animal Control (PAC) workshop at Jwana Park, in Jwaneng. The successes of, as well as the positive response to, these events stem from their inclusivity - that they involve all stakeholders such as the Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP), the local Police, farmers and community leaders.

More one-to-one site visits have also been conducted, around the Mabutsane cattle posts, Hukuntsi and the surrounding areas of Tshane, Lehututu, Lokgwabe, Maake and others. At the request of Mr. Sekhutle, the head of PAC at the DWNP, three workshops were staged in Letlhakeng, Letlhakane and Serowe - the latter taking place at Khama Rhino Sanctuary.

Top Left: Thabang with participants of the Weda mobile workshop.

Top Right: Leading discussions on predator activity and non-lethal control at the Mosadifela cattle post. Above: Vehicle problems on the Trans Kalahari Highway, southeast of Ghanzi.

Next Page Top : Participants at the Khama Rhino Sanctuary Workshop. Centre: Participants at the Setata End Veterinary Camp workshop.





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In June, I also visited the DWNP offices in Maun to carry out a Management Orientated Monitoring System exercise. The purpose of this was to discover how the principles of promoting coexistence could be applied to cheetah conservation in that area and to promote community involvement by exploring potential for uplifting their livelihoods. Communities visited included the Khwai Development Trust, Samkoyo Tshwaragano Management Trust and the Mababe Zokotsama Trust. During the recent Ghanzi Farmers Association Field Day, I also gave a presentation to an audience of about 180 people. More PAC workshops have followed very recently and together with the DWNP Officer from Motokwe, Mr. Kgobati, I've also conducted joint visits to Kweneng cattle posts and commercial farms.

The DVD now plays an important part at workshops and the development of the Livestock Guarding Dog programme is also making progress. We are currently staging a national competition to find the 'best livestock guarding dog'. The event is being promoted through Farming Magazine and interviews on national radio station RB2. The response has been very encouraging.

Thabang

## X-Ray Machine

Cheetah Conservation Botswana has become the proud new owners of a portable DynaRad X-ray machine, generously donated to the project by the Exotic Feline Breeding Compound (EFBC) in the United States'.

Until now, the project has had to rely on the services of local veterinary practices and private hospitals for X-ray services - which were sometimes not available when we really needed them. This donation is a significant contribution to the project and will also be available to Mokolodi Nature Reserve's Wildlife Clinic, at which local and international volunteers on placement with Mokolodi have been busy helping Kyle to convert a room into a Dark Room for developing x-ray images.

The machine, though portable, is still a substantial piece of equipment and

posed a transportation challenge, until DHL stepped in with an equally considerable offer of support.

The machine's power supply has been converted and it has already been pressed into service, helping out at a local veterinary hospital while their equipment was being repaired. With the Mokolodi Dark Room complete, the machine has now returned from loan and is available to us once more.

We wish to sincerely thank the EFBC and their supporters for this generous donation, as well as their 'movers', Lancaster Rotary and Lancaster Moving & Storage. We are also indebted to Sethunya Botshabelo and Kevin Botha at DHL for their shipping contribution.

Right: Kyle, Wabotlhe and Thabang at Mokolodi with the new X-ray machine.





# Education *Wabotlhe Letubo*

**E**ducation is an essential component of CCB and this has been a very busy year for me, so far. Many schools are requesting predator presentations and the DVD launch has also boosted interest, with most schools that are receiving copies of the *Spirit of the Kalahari* requesting more presentations, as well as help with ideas on how to run their Environmental clubs.

School presentations continue to stress the importance of predators in a healthy ecosystem, besides strengthening the students' understanding of predator behaviour. The Ministry of Education are supportive of Environmental Education (EE) activities and wish to include more in the curriculum. I am pleased to report that, since the start of 2007, I have been reaching an average of three schools per day with my programme of predator presentations and activities - including games that demonstrate the effects of upsetting the balance of nature.

Another of our popular Teacher Training workshops was held at the Khama Rhino Sanctuary, in April. The event was attended by 36 teachers from schools in Serowe and the surrounding communities. Follow-up visits to individual teachers and their schools will take place at a later stage. Follow-ups for the previous teachers workshop have recently taken place and I visited schools in Kanye, Jwaneng, Mokhomma and Sammane. Impressively, in the intervening time since that workshop, the teachers have been disseminating information through mini workshops of their own and projects in their own schools! In Mokhomma, for example, they even want to start a snake capturing and release project and so wrote a proposal to the Botswana Defense Force (who are often called in to help with wild animals) for help. At Lefhoko and Sammane Primary schools, they have



started bird watching activities and a gardening project, and now sell produce locally to generate income for their Environmental Club! The next Teacher Training workshop will take place in the north, at Palapye. The success of these workshops, with help from the Angel Fund and Cheetah Outreach, is resulting in plans to create similar events for Head Teachers - the first of which is scheduled for September.

Tuelo Mokgethi, my assistant, joined the project as a volunteer earlier this year. He has been a great help and is currently busy sourcing sponsors for signs that we need to upgrade the predator playground, here at Mokolodi.

Following on from our established working relationship with Debswana and their Jwaneng mine, the company's

Top & Top Left: Predator presentation at Dinonyane Primary school, near Jwaneng.

Centre Right & Above: The new vegetable garden at Lefhoko Primary school and the kids gathering for a photo, following a predator talk.

Following page top: Teachers at the recent training workshop staged at Khama Rhino Sanctuary.



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Orapa mine is now also showing an interest in CCB's programmes. As this newsletter is published, I am about to enter into discussions with the mine management at Orapa. They are especially interested in our education activities and it is also thanks to Debswana that our first Education book is about to go to the printers.

Finally, one of the highlights of my year so far has been a presentation that I gave at the Ramotswa School for the Deaf, in March. The presentation was made to a packed class through an interpreter and the teachers and children were very excited that CCB had not overlooked them. Communicating in sign language, it was a joy to see the children 'talking in class', discussing the predator pictures they were seeing come up on the big screen. We hope to make some video footage available to all our donors and supporters via our web site in the near future, so that you can all see the positive results of our efforts and of your continuing, generous support for CCB. Please keep up the spirit.

*Wabothle*



## Botshelo progress

## Thank You to...



Following so much tragic news about our cheetah rehabilitation participants, we are pleased to report that Botshelo, the leopard, continues to make good progress at Jwaneng and is nearing the release phase of her rehabilitation programme. Taken by a camera trap positioned in her enclosure, the above photograph shows her proudly displaying her new teeth, in early March.

As always, we continue to be indebted to our supporters and donors here and around the world. We are delighted to welcome new donors, the Predator Conservation Trust, from the UK, who are supporting our vehicle fleet. So, most recently, many thanks to you and to...

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN)                 | Sanitas              |
| The Howard G. Buffett Foundation                    | Lydia Moate          |
| Debswana  | Mike Matson          |
| UNDP Global Environment Facility                    | Creations of Africa  |
| IUCN/Cat Specialist Group                           | Sanitas              |
| AZA Conservation Endowment Fund                     | Rudy DeWet           |
| Exotic Feline Breeding Compound Inc.,<br>California | Joe Maynard          |
| DHL   | Kevin Botha          |
| Mokolodi Nature Reserve                             | Sethunya Botshabelo  |
| Lobone Creations                                    | Ravi Iyer            |
| Impression House                                    | Sarah Banks          |
| Cheetah Outreach                                    | Lomar Roux           |
| De Wildt Cheetah & Wildlife Trust                   | Suzanne Peck         |
| Frensch Corporation                                 | Mary & Richard Olsen |
| Inktec  | Tapeats Fund         |
| Showgroup Botswana                                  | Geoff Power          |