



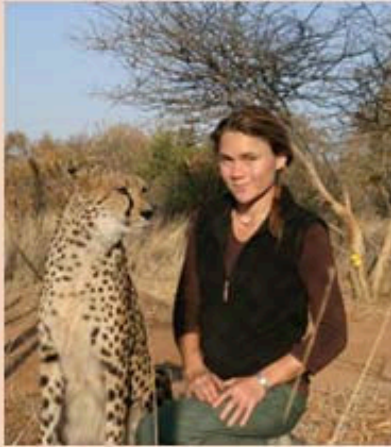
Cheetah Tracks

The Newsletter of Cheetah Conservation Botswana



May 2006

Introduction



Greetings from the Botswana winter! The past six months have been a great journey for CCB. We have been very busy raising awareness about the elegant and endangered cheetah through training workshops and farm visits, and monitoring at Jwana Game Park has taken a technological edge with the successful use of a cell phone collar on pregnant cheetah, Nala.

One of the most exciting events of this year so far, has been the relocation of our three orphaned cheetah cubs to their new home in the Tuli region of eastern Botswana. We remain optimistic about their future and that they will gain the necessary skills that will enable their release into this beautiful part of the country. This is the first cheetah rehabilitation of its kind in Botswana!

Africa can certainly get cold at this time of year and it is during this season that cheetahs need to be particularly careful. With less young wild prey available, as regional records indicate, predators are more likely to take unattended livestock and as a result of this and working with the Department of Wildlife, the winter months will find us out in rural tribal lands to put on a series of workshops about effective methods to decrease losses to predators. Our community programme goes from strength-to-strength and is beginning to earn the respect of both the farming community and government organizations. By working together, we believe that it will be possible to find a positive future for Botswana's cheetahs.

We would not be able to achieve these results without the assistance, in so many different ways, of all our supporters. We thank all of you for your ongoing encouragement. We couldn't do it without you!

Best wishes from Botswana!

R. Klein

Cover Photograph



Orphaned cheetah cubs Decu, Gracie & Alice at Jwaneng.

Photo: Suzie Nott

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Delegates at the Global Cheetah Forum conference at CCF in Namibia, 15th December 2005.

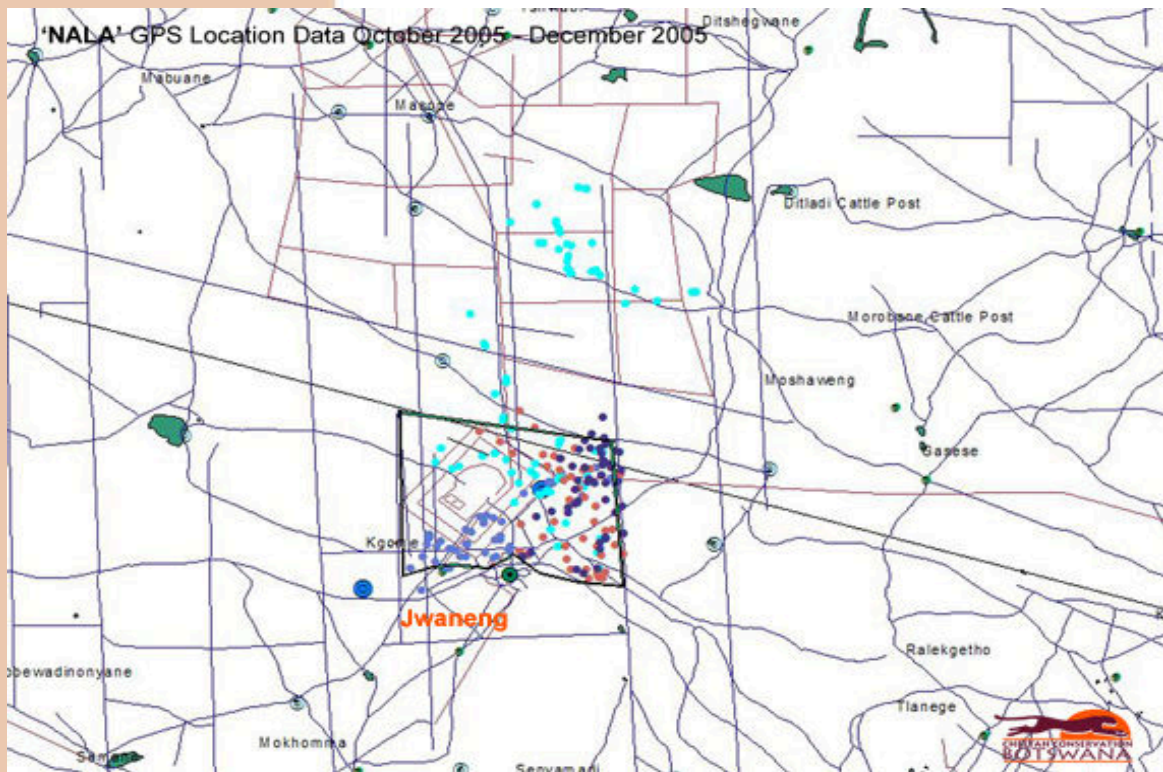
Jwaneng Research Camp



Nala wearing her cell phone collar at Jwaneng in 2005, prior to her recovery and release back into the park.

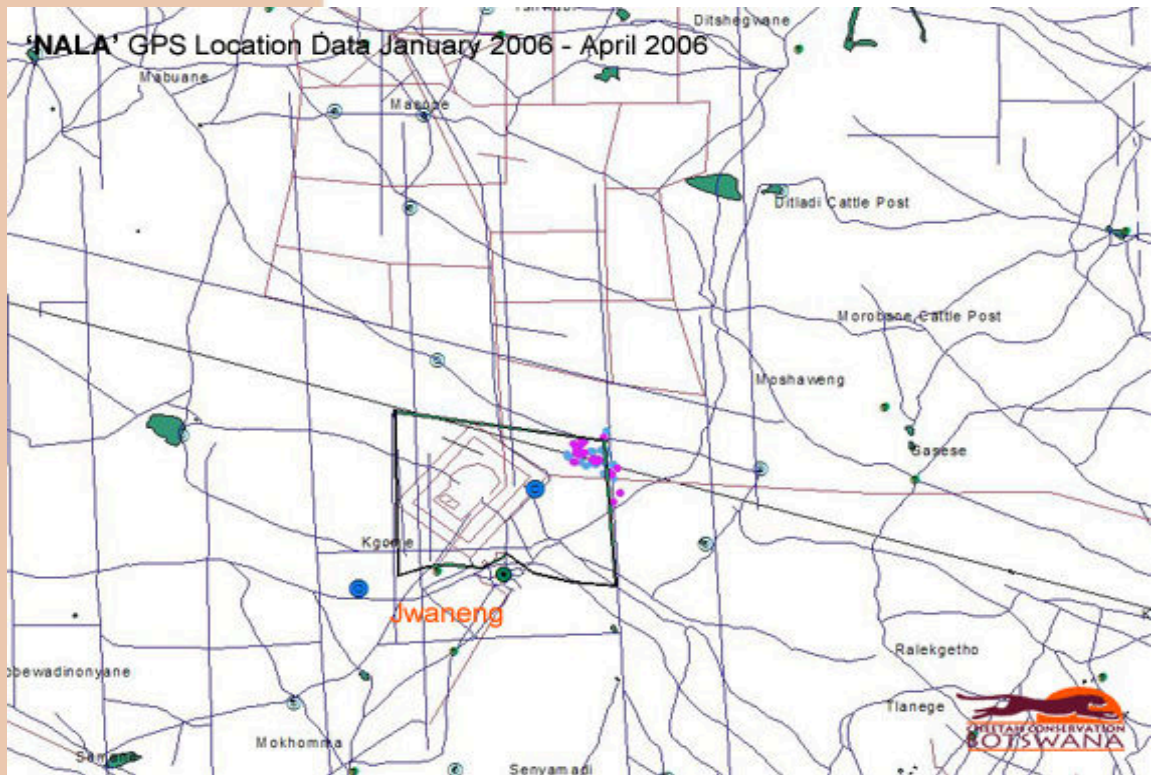
In the last six months, activity at Jwaneng has been focused upon the monitoring of Nala (the pregnant female fitted with a cell phone collar which we released back into the park in October) and on moving forward with the rehabilitation of our orphaned cubs, Decu, Gracie and Alice.

The arrival of the rainy season each year results in a rapid explosion in the growth of vegetation and in Jwaneng, the tall grass significantly reduces the opportunity to obtain visual sightings of cheetah. It was not until April, therefore, that Ann Marie was finally able to see Nala again for the first time since last October! However, her cell phone collar has proved reliable during that time and we are continuing to build up an almost uninterrupted picture of her movements. As illustrated by the maps we have been able to generate from the location data transmitted to our cell phones, Nala remained in the area for some time after her release before moving a considerable distance north of Jwaneng. She then turned around and returned to the park, where, given the locations transmitted and her lack of movement, it appears she gave birth.



By employing suitable computer software, CCB is able to generate maps using location data transmitted to our mobile phones by, in these instances, the collar worn by Nala. The coloured dots represent her progress until the birth of her cubs.

The subsequent location data transmitted so far this year has begun to indicate a gradual expansion of her activities once more, as the cubs now seem able to accompany her (see map overleaf). Ann Marie managed to catch her first sighting of Nala in April – accompanied by three cubs!



Transmissions from the Nala cell phone collar (purple & blue) following the birth of her cubs.

The Orphaned Cheetah Cubs

We are delighted to be able to report significant developments in the ongoing programme of rehabilitation for the cubs. Following discussions with businessman and game ranch owner Mr Rudy DeWet and after careful consideration of the cubs potential for development and survival, CCB was able to draw-up plans in January to move them to a new location. Situated in the Tuli Block, Kwatala Game Ranch covers an area of some 9000 hectares and with a healthy prey base, but without a significant lion and hyena population, we believe it will afford the cubs the best possible chance at a critical stage in their rehabilitation.





Arrival at the cubs new temporary holding pen at Kwatala Ranch.

On the 17th of May, after each underwent a full veterinary work-up conducted by Kyle, Ann Marie and a team of CCB volunteers, Decu, Gracie and Alice were transported to their new home in the Tuli Block. All went according to plan and following their release into a new 800² metre holding enclosure, the cubs appeared to be completely unfazed by the journey.

The holding enclosure is enabling the cubs to settle down in reasonably familiar surroundings prior to commencing the next, and potentially most crucial, stage as they approach adolescence – learning to hunt and kill their own food. The holding pen is located within the confines of a much larger 65 hectare secure enclosure which is about to be stocked with an adequate number of impala. It is here where the cubs are about to learn the vital skills they must reasonably master before they can eventually be considered for release into the 9000 hectare reserve.



We sincerely appreciate all the interest and support, both locally and internationally, from which the cubs have benefited so far and we will of course keep you all posted about their progress in the next issue of *Cheetah Tracks*.



Louise in discussion with Ghanzi farmers on the subject of local predators.



Ghanzi camp construction, before and (below) after.



Ghanzi Research Camp

With the arrival of long-term volunteers Jennifer Johnson, Mark Lungdren and Louise Egerton last year, the project has been able to make progress at Ghanzi into 2006. Despite a number of setbacks and having to persevere through floods, which affected the camp in December, Jen, Mark and Louise managed to re-establish and upgrade camp facilities and make progress in establishing links with the local farming community.

The programme of farm surveys has continued into this year and through these, with a reasonable degree of accuracy, in a suitable sample size, we are able to obtain information about predator activities in the area and draw-out individual attitudes towards them. After conducting farm visits and surveys, the Ghanzi group were able to issue a community briefing to local farmers and embark upon the process of developing targeted assistance.

Unfortunately, Mark and Louise were unable to remain in Ghanzi for an extended period of time and the recent movement of the cubs also required Jen to return to Jwaneng in support of that operation, while Ann Marie manages the cubs in the Tuli Block. However, anticipating the appointment of new volunteers, we will soon be in a position to continue with our work in the area. Incidences of human/predator conflict in Ghanzi can be high, so it is vitally important that the project maintains a field station there and continues to establish and develop good working relationships with the community.



Mark & Louise spotted this group of cheetah on the edge of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. (Photo: Mark Lungdren)

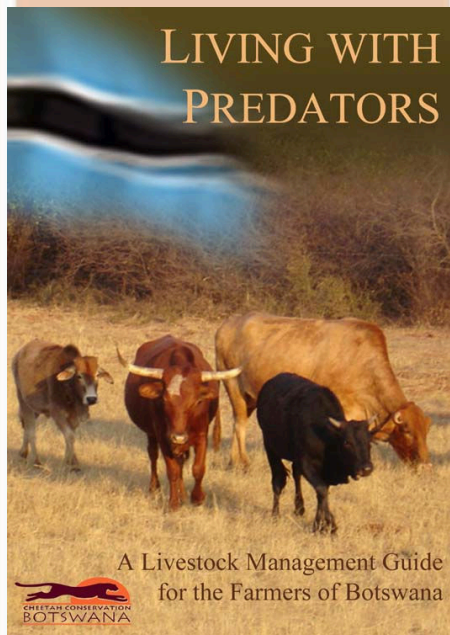
Community & Education



Thabo with Mokolodi cheetah, Letoatse.

While we continue to achieve success and obtain much from our monitoring and research activities, moving forward with our community & education programmes remains our highest priority. Though we have encountered delays and setbacks during the last six months, there have also been a greater number of significant advances and positive events which now have the potential to allow the project to achieve long-term success in our community outreach and education programmes.

After working tirelessly for the project during 2005 and having made significant progress, particularly with our education initiative for school children, CCB's Community & Education Officer, Thabo Mokokonyane, left the project in December for new pastures at the Mashatu Game Reserve. Though Thabo was a great loss to the project and we all miss him, he continues to promote the project in his spare time and still occasionally gives presentations about the plight of the cheetah to visitors at Mashatu.



New livestock management booklet and (right) delegates of the DWNP workshop in Francistown.

Our programme of workshops continues to develop since the staging of our first event for farmers in Jwaneng last year and on the 1st March 2006, Rebecca, and David Mills from the Khutse Leopard Trust, hosted the 1st training workshop for Problem Animal Control (PAC) Officers of the Department and Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP). The workshop was held in Francistown and Rebecca was supported by local CCB volunteers Modiegi Bakana and Kokole Morulaganye. The event focused upon measures to tackle human/predator conflict in Botswana and received an extremely enthusiastic response from the sixty or so attendees. DWNP officers were provided with information about establishing correct identification of predators from spoor, indirect signs of predator activity and kill characteristics. Documentation about the provision of support for farmers and livestock management techniques was distributed and officers also took part in discussions and predator quizzes. The prospect of establishing a closer working relationship with the DWNP is something that department officials recognised afterwards as 'mutually beneficial', an acknowledgement which can now only strengthen efforts to stem conflict and predator losses in Botswana. As a result of the success of the workshop, the DWNP has requested that presentations and materials be made available to them for use in their staff training programmes. We now also plan to team up with the DWNP's Kanye branch, to stage several village workshops for local communities in rural areas of Southern Botswana. This significant working relationship has the potential to develop further, reinforcing the message that sharing the land with predators is possible.





Teacher training workshop at Mokolodi

On the heels of the DWNP workshop came another on the 11th March, this time staged with the help of Mokolodi Nature Reserve. Hosted by CCB and with the support of the Angel Fund at Cincinnati Zoo, our colleagues from Cheetah Outreach and the DeWildt Breeding Centre in South Africa staged the first in a planned series of workshops for local teachers and education professionals. As part of our own predator education programme, this two-day residential workshop explored teaching tools and techniques and how the cheetah, in particular, can be introduced to engage pupils in a variety of subjects – not least, Environmental Education. Teachers from schools in the Gaborone area enthusiastically took part in cheetah related activities which can be introduced into the classroom to illustrate specific environmental and ecological issues. Over the course of the two days, the 40 participants were also treated to a game drive through Mokolodi Nature Reserve and, of course, a visit to cheetah ambassadors Duma and Letoatse – which served as a unique and poignant reminder about the whole focus of the workshop. At the end of the weekend, the teachers were presented with resources to take back to their schools and were asked for feedback about the event, which resulted. The success of the event signalled the proposed continuation of these training workshops and we hope to be in a position to hold more here and in other parts of the country as resources will allow. We extend our warmest appreciation to Cheetah Outreach, the DeWildt Breeding Centre and especially Peter Dow of Mokolodi Nature Reserve, for contributions that made the weekend such an outstanding success.

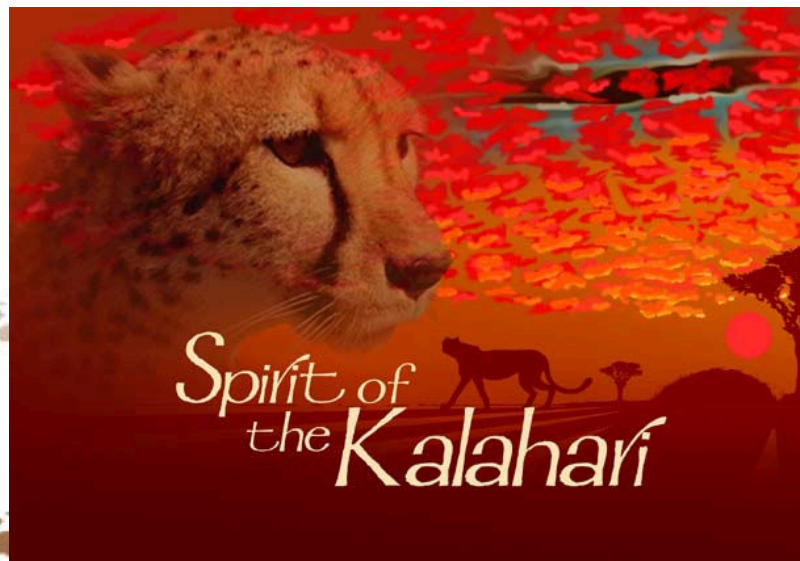


Participant of the recent teacher training workshop with Letoatse.

The collaboration between CCB and Lobone Creations (reported in *Cheetah Tracks*, November 2005) has resulted in significant progress with the musical theatre production, *'Spirit of the Kalahari'*. Thanks to the continued support from The Howard G. Buffet Foundation, production of the DVD got underway in March and filming at various locations (including Mokolodi Nature Reserve and Motse Lodge in Kanye) has now been completed. With dialogue in Setswana, the 30 minute educational DVD will tell the story of two livestock farmers who use quite different methods to control predators! After the DVD becomes available and subject to available resources, it is also hoped that the stage version could eventually go 'on the road' and tour communities around Botswana. CCB is indebted to Mike Matson for generously agreeing to film, edit and produce the DVD for nothing more than his basic expenses (and for the time and effort he has dedicated to this project so far) and to Lydia Moate and the performers at Lobone Creations for their hard work and enthusiasm in creating *'Spirit of the Kalahari'*.



Workshop group photo on the final day.





Delegates at the GCF meeting at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia, included Ann Marie, Kyle and Rebecca (front row left, standing)

The recruitment of a new Community & Education Officer generated significant local interest and resulted in the receipt of applications from over 40 potential candidates. During the process, we also learned that CCB had been successful in receiving funding specifically for our community and education programmes from the United Nations Global Environment Facility. This news has therefore enabled the project to recruit not one, but two new members of staff from the local community and we are now excited about the prospect of making significant progress in both our community and education programmes!

As we publish this edition of Cheetah Tracks, CCB is delighted to welcome Wabotlhe Letubo and Thabang Segaletsho to the project. Wabotlhe, from Lobatse, has a degree in Social Sciences from the University of Botswana and has previously been involved in research into HIV/AIDS and environmental conservation. She joins us as our new Education Officer. Thabang Segaletsho, from Francistown, has a diploma in Nature Conservation from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and a degree in Nature Conservation from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and joins us as our new Community Officer, with experience in areas such as Problem Animal Management, Environmental Education and Conservation Administration.

Global Cheetah Forum

In December 2005, Rebecca, Kyle and Ann Marie made the 17 hour journey by road to attend the meeting for the Southern African members of the Global Cheetah Forum (GCF). Hosted by the Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia, the event was the latest opportunity for delegates from around the region involved in the current international cheetah conservation effort, at various levels, to review the current status of the species; assess the impact of localized conservation programmes; and to share in the continued development of conservation strategies.

New Endoscope

CCB is now the proud owner of a new endoscope! This equipment will now enable us to collaborate with studies into the health of both wild and captive cheetah, particularly in multi-population comparisons of gastric biopsies taken to gain an insight into gastritis. This disease is fairly common amongst captive cheetahs and the comparative data obtained via endoscopies will provide both an insight into the condition and treatment regimes. Special thanks go to Dr. Arthur Bagot-Smith and Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia for guiding us through the initial use of our endoscope taking gastric biopsies of cheetah at their facility, and to National Endoscopy Services Inc. in Clearwater, Florida, USA, for donating this valuable piece of equipment.



Kyle had the opportunity to use the project's new endoscope at the facilities of CCF in Namibia, during the GCF meeting in December 2005.





CCB's first Annual Report will be published in July.

Right: Mokolodi cheetah ambassadors, Duma & Letoatse, March 2006.

Annual Report

Following the imminent completion of an independent audit, we anticipate that we will be in a position to publish our first Annual Report in July. This document will be available to download from our website as an Adobe Acrobat PDF and will cover the period from August 2004 to March 2006.

Thank You to...

Cheetah Conservation Botswana would be unable to function or make progress in its efforts to conserve the cheetah population of Botswana, without you. In the period since our last newsletter, we remain especially grateful to our existing donors and supporters here in Botswana and internationally for their unending faith in the project and, as CCB continues to develop, to new individuals and organisations for their invaluable assistance.

Very special thanks are due to the following:

The Howard G. Buffet Foundation

Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN)

The United Nations Global Environment Facility

Debswana (Jwaneng Mine)

Mokolodi Nature Reserve

Rudy DeWet &

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Barloworld

Inktec Ltd

Lobatse Canvas

First National Bank of Botswana

E-quip Services

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Doreen McColaugh

Cheetah Conservation Fund

Cheetah Outreach

DeWildt Breeding Centre

The Angel Fund at Cincinnati Zoo

The American Zoological Association

Bill & Pat Miller

National Endoscopy Services Inc.

Banham Zoo & Suffolk Wildlife Park

Tusk Trust

Idea Wild

WILD Foundation

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