



CHEETAH NEWS – April 2005

JWANENG RESEARCH CAMP

Good news! Everyone will be happy to know that it appears the anthrax outbreak has been contained for the time being and Jwaneng Game Park has reopened. Now the not so good news! Unfortunately, we have not been able to locate our collared cheetahs for 2 months so that is a great worry. It may be they are just living outside of the park for the time being. Once the microlight is back in the sky we will get a better idea of what is going on. We have had some problems with the microlight due to two incidences of vandalism! We have been unable to find the culprits and it is a great concern. However, the microlight has now been repaired and is due to be checked over by the aviation department by the end of this week. So fingers crossed we will soon be airborne again. Since the outbreak we have not seen so much cheetah activity in the park. Do they know and are avoiding the area? Or are they contracting the disease and dying? Thankfully, we have not found any dead cheetah this year. Time and aerial surveying will hopefully shed more light on the situation.

However, cheetahs are still around and we were thrilled to have a wonderful sighting of two approx. 9 month old cubs in February. They were not belonging to the cubs of our most recently collared female as none had ear tags. It's possible they may be the new

cubs of our first collared female who was around in the area at the time.



Photo thanks to Duncan Yearley, volunteering from UK

GHANZI RESEARCH CAMP

Our camp in Ghanzi is ready, thanks to the assistance of Dr Jen and Jay Zerbel who have been setting it up. A huge thanks must go to Chris and Grace Kitchin who have kindly provided the land for the camp. Not to mention always giving us much appreciated advice, support and company! As well as, Mr Christian de Graaf for inviting us to stay at his safari camp in Tautona Lodge while the camp was being set up. Ghanzi is one of Botswana's main areas of commercial farming and therefore one of the primary problem areas for cheetah conflict. Setting up here has already brought us a lot of activity. Gavin Richards at Kanana Safaris, was kind enough to pass onto us a large male cheetah he had trapped on his land, which has been collared and released. Since February, we've been brought 3 orphaned cheetah cubs. Two sisters from a farmer and the other single male which

came from the Wildlife Department. All three are doing well.

ORPHANED CHEETAH

The two sisters are in Jwaneng where they are staying at our quarantine camp after contracting a mystery illness. We feared for their little lives for many days. Tests have confirmed it was not one of the serious viruses such as feline panleukopenia that we had considered and the cubs are making a good recovery thanks to the care of CCB staff and volunteers.



Our single male is currently at Mokolodi Nature Reserve after receiving treatment for stress. He is doing very well and starting to catch his own food, albeit fairly clumsily! The plan is to move him upto Jwaneng to be integrated into a group with the two females. It is hoped to release them as a group if full rehabilitation can be achieved. This will require the building of a very large enclosure, were they can live as naturally as possible, whilst staying under observation. They will not necessarily stay together in the wild but they will have a better chance of survival in the beginning as a group. So the Ghanzi plan to provide a rapid response to farmers' calls for assistance, and to save orphaned and injured cats is paying off!

HOME RANGES

We are very pleased to announce that our new GSM collar is working! This new technology works via the cell phone network. Sending a location 5 times a day to the satellite and coming through via email or text messages to the cell phone.

We decided to trial this collar from African Wildlife Tracking on our recently caught 52kg male from the Ghanzi farmlands. So far we have been relying on radiotracking and although we have collected some good data, there are times when we cannot find the collared cats and this can become very frustrating. Once released, there was a short period of silence from the satellite, when we held our breath. Five days later downloads were received. Many locations appeared with a single download, since the collar records positions and saves them, in the event that the cat is out of range. The wonders of technology...when it works! It appears he has decided to return to the Ghanzi farmlands for the time being and we hope that we can work with the farmers to keep him safe and well.

COMMUNITY

Our workshop in Jwaneng on February 25th for farmers on 'Sharing the Land with Predators' went very well. We had a turn out of 55 people. 40 of which were farmers from the local area. The rest included the Departments of Wildlife and Animal Health and Production. The event was generously sponsored by Debswana at Jwaneng Mine. Presentations were made by Cheetah Conservation Fund's Bonnie Schumann, who has been working on this issue for

several years and the information she provided was very well received by our local farmers. Presentations were also made by Mike Sento, president of Botswana Veterinary Association; Glyn Maude of Makgadikgadi Pans Brown Hyena Project, David Mills of Khutse Leopard Project and Rebecca Klein from CCB. The workshop has gone a long way towards developing positive relationships with the farming community.

AWARENESS RAISING



On 25th April we attended Kgale Agricultural Show in Gaborone. We had a stall distributing booklets on livestock management and predator control as well as leaflets on livestock guarding dogs, using donkeys as guard animals, efficient kraaling and more. Some very interesting discussions were had and many names collected for our mailing list. Several farmers have scheduled farm visits from us, for advice on being more predator friendly, or the way they see it: encouraging predators to be more farmer friendly!

EDUCATION

As Jwaneng Park has now reopened, educational visits will commence when the

schools return after Easter holidays next week. Great news came from Debswana at Jwaneng Mine when they presented us with a cheque for 12,000 pula (\$2400) for the printing of our educational books. These will be distributed to schools throughout Botswana and contain information on the importance of cheetahs and predators in a healthy ecosystem and how to can learn to live with them.

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MANY THANKS TO:

The Howard Buffet Foundation for all of your support! Thankyou very much for your dedication to cheetah conservation! A big thank you to Andrea Stepinwall for giving us legal advice when needed and special thanks to Jeff Bookbinder of Collins Newman and Co. for organizing and overseeing her help.

AND REGULAR THANKS TO:

Local: Debswana at Jwaneng Mine, Mokolodi Nature Reserve, Barloworld, Wilderness Safaris, Inktec Ltd, Lobatse Canvas.

International: Wildlife Conservation Network; Howard Buffet Foundation, American Zoological Association, Cheetah Conservation Fund, Namibia; WILD Foundation; Sierra Club; Banham Zoo and Suffolk Wildlife Park, UK; Idea Wild; Cincinnati Zoo; Columbus Zoo; Sierra Endangered Cat Haven; Sophie Danforth Conservation Fund.