



## CHEETAH NEWS - October

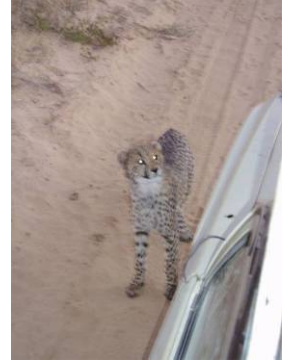
### JWANENG RESEARCH CAMP

We have been very busy monitoring our collared cats, carrying out a spoor survey to estimate density and attempting capture of any new cats in the reserve.

In June we were coming back from an unsuccessful mission to locate our 3 males. We were feeling a little disappointed at not finding them when up ahead in the road we saw cheetah. It turned out to be a mother with 5 young cubs of about 6 months old. As the vehicle approached they melted into the bush as usual. We stopped to climb onto the roof for a better look into the long grass. After several minutes 5 small cubs began to emerge from the bush back onto the road, where they proceeded to put on a display for us. Jumping, running and tumbling with each other. Mum looked on impassively from the safety of the trees. They approached inquisitively closer and closer. One male cub was particularly brave and began circling the vehicle with a low growl, even stopping to sniff at the tire. They stayed until the sunset then returned into the bush.

This is an unusual sighting for wild cheetah which are notoriously difficult to see and if spotted usually disappear as soon as they are able. (This is not the case in well known reserves where predators are very habituated to people and vehicles, but cheetahs are generally very shy).

We then set out to attempt capturing and collaring the group. Setting the traps up in areas we knew they were frequenting. By August we had been successful in



capturing the whole group. Samples and measurements of all were taken and mum was collared for monitoring. Thanks to veterinarians, Mark Bing and Jane Freeman for assisting us with the medical workups and for being predator friendly farmers! So far we have been getting good locations on the group, they have been staying in the reserve, much the same as our first mother with cubs. It will be interesting to see how their movements change as the cubs grow.

**MICROLIGHT** - Our microlight arrived last week, so we are all very excited! Ann Marie will be flying the plane and taking care of locating our cats once they leave the reserve. So far she's only done a couple of test flights, as its important to familiarize yourself with a new plane before starting aerial work. The model coincidentally is named the Cheetah with a Rotax 912 engine, purchased from Rainow Aircrafts in South Africa. Funds were generously donated by the Howard Buffet Foundation. This will revolutionise our monitoring capabilities and we'll be able to cover a much larger area than ever before.



## COMMUNITY

Our community work has moved up a level now that we have a new member of staff. Mmusi Tutwane has joined us as our new community development officer. He has an ideal background as a guide, ranger and educator for the Wildlife Department, Conservation International and Mokolodi Nature Reserve.



*Mmusi (left) with village children*

Mmusi and Rebecca have been making regular visits to communities surrounding Jwaneng to assess the level of cheetah conflict and gather sightings to be used to estimate numbers. We've been finding that people do perceive the cheetah as a very real threat to their livelihoods and are very open to assistance from the project. The area we are currently surveying is the same area that our collared

cheetahs roam over. We have received some feedback that 3 adult cheetah have been causing problems with communities to the North of the park. So it is essential we target these areas for support.

Visits have also been made further afield. In June we went to the Tuli Block which borders Zimbabwe and South Africa, in Eastern Botswana. This is a very important area and will soon hopefully be gazetted as a transfrontier park. We were looking into the numbers of cheetah and level of conflict in this area with the aim to set up a small research camp next year. We have made some good connections and found a healthy population of cheetah in the area, although they do come into conflict with farmers again. Thanks to Steve and Kerry of Mowana Educational Camp in Northern Tuli for putting us up for 3 nights, we really enjoyed your hospitality.

In this area we visited a village named Molalatou, where the community uses livestock guarding dogs to protect their livestock. They use a cross of greyhound and bull dogs. They say the dogs are very effective in deterring predators, even lions! So this will be a very useful case study to take to other communities in Botswana. Thanks to Mr Motsune for taking the time to talk to us.

In September, Ghanzi in the West was visited. This is an area of commercial farming interests, both cattle and game. Farmers here have a very low opinion of cheetah and believe them to be the worst of problem predators. It has been our aim for some time

to set up a camp in this area as it is a definite area of concern. We've made several visits, including attending a farmers festival with an educational display. Slowly we have gained a little trust, and we are very happy to have been offered a place to set up a small tented research camp in January of next year. Thanks to the Kitchens for this generous offer and hospitality, and also to Mr. Christian De Graff for offering accommodation at his camp, until ours is completed. This camp will be run by Dr Jennifer Zerbel and her husband who worked with us as volunteers earlier this year.

### **EDUCATION**

Kind thanks go to Brevard Zoo in Florida, USA, for sending us some wonderful learning materials for predator activities and talks. These will be incorporated into our program at Mokolodi Nature Reserve and Jwaneng Game Reserve, where school groups come on a regular basis to learn about the environment. With the assistance of Mmusi, we are now planning to expand this program and take it out to schools.

### **WORKSHOP**

In the beginning of June we were fortunate to attend a cheetah censusing workshop in Tanzania held by the Global Cheetah Forum. It was held at Ndotu Lodge in Ngorogoro Conservation Area. The focus was on counting cheetahs and standardizing the methodologies used by cheetah researchers. As a low density, wide ranging predator cheetahs can be difficult to study. However, with the collaboration of cheetah researchers, effective methods are being developed

including spoor surveys and camera trapping. As everyone works together we can ensure that techniques used are comparable between the different range countries.

### **INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT**

A very significant thankyou to Howard Buffet for answering our call for assistance in purchasing a microlight. Your donation has made a huge contribution to our work and it's a dream come true for us!

Many thanks to Paul Czarnecki who kindly donated us his Toyota Landcruiser last year. The 'Beast' is still working well and is our main workhorse at Jwaneng. Also, many thanks for donating us your laptop. It's a great machine and resides at Jwaneng as our data input station.



Our tracking vehicle 'the beast'

Thanks to Patrice Aubry for your generous donation which will go towards new telemetry collars to monitor cheetahs. Thankyou to Annette Daly for donating the funds to purchase materials for 2 new transport boxes. They have been made and are known as the 'daly' boxes! Big thankyou to Mr and Mrs Sizer for assisting us with the organization of a fundraiser which

was held and organized by the owner Arthur, at Silver Wings Pub in Springs, SA in September. Thanks for your support and friendship!

Also, to Wayne at P&R Motors for fixing our vehicles and helping out in general, thankyou!

## LOCAL SUPPORT

Thanks to Barloworld Motors for your support towards a new vehicle for our community project. This now makes it possible for us to make weekly community visits, an essential aspect of cheetah conservation.

Continued thanks to Inktec for your regular computer support over the last 2 years. Contact them to join CARES their ink cartridge recycling program. Help save the environment and contribute to charities (including CCB) at the same time. Email them at [cares@inktecbots.com](mailto:cares@inktecbots.com)

Last but not least! Many thanks to Larry Tout of FFM Botswana (the Botswana agents for ESRI) for obtaining us a free copy of ArcView. This powerful mapping program will be used to map our cheetah sightings and become our long term monitoring database, so send us your sightings!!!

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Help us to distribute the survey to any farmers, landowners, game reserve managers you may know.
- Send us your cheetah sightings, past, present and future.
- Raise awareness for predator conservation. Botswana still has a rich biodiversity and it is up to all of us to protect it!

- Make a donation, however large or small, everything makes a difference.
- Help us organize an event to raise funds.



Contact us at: [info@cheetahbotswana.com](mailto:info@cheetahbotswana.com)

Mokolodi Nature Reserve

Private Bag 0457, Gaborone, Botswana

Tel: 00 267 3500613

Fax: 00 267 3165348

Cell: 72621077

[www.cheetahbotswana.com](http://www.cheetahbotswana.com)

## Thanks to:

**Local:** Jwaneng Mine, Mokolodi Nature Reserve, Barloworld, Wilderness Safaris, Inktec Ltd.

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