

CHEETAH SPOTS

Cheetah Conservation Fund Australia

| November 2021

International Cheetah Day

Yes, it's that time of the year again, when we raise awareness of the plight of the most endangered of the African big cats, the graceful and unique Cheetah. Here are a few events that are planned for Saturday 4th of December.

The Cheetah Conservation Fund centre, located on the outskirts of Otjiwarongo in Namibia, will be holding an open day: there will be stalls with information and activities and everyone who manages to complete all the activities will go into a draw to win great prizes. A competition with one of the local radio stations will also allow one lucky person to win a cheetah drive.

Our Founder and Executive Director, Dr Laurie Marker, and her husband Dr Bruce Brewer, CCF's General Manager, will be in Dubai for the World Expo, which will feature activities for International Cheetah Day, while an awareness event is being planned for CCF's Somaliland compound in Hargeisa.

Back in South Australia, Monarto Safari Park will be hosting an event by Kimbolton Wines, featuring their 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, with tastings, quizzes and prizes. And every bottle sold will benefit Cheetah Conservation Fund's work. If you can't attend, head to <https://www.kimboltonwines.com.au/product/2018-Kimbolton-Cabernet-Sauvignon1> to secure your bottle of cheetah wine.



In previous years, people have celebrated through fund-raising events, cheetah parties, cupcake sales and many other initiatives. Sharing with family and friends is important. So what are you planning for ICD? Please let us know at ccfaustralia@cheetah.org!



CCF is bouncing back from the pandemic

Twenty-twenty saw the closure of the CCF Visitor Centre in Otjiwarango while the world went into lockdown to prevent the spread of COVID-19. And early in 2021, Namibia was hit hard with a third wave of infection that saw many people across the nation succumb to the disease. However, infection rates have since reduced with the vaccination roll across Namibia. CCF was able to work with the State Hospital to set up a mobile vaccination clinic at CCF for all staff to have the



opportunity to get vaccinated. CCF can now proudly state that more than 90% of staff are fully vaccinated, ensuring the best protection for all involved while welcoming national, international guests and volunteers back to the Centre.

CCF has now opened its gates and more overnight visitors are staying at the Cheetah View Ecolodge. There are also many more day visitors and school groups. Recently, CCF hosted 130 students from Northern Namibia who had the opportunity of exploring the education Museum and meet one of the resident Livestock Guardian Dog Ambassadors. They learned how dogs are helping to save cheetahs. Visitors are important to CCF's work as they share information with people on how to live alongside predators while protecting the wild cheetah populations in Namibia.

Trafficking in the Horn of Africa

For ten months, not a single cheetah cub came into CCF's care in Somaliland. Then, in September and October, eleven new cheetah cubs were confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade and were entrusted to CCF. The Hargeisa Safe Houses are now hosting 65 cheetahs. The eleven cubs are estimated to have been between five to six-weeks-old at the time of confiscation. Given the condition of ten of the cubs, they do not appear to have been held for long. But a single male cub in much worse condition than the others appears to have been in the hands of his captor longer. Cubs taken from their mothers at this early age and held captive typically suffer severe impacts from malnutrition and dehydration, and many perish.

Dr Laurie Marker flew to Somaliland in September to conduct Legal Intelligence Training for Cheetah Illicit Trade (LICIT) for government officials involved in the prevention of cheetah trafficking. CCF hopes that these education programs will also help to prevent further cheetah cubs from being taken from the wild and ending up at CCF Safe Houses.



Cheetahs and Climate Change

Climate change is a global problem, and efforts to reverse it require support at the highest levels of government. We are depending on the participants of #COP26 to stick to their commitments on behalf of their citizenry. (Abridged from an article by Dr Laurie Marker)

Climate change poses a significant threat to all wildlife because it accelerates environmental change and puts increasing pressure on people and animals who rely on the land for a living. If action is not taken to address the root causes of climate change, we will be facing wide-scale, rapid extinction in many species. Cheetahs are uniquely vulnerable to rapid ecological change, because they lack genetic diversity, and they are specialised hunters. They require large ranges and open landscapes to catch their prey.

At CCF, we study the ecology of the arid landscape that the cheetah calls home. We have seen the impacts of poor land management and unsustainable farming practices on the savanna. The degradation of the ecosystem compounds exponentially over time. In Namibia, ground level vegetation (grass) is most frequently consumed by livestock and wild ungulates (hoofed mammals), but the mid-tier of vegetation (bush) is less frequently consumed. This is largely due to the absence of megafauna (rhinos and elephants) that would have historically eaten it. The widespread reduction of these megafauna has caused an unchecked flourishing of native thorn bush. As thorn bush grows, open grassland gradually becomes more condensed and closed off. This means less available space for farmers to graze their livestock, which causes overgrazing. As more livestock feed on reduced land, it creates a vicious cycle of further habitat loss.

Another consequence of the reduction of grassland is the decline of wild prey. As the human population grows, people live in closer proximity to predator species like the cheetah, resulting in greater occurrences of human-wildlife conflict. In order to mitigate this conflict, CCF developed a series of farmer education programs that emphasise predator-friendly farming techniques. The Future Farmers of Africa training teaches good livestock, rangeland and wildlife management practices, including the use of Livestock Guarding Dogs (LGD). Protecting farmers' livestock from predation with an imposing presence and a very loud bark, LGDs help reduce livestock losses from 80 – 100% thus reducing the farmers' need to kill cheetahs and other predators.

The shift from grassland to bush and its increased consumption of water has a negative impact on the economy of Namibia resulting in more than 150 million US dollars per year in interventions to bring water to the people. In order to mitigate habitat loss, CCF works to remove the thickened thorn bush and use the woody waste material to create biomass fuel. Bushblok®* is an eco-friendly fuel log that is clean-burning and is a better alternative for heating and cooking than coal. Biomass energy production with green fuels has the potential to power much of Namibia if they are scaled up. Cleared habitat creates an opening for wildlife to reoccupy the land. CCF's ecology team researches the short- and long-term effects on the distribution of animals and plants and monitors chemical changes to the soil structure using different methodologies. The research that we conduct helps build a better understanding of which conservation actions are most effective in restoring the habitat.

Obituaries

It's been a difficult time for the staff in Namibia in recent months, as most of the resident cheetahs at CCF are of a similar age and unfortunately it means they are having to say goodbye to a lot of their long term resident cheetahs at the same time. The recent cheetahs to cross the rainbow bridge are B2 and Smartmart (obituaries below). Further obituaries can be found at <https://cheetah.org/resident-cheetahs/>"

N'Dunge, or Smartman as he was known, first arrived in 2008 with his brother Shunge or Blondeman after being found without a mother. He was approximately three months old and was cared for by Dr. Laurie Marker and Dr. Bruce Brewer in the nursery. Another cheetah named Little C was only about six months older than them and he quickly took them under his wing and helped them to settle in nicely to their new home. Along with another male named Ron, the four males formed a strong coalition group, and lived together for most of their lives at the centre. When N'Dunge first arrived at CCF, he very quickly picked up our routines and schedules, especially around feeding. Resident cheetahs are fed from bowls, so that they are not ingesting too much sand or dirt with their meat. It can take some time for them to learn how to eat from the bowl. But not N'Dunge. He picked it up almost immediately, which is how he earned his nickname of Smartman!

At 13 years old, N'Dunge was considered one of our more elderly cheetahs. In the last year, he had started to show his older age and developed several incurable conditions. He was losing weight and his personality became subdued and quiet. In order to prevent unnecessary suffering, Dr Marker and the veterinary team made the difficult decision that it would be best to say goodbye and to euthanize him. N'Dunge was an amazing cat to work with. He will be greatly missed by not only the team at CCF, but also by the many people whose lives he touched.

B2 arrived at the Cheetah Conservation Fund in 2014 when he was approximately six months old. Named after the B2 goldmine close to CCF, he was an extremely frightened young cub, and called endlessly for his mother the first few days. He was extremely wary of people, and wouldn't let them approach. Luckily, another adult male cheetah named Phoenix answered his calls, and the two became inseparable almost immediately. Phoenix was calm and confident and B2 would look up to him for support and guidance, even as he got older. Because he called so much for his family as a young cub, B2's meow was very unique. It sounded almost like a baby crocodile rather than a cat. It always made his keepers laugh when he tried to be a big, tough cheetah and scare them off, but a tiny little squeak would come out of his mouth rather than a more intimidating noise like a hiss.

When Phoenix passed away earlier in the year, B2 became a different cheetah. He would call out for his best friend constantly, walking around the enclosure day and night. His appetite was gone, and his once standoffish behaviour towards his keepers became quiet and subdued. When he became sick with pneumonia earlier in the year, the veterinary and cheetah team had to fight hard to bring him back. Although he recovered, his body took a hard hit. His liver and kidneys had started to shut down. He was treated with medication, which luckily he was very patient with. However, the disease eventually caught up with him, and there was nothing more that could be done. The decision was made to euthanise B2, so that he would no longer be in pain. While it was a devastating loss for the CCF team, it is made a bit easier thinking that he has gone to join his best friend.

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As always, many thanks to our friends at **Goodwill Wine**. Remember to get some cheetah wine to celebrate a free Christmas with family and friends! We all hope to be able to visit our beloved cheetahs in Namibia soon as we learn to live with this devastating pandemic. These excellent amazingly priced wines make excellent gifts too. And, of course, don't forget to pick Cheetah Conservation Fund Australia as your chosen charity! You can enjoy a beautiful drink knowing that you're benefiting our cause.



We would also like to thank our friends and partners at **ZOOSA** for their contribution and support since our inception in Australia. Take the opportunity of the holiday season and the loosening of state borders to visit the cheetah coalition at Monarto Safari Park, where there is a new male, Innis, in residence.

We welcome warmly a new contributor to our cause, the **Henry and Cecilia Foundation**. Please head for their webpage at <http://www.henrycecilia.org/> to check out their mission.

Finally, we would like to thank all of you for your continued support and interest in the plight of the wild cheetah, the fastest land mammal and the most endangered of African big cats. Although their population has been stabilised in Namibia, it continues to dwindle in other African countries, with the remaining number of wild cheetahs estimated to be approximately 7,500. These cheetahs are counting on you to support them through these difficult times. Please don't let them down. Donations, however small can be made through our website: <https://cheetah.org/australia/>

We would welcome any contribution you can make to our newsletter. Please send us your stories of encounters with cheetahs, and photos you have taken at open range zoos or on trips to Africa. Let us know how you met your first cheetah, or became interested in this unique and graceful feline. We would be particularly grateful for suggestions for events to raise awareness and funds to promote the cause of the survival of the wild cheetah. Please communicate any ideas to ccfaustralia@cheetah.org. Thank you all in advance!



Smartman



B2