



CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND - KENYA

Newsletter

PO Box 1611 Sarit Centre, 00606 Nairobi, Kenya WWW.CHEETAH.ORG cheetah@africaonline.co.ke
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KARIBUNI – welcome to the second newsletter dedicated to sharing information about Cheetah Conservation Fund efforts in Kenya.

The first half of 2007 has been extremely busy and very productive! From January to August 2007 we completed the field work for the National Census. The remote and distant areas of northern Kenya have poor road infrastructure, thus are subject to limitations from weather. The field work in this area has been repeatedly postponed by heavy rains that came after the 2005-6 droughts. These areas are often involved in tribal conflicts between the tribes of Kenya and cross-border with Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. While there were limits to areas where the team could travel, we feel we have sufficiently covered the area to give a good indication of remaining cheetah presence in historical cheetah ranges. Throughout the study we were welcomed into villages by chiefs and escorted by KWS and regional game rangers. We were given blessings by Samburu, asking “*Ngai*” (God) to guide our way, and by Turkana through the traditional method of tossing water into our faces. In the Wajir, Mandera and Garissa Districts we were told that there were many cheetahs as these cultures traditionally live peacefully with wildlife. Giraffe and ostrich lived at the edge of many of the villages, indicating coexistence with wildlife. Now... the daunting task of analyzing findings to prioritize regions for future cheetah conservation efforts.

A welcome addition to our team, Sarah Brooke, assists in compiling and analyzing the conflict and tracking data collected in 2005-6. She filled the void left while Cosmas Wambua was away at University and kept Lumumba Mutiso on his toes. The rains and the subdivisions of two farms, more than 70,000 acres, in the Machakos Wildlife Forum have created many changes in the area. Not only have cheetah conflicts increased in the last 6 months, but other displaced wildlife including hyena, lion, leopard, warthog and buffalo have been affecting not only the new settlers,

but also the areas which have been settled in the past. We continue to work with the KWS and other conservation and research programmes in the area with hopes of reducing the conflicts while keeping enough wild areas for the animals to co-exist with the people. The only hope for the cheetahs in this area is to assist in developing income from the conservation of the land.

Community development continues through the Cattle Dip Project. The workshops aim to empower the members of the dip while encouraging their improved interest in wildlife conservation. Several of the Dip Committee Members were asked to assist in the development of a conservation plan for the region. The Kilome Veterinary office commended the improved livestock health in the area, attributing the improvement in part to the awareness of healthy livestock through CCFK work.

Cosmas returned from Ethiopia to conduct his field work for the completion of his Master’s Degree. His study will aid in accurately measuring settlement patterns and its effect on wildlife and conflict. He will also be an integral part of the National Census report and ongoing National efforts. Volunteers assist with data entry and field work where feasible. Laila Bahaa-el-din gives her account of volunteer activities during her stay.

I have been busy preparing for a US tour to update donors and raise funds. Presentations will be given in Michigan, Ohio, California, Texas and Utah.

Mary Wykstra
CCF Kenya Programme Coordinator

RESEARCH

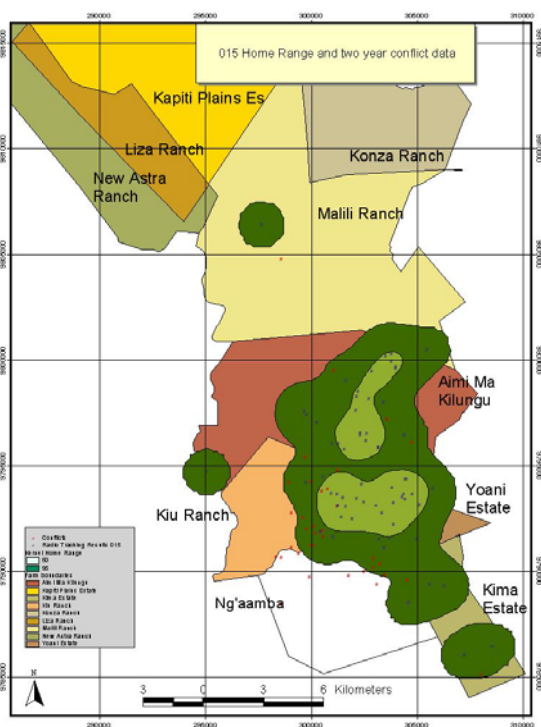
Radio-tracking

By Sarah Brooke, Research Assistant

Suspected as a 'problem' animal, a female cheetah (ID Number 015), was captured and collared in March 2004. This female has been through three set of cubs. The first set of five cubs were sub-adult at the time of collaring, and she has given birth to two litters of four cubs since. The litter born in 2005 resulted in two surviving cubs that became independent in December 2006. The most recent litter of four cubs were born in February 2007. Using standard telemetry equipment, she is radio tracked on a weekly basis. The movements of this cheetah are monitored through private, share-holder and commercial ranches. Understanding cheetah movements of particular interest as predator conflicts in the area are on the increase. Attacks by cheetahs in particular are reported as a substantial problem. The most prominent predator conflicts in the area are cheetah killing shoats (sheep and goats. The recent subdivision of land is thought to be a primary factor influencing the movement of the cheetah and the increase in conflicts.

In addition to the tracking information, the vegetation in the direction of the signal is recorded to assist in understanding the habitat in which the cheetah lives. In addition, livestock in the surrounding area is also noted. On occasions when the cheetah is seen, the GPS coordinates of her precise location are recorded.

Using GIS mapping programs, we estimate the cheetah's home range (the area where the cheetah finds food, water and raises her cubs throughout the year) to be 108km² with the core home range (the area where she spends the majority of the time) to be only 23km².

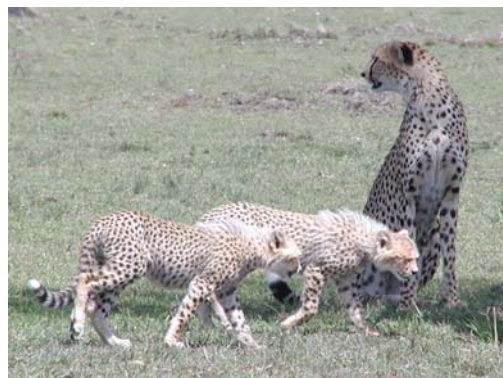


Kamotho, a community volunteer, listening for a signal



A combination of three years of research in the area and the regular sighting reports allow us to estimate the cheetah population between 12 and 20 (depending on the number of cubs) within the 300km² study area. That is a density of 5 cheetah per 100km². Research shows that the collared female cheetah is not solely responsible for the conflicts within the Kima-Kiu region. The lack of game available, particularly in the Kiu region, means cheetah opportunistically predate on livestock as there is no natural prey available.

Radio tracking continues into 2007 where the focus has been on the collared cheetah's daily movements. Tracking is therefore concentrated on consecutive days in the hope of highlighting aspects of the cheetah's hunting behaviour. Ideally, we would like to increase the number of collared cheetahs in the area to assess whether the home range we discovered is typical of cheetah in this area.



NEXT ISSUE:

- * Community Liaison officer's report on conflicts and community issues in the Salama study area.
- * Education and Awareness efforts
- * Results of US tour September October 2007.





Nation Wide Census - Update

By Mary Wykstra, Kenya Programme Coordinator



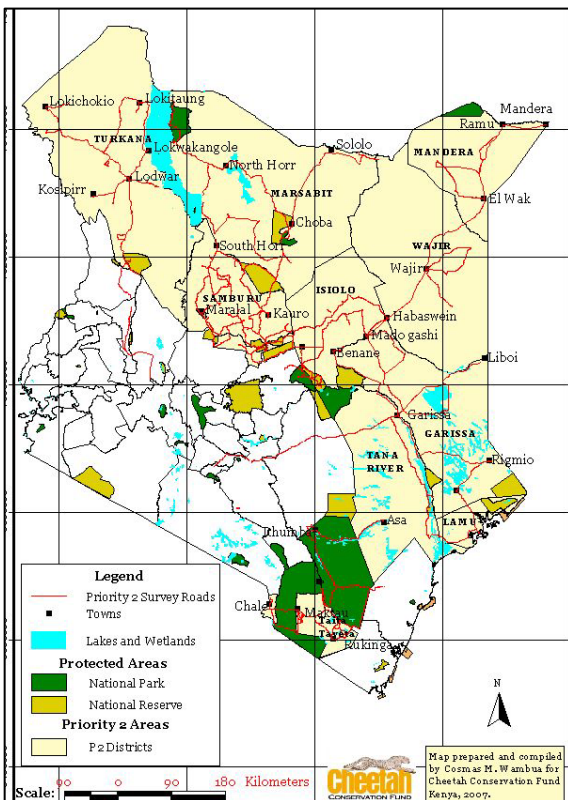
The National Census Project visited the northern districts of Mandera, Wajir, Garissa, Marsabit and Turkana and the eastern districts of Ijara and Tana River between April and August 2007. The lack of secure infrastructure in 2006 had left these districts as the last in our Priority 2 field work.

The field work in this project was coordinated by CCF staff and by Wallace Isoboke of East African Wildlife Society . Wallace made contact with the appropriate KWS authorities to arrange the field ranger escorts and to keep an eye on weather and security issues. CCF arranged field supplies, maps and additional contacts, and was the primary driver for this area. Mary and Wallace were the consistent team members in all of the northern district field work.

In Wajir and Mandera, we were accompanied by two KWS rangers while in Marsabit and Turkana, Ernest Ekeno from Samburu National Reserve and one KWS Ranger accompanied the team. Cosmas Wambua was co-driver and in Wajir and Mandera, while Lumumba Mutiso filled the roll in Turkana Garissa, Ijara, and Tana River.

As in all the previous census field exercises, KWS occurrence books were used to determine the areas where the team would focus their efforts. The team drove as much of the area as possible while taking GPS readings of all wildlife, livestock and human impacts (water, villages, etc). Photographs were taken every 10 kilometers and the tracks used along the drive were stored to enable the the habitat and other aspects of the study to be repeated and verified.

While there were reports of large numbers of cheetahs in pocketed areas of Wajir, Garissa, Ijara, and Marsabit, it will be difficult to estimate numbers as the people in these regions have never really been asked about exact numbers before. General replies were “cheetahs here are so many.” The Turkana district preliminary results are a bit disappointing as a common reply was “cheetah have not been here in many years, but I think you will find them beyond the next hill.” There were only three small areas in Turkana where we believe cheetah still remain in very small numbers. The Tana River district has been a difficult area for the census team to access because of rains and tribal clashes, thus we still have very limited knowledge of the region. In general, our knowledge of the north is still incomplete, but once our results are compiled we should be able to identify areas where KWS and other stakeholders agree that additional work should be done.



Top Left: Cheetah tracks in Garissa District. Top Right: Lion tracks in Marsabit District. Left: Map showing tracks driven by the field teams. Above: Census team in the Wajir district. Below Left: Northern Topi in Sibiloi National Reserve, Marsabit District. Below Right: Kudu in Tana River District



COMMUNITY

Diving Center Report

By Mary Wykstra - Kenya Programme Coordinator

Since the opening of the four community cattle dips in the Salama area (Kima, Mwanyani, Ngaamba and Marwa), there have been ups and downs in the attitudes and management of the dips. This project aims to provide the community with the opportunity and the skills to manage the dips in a sustainable way. Two workshops were conducted in April and July 2007 to improve the management skills of the dip committees. Lawrence Nyaguti and Yvonne Anyango facilitated the workshops. Topics included: *Corporate Leadership, How to Conduct and Minute a Meeting, Business Planning, Stock Taking, Basic Book Keeping and Problem Solving.*



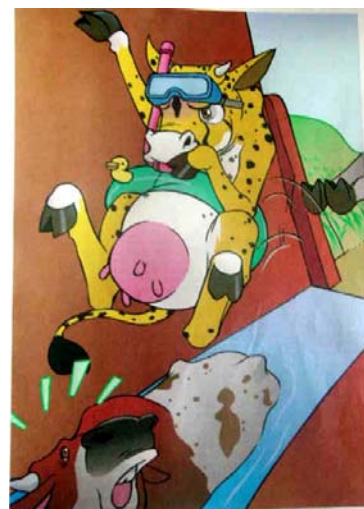
Lawrence Nyaguti (front left) and Lumumba Mutiso (center) prepare for Dip Workshop.

Issues that dip managers struggle with include a lack of leadership and book keeping skills within their committees. Team exercises and group discussions provided direction and solutions to these aspects. The committees also struggle with the commitment of the members in office towards their roles as secretaries and treasurers. The workshop stressed the need for accurate accounting of resources and funds to improve confidence in the committee. Other problems addressed included maintenance and clean up, generating increased visitation and improving the relationships between the members of the community based organizations. For each problem, the participants of the workshop were guided by the facilitators

Cartoon by "Eco-Sys" depicting a Cattle Dip.

into identifying solutions and actions for correcting the problem.

Dip Management committees were encouraged to hold meetings with their members to discuss current issues thus opening communication between the customers and the managers. Transparent accounting and forward thinking concepts were lacking in past dip management. These are necessary if the dip functions are to be sustainable.



Unga Farm Care showed its ongoing support for this project by providing sponsorship as well as sending a representative to each of the workshops. All of the issues that the committees face with the acaricide (chemical added to the water to prevent ticks) stem from issues that can be addressed through technical support. Dip attendants have been unsure of some of their protocols, thus regular visitation by the company technical advisor and scheduled days for taking samples should enhance the performance of the dips.

Finally, CCF gave presentations on preliminary results from two years of tracking cheetahs in the region and from the pilot of the interviews on husbandry and livestock losses. Each of the studies are ongoing, but CCF feels that it is important to provide the community with information on the results. It was agreed that CCF should be invited by the dip committees to present issues and provide opportunities for the members to talk about the wildlife in the area and CCF's involvement in the Dip Project. Plans are being developed for community awareness meetings (baraza) in the later months of the year.



Left: Mary Wykstra (3rd from left) and Yvonne Anyango (front center) with some Dip Workshop participants.

Right: Marwa Cattle Dip is one of the four dips participating in the project. It was officially reopened in December 2006 and operates every Saturday for community members to bring their livestock.



CAPACITY BUILDING

A Masters in Ecological and Systematic Zoology

By Cosmas M. Wambua, Research Assistant

In 2006, I began Master's course work in Ecological and Systematic Zoology at the Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. The coursework commenced on 1 November 2006 and included courses in: *Advanced Animal Ecology* which reviews materials, methods and techniques for ecological studies; *Comparative Animal Physiology* providing insight into animals' diverse physiological functions and their capability to adjust to changing internal and external factors; *Biological Data Analysis* introducing statistical analysis of biological data to give quantifiable results for use in decision making and management of ecological systems; *Scientific Writing* providing an understanding of tools and phrases used in presentation of scientific data; *Biodiversity Conservation* giving a comprehensive picture of biodiversity; *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)* covering the basic concepts and principles of EIA, focusing on sustainable development while at the same time taking into account the environmental needs; and *Wildlife Ecology and Management* giving insight into the roles of culture, conflict values and community participation in wildlife conservation through evaluation of history, problems and legislation on wildlife resources and conservation in Ethiopia. Now that the course work is finished I will spend the next six months on field work collecting data for my thesis. The study will compare density, distribution and abundance of wildlife and the significance of land settlement for cheetah in the sub-divided, partially sub-divided and undivided ranches in the Kibwezi and Machakos districts of Kenya.

Course work at a University level provides me with skills to aid CCFK in its objectives of working with communities in finding solutions to human/wildlife conflicts. All this with the aim of giving the cheetah a fighting chance in its race against possible extinction. I am deeply indebted to Mary Wykstra, project coordinator of CCFK and to CCF for making my dream possible by supporting me financially and materially. I say "asante sana" to all our sponsors and supporters. Thank you.



Left: Cosmas and his course mates during field work in Ethiopia.

Right: Laila Bahaa-el-din and Sarah Brooke at the market.



A Month of Volunteering with CCF-K By Laila Bahaa-el-din

As a recent graduate in zoology from the University of Nottingham, I was keen to explore East Africa and gain experience in the world of conservation. The first few days with CCFK were spent in Nairobi, where I got to know Mary, the CCF Kenya Programme Coordinator and Research Assistants, Cosmas and Sarah. On my first day we had a staff meeting to assure everyone was aware of the tasks and the schedule for the coming weeks. My tasks included working on the CCF-K webpage, the newsletter and data entry. I was happy to have tasks to dig my teeth into before heading to the field.

On two occasions, Sarah and I went to Salama to track the collared cheetah that CCFK monitors. The cheetah wears a radio collar which is located using a receiver by sitting on the vehicle and listening for the signal. The aim is not to see the cheetah, but identify her whereabouts. On both occasions we found her signal. On the first two day tracking session a cheetah family did not move during the night. On the second session we bumped into the local ranger who saw seven cheetahs that morning. He took us to the location where we got out of the car and used the tracking equipment for a direction. We had a loud clear signal in the valley just next to us. Then, the ranger spotted a cheetah lying under a tree about 200m away. We moved around to get a better view, but the cheetahs were aware of our presence and remained hidden. After the ranger left, Sarah and I sat on the car to get the best view possible. Within a few minutes, out came a young cheetah to sit in the sun, followed closely by four or five others. We observed through binoculars, mesmerized by this cheetah family going about their daily business. The sun was shining as we sat between two hills, not another person in sight. We made sure we weren't disturbing the cheetahs in any way, and just watched. After a couple of hours, the collared cheetah moved over the hill, followed by her almost grown-up cubs. It was a morning I won't forget for a while.

The afternoon in Salama was spent taking a conflict report at a farm quite close to where we had been sitting with the cheetahs. Seven cheetahs had been through this farmer's property and killed four animals. We inspected the carcasses, then Sarah asked the farmer some questions about the attacks and advised him on herding techniques and boma design (secure place for livestock). I'm leaving in a few days and am trying to complete all my work before my departure. I arrived asking for the full experience of running a conservation project and I really feel I have, from the field, to the human relations, to the computer. Mary, Sarah and Cosmas have been good to me.



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