

# CHEETAH STRIDES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND



CHEETAH VIEW

BIOMASS TRAINING

PATHWAYS NA

INMATES RELEASED



Photo by Mark Frolick



**Cheetah**  
CONSERVATION FUND  
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HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

**in the wild.**

# NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



The beginning of a new year always brings lots of excitement about what lies ahead, and 2017 is already shaping up to bring us an amazing time. This year certainly kicked off with a bang! A study by Dr. Sarah Durant from the London Zoological Society, Panthera, and Wildlife Conservation Society and co-authored by myself, our staff geneticist Dr. Anne Schmidt-Kuentzel, and 51 of our cheetah researcher associates on the world's dwindling cheetah population was published Dec. 26 in *Proceeding of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS, see story p. 3)*. The story was covered by the Associated Press, BBC, and Reuters, which resulted in many other stories. In addition to print, radio and online media, I personally gave interviews with major television news networks in the UK, France, and Germany via Skype. Many of the other co-authors also were flooded with media requests.

If that was not enough to proclaim 2017 as the year of the cheetah, on Jan. 4, a second major international story broke – the United Arab Emirates passed its long-proposed ban on exotic pets, with cheetahs being among the nation's favorites – and I was again back on call, providing commentary and insight for media. With all this attention, the time is right to share our work with your friends, family and co-workers. You can help by directing them to our website or letting them borrow this issue of *Cheetah Strides* after you are finished reading it. People's ears have been perked, now is the time to tell our story.

In between interviews (or so it seems), I've been working diligently on a new comprehensive textbook, titled *Biology and Conservation of Cheetahs*. There are 60 collaborative cheetah researchers working to complete this project, most of whom share CCF's research and conservation objectives. The book will be published later this year by Elsevier, with myself, Dr. Anne Schmidt-Kuntzel and Dr. Lorraine Bowden as co-editors. More details will come once our manuscript has been finalized and the production process gets underway.

There hasn't been a dull moment here in Namibia. We welcomed a new litter of Livestock Guarding Dog puppies just before Christmas, and we've had lots of movement with our cheetahs in the sanctuary. Our eight growing orphaned cubs were placed into a larger area. In the next few months, they will move to the next stage in the re-wilding process. We also relocated three adult males from CCF to Erindi Private Game Reserve, where we will continue to monitor their progress.

It's summer here, and this is when we host Namibian interns from the University of Namibia and the Namibia University of Science and Technology. It's wonderful having all their energy and enthusiasm on our campus. We are so proud of our Namibian students!

It seems like I just got back to Namibia from my last trip to the U.S., and here I am getting ready to pack and return! I am looking forward to seeing my dear cheetah friends and very excited about the prospect of making some new ones.

All my best,

Dr. Laurie Marker  
Founder & Executive Director

## SAVE THE DATE:

### DR. MARKER'S USA SPRING TOUR

**New York**  
NYC  
March 24-25

**Ithaca, Cornell University**  
March 26-30

**Georgia**  
Atlanta  
April 1-2

**Florida**  
Jacksonville  
April 3-4

**Ohio**  
Cincinnati, Cincinnati Zoo  
April 5-6

**Washington**  
Seattle  
April 8

**Oregon**  
Portland  
April 9-10

**Arizona**  
Tucson  
April 11-12

**California**  
Bay Area  
April 13-20 & April 28-30

**Palm Springs**  
April 21-23

**Washington, DC**  
April 24-26

**New Jersey**  
Jersey City  
April 27

For more info and to see the updated schedule.  
[www.cheetah.org/events/](http://www.cheetah.org/events/)

## ANNOUNCING PATHWAYS AFRICA 2018: NAMIBIA



Pathways Africa is a conservation conference held every other year, with its last conference held in Kenya in 2016. Pathways brings together scientists, visionary wildlife managers, leaders in conservation policy, students and academics from all around the world to exchange ideas and forge frontiers. Its sixth annual meeting “Living with Wildlife”, will take place Jan. 8 – 11, 2018, in Windhoek, Namibia and is open to the public. Together with Colorado State University, CCF will co-host the event, in cooperation with the Large Carnivore Association of Namibia (LCMAN) and the Namibian Nature Foundation.

Pathways will also offer a three-day training course (Jan. 6-8) in conjunction with the conference to improve leadership skills and provide information on how to engage entire communities in conservation efforts. Demonstrations of technologies that aid in species monitoring and workshops on mitigating conflict will be offered to participants.

The 2018 conference will be only the second time Pathways has been open to countries outside of Africa, bringing an estimated 250 people from almost 30 different countries to “The Cheetah Capital of the World.” Because it will be held in Windhoek, many of CCF’s staff and interns will be able to attend, with several giving presentations.

“We are thrilled to be co-hosting the event,” said Dr. Laurie Marker. “Pathways is aptly named, as we will be bringing so many new people to Namibia to show them the ways we have had success with our conservation strategies. From our conservancies, to our conflict mitigation efforts, we are eager to share our knowledge with those who implement conservation strategies for the benefit of the cheetah, other large carnivore species, and human beings.” For more information, visit <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/pathways-africa/>.

Presently, Dr. Laurie Marker also serves as Chair of LCMAN.

## CHEETAH VIEW LODGE TO OPEN IN JUNE

If all remains on track, CCF’s newest overnight guest accommodation, the Cheetah View Lodge, will be ready to accept bookings by (or around) June 1, 2017. The new lodge has five suites, all with private baths. One of the suites is a little larger than the others and has a sleeper sofa, so it is known as “The Family Room,” because it can host a family. The suites are decorated in a casually elegant African style that is on par with or surpasses other lodgings in the region. But its proximity to the CCF Centre and Cheetah Sanctuary will ensure it is a popular accommodation among visitors who wish to see cheetahs in their natural environment.

In addition to cheetahs, guests many also see other African species that live on CCF’s lands. The new Lodge boasts a spectacular view of the Waterberg Plateau, and its private dining room overlooks a waterhole that draws baboons, jackals, oryx, steenbok, and a variety of birds. Guests will be enchanted by scenery that is straight “Out of Africa” while enjoying their meals, which will be prepared, quite literally, from “farm to table.” Many of the vegetables and meats served to guests will come from CCF’s model farm (grown with organic methods), and the Feta and Chevre cheeses and ice cream will be made by CCF’s onsite Dancing Goat Creamery.



photo top: Illustrating the theme of the 2018 Pathways conference “Living with Wildlife” an oryx on the conservancy at CCF in Otjiwarongo  
bottom photo: Work in progress, CCF’s new Cheetah View Lodge nears completion, scheduled to open this year..

## CHEETAHS AND CCF MAKE WORLDWIDE HEADLINES

On December 26, 2016, a landmark study by Dr. Sarah Durant, co-authored by CCF's Dr. Laurie Marker, Dr. Anne-Schmidt-Kuentzel and 51 other researchers, was published in the scientific journal, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*. *Disappearing spots: The global decline of the cheetah and what it means for conservation* produced major coverage in news outlets around the world because of its shocking findings: the total number of adult cheetah in the wild was projected to be just under 7,100. While the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List in 2015 published the same number, the release of this PNAS study had the impact of a bomb exploding in the mainstream press. Hundreds of international media outlets, including broadcast and cable television networks, national, regional and local newspapers, radio, Internet news sites and blogs, covered this important story.



CCF began receiving requests for comment by Dr. Marker immediately, and they continued rolling in over the course of the week that followed. On the day that the story hit, Dr. Marker gave interviews to several international television broadcasters from Namibia using Skype. The outlets included BBC World News and Sky News (UK), Deutsche Well (Germany), and France 24 (France). On Dec. 27, Dr. Marker gave an interview to Agence France Presse (AFP), the leading newswire service in Europe. The story containing her quotes was published in dozens of outlets across Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Also on Dec. 27, representatives of CCF Australia were interviewed for a report airing on ABC-TV, their 24-hour news channel. Canadian broadcasters, CNN, and many local television news stations also covered the story.

"The study is sounding a loud warning cry," said Dr. Laurie Marker. "It is the result of a range wide

program that brought together cheetah researchers from throughout the species' remaining range to compile the best data on habitat and threats facing this iconic big cat."

Close to 70% of the remaining cheetah population is found outside of protected areas, with about 50% of the population found in southern African countries. These populations fall into 'ecological traps' as human wildlife conflict and habitat fragmentation occurs and higher extinction rates occur outside of protected areas. "For instance in Zimbabwe, an 85% decline of the population has occurred in the past 15 years due to land redistribution and political instability," said Marker.

"Cheetahs can reduce in numbers very drastically over a short period, as predators are more likely to be targeted and removed than smaller species," said Dr. Anne-Schmidt-Kuentzel, CCF's Research Geneticist and Assistant Director of Animal Health and Research and co-author of the paper.

In Namibia, cheetah conservation efforts are embraced by the government and the local populace. This has set the stage for the possibility of a cheetah comeback. Namibia has approximately one-third of the world's population, earning it the nickname, "Cheetah Capital of the World".

## RE-WILDING: CUBS AND COALITIONS EIGHT IS ENOUGH

On December 31, 2016, CCF moved its eight, growing orphan cheetah cubs into larger enclosures. The five female and three male cheetahs have all almost doubled in size since their arrival! The three cubs from re-wilded cheetah Zinzi, killed by a leopard in August are now juveniles at 16 months-old and have reached about 75% of their full adult size. The other five cubs from the wild mother who was killed in August, are now approximately one-year-old. Because all are growing by cheetah leaps and bounds, they were moved to a place where they could run faster and spread out a bit. Their new pens are quite large, coming in at almost 10 acres.

The task of moving the cubs began with preparing several crates large enough to hold the cats while they were transferred between their old and new homes. Met by cheetah chirps and growls from the cubs who noticed the teams' arrival, cheetahs have a natural desire to get away from people. Because the box is dark their instinct is to run inside, then we close the doors.

The cheetah cubs were mostly still and calm during the drive. At the destination, a similar process was

followed; the crates were placed on the ground and lined up. The doors were opened and “woosh!” The cheetahs darted out of the crates and ran quickly to the edges of the new enclosure to scope out their new home.

“We are amazed by how well all of the orphans are doing. They are as wild as they can be, which is the way we want them to be, with as little exposure to humans as possible. Their new enclosure is ‘in the bush’ and away from everything. They look great and they are growing so quickly,” said Dr. Marker. “All have been sponsored and named by cheetah friends, except one. We don’t get this opportunity that often, thankfully, but please speak up if you would like to be an adoptive cheetah parent!”

### INMATES RELEASED

As of 2017, CCF has reintroduced a total of 17 cheetahs into Erindi Private Game Reserve. The most recent additions are a coalition of three males affectionately known as “The Inmates,” – Dexter, Donner and Alcatraz. Before Erindi, the trio lived at CCF. They will be moving through the next stages of the re-wilding program at Erindi. Currently they are in a 10-acre enclosure in the middle of the reserve where they will eventually be released at the end of February. CCF scientists will then follow their progress and monitor them as part of ongoing research. If things go as planned, this cheetah coalition will hunt together, protect each other, and defend their territory against other cheetahs and predators.



“The Inmates” flee the scene of their release. Above you can see two of them through the bush and their release crates to the right. For a better view, go to our YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/j0GSDg4QXhE> to watch a short video.

*photos opposite page: left: Steven Shpall - CCF ambassador cheetahs  
Photos this page: above: Steven Lambright - cheetah release in Erindi  
right: Matti Nghikembua with the plants in the newly constructed greenhouse*

## FARM TO TABLE

### CCF’s Great Greenhouse

“Our greenhouse is going great guns!” said Matti Nghikembua, Senior Ecologist, and Garden Supervisor. “We are harvesting lots of food, about 35 pounds a day. Right now we have oodles of squash and cucumbers - staples at CCF - plus a variety of herbs. We are still trying to get some melons going. Our tomatoes are growing nicely and they will soon be ready for harvest. We are hoping they’ll coincide with our eggplant, which will also soon be ready.”



Dr. Marker noted the greenhouse has been a great boon to the organization’s ability to properly care for vegetarian guests, like the recent visiting VIP delegation from TIKA, the Turkish relief agency that supported CCF with a new dog enclosure.

“When our TIKA guests were here, we were able to serve them a lovely lunch of vegetarian staples fresh from our garden. Our chef made a rice-stuffed squash dish with wild mushrooms that was just heavenly, and for dessert, we enjoyed goat milk ice cream made by our creamery in four flavors -- berry, cinnamon, chocolate and vanilla.

### Nice Namibian Bees

When most people think of bees, they imagine angry, stinging insects. But the bees in CCF’s Apiary are anything but.

“Our bee program is young. It is coming along well, but we have just one hive and our bees are young and delicate. There is not a lot of natural food for them to eat, so we put out plates of sugar water in the winter. We say they are nice bees because they do not sting and they seem very grateful for our support,” said Dr. Marker. “We are planning a harvest soon and we are very excited. Despite the harsh conditions here, the honey we have sampled thus far has been delicious.”

To sponsor a Livestock Guarding Dog visit [www.cheetah.org](http://www.cheetah.org) and click DONATE. You can also choose to sponsor one of CCF’s non-releaseable resident cheetahs.

## HABITAT RESTORATION BIOMASS TECHNOLOGY DEMO CENTER



The Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) has completed initial construction of a new facility at its main campus, the Biomass Technology Demonstration Centre (BTDC), to catalyze the launch of a biomass industry in Namibia. With a massive, sustainable supply of invasive thorn bush, central Namibia is an ideal location to demonstrate the full economic potential of biomass and to research harvest methodologies that can ultimately restore habitat. Bringing commercial enterprises to central Namibia will have many benefits, among them creating much needed employment, generating electricity, restoring wildlife habitat and improving farmland productivity.

The BTDC will research a wide range of biomass technologies with an emphasis on those capable of generating sustained economic enterprises. Initial technology will include manufacturing of briquette logs, charcoal hex logs, lump charcoal, and for pyrolysis-based electrical generation. Phase two will include other promising technology such as wood pellet production, alternative chipping power trains, and Stirling engines.

“The BTDC is taking shape,” said Dr. Bruce Brewer, CCF General Manager. “While we do not have a biomass-fueled generator yet, the diesel genset is in place and sending power back to the CCF main campus. The carbonizing kiln we installed to use in the production of Bushblok’s charcoal hex logs is turning out fuel logs that are 50% lighter and therefore, much more marketable. It has been working well and we are stockpiling product for sales later in the year.”

Other forms of renewable energy technologies will also be evaluated at the BTDC. This will include photo voltaic (solar) systems, alternative battery and energy storage systems, and micro-grid deployments. It is likely that biomass based electricity and solar electricity will both be important sources of energy

for rural biomass industry, so the BTDC will investigate how to best implement small grids in rural areas. CCF is currently looking for support in its effort to purchase the solar panels.

CCF believes the BTDC will attract entrepreneurs, existing companies, international grant foundations, NGOs, and investors from all over the world. With millions of hectares of invasive bush, biomass could become a regional economic powerhouse, creating much needed jobs, new tax revenue, and improving livelihoods.

CCF’s Bushblok production facility is in Otjiwarongo, about 40 minutes from CCF’s Centre and the BTDC. But plans are to move the factory to the Centre, so all biomass activities are closely quartered, for economies of scale and for research purposes.

“Electricians are in the process of wiring up the Bushblok production facility, and we will begin installing an extrusion press line at the CCF Centre’s BTDC in early March 2017, with the first products coming off the line by May,” added Brewer.

## ILLEGAL TRAFFICKING HORN OF AFRICA-WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT NETWORK

The Horn of Africa has emerged as a region for wildlife crime both as a source and a transit route for illicit wildlife products and live animals, but especially the cheetah. CCF first became actively involved with the illegal taking of live cheetahs in November 2005, when it arranged for the confiscation of two extremely unhealthy cheetah cubs held in ropes outside a restaurant in Ethiopia. Since then, CCF has monitored the illegal trade, which is estimated to involve as many as 300 cubs each year being smuggled through the Horn of Africa into the Arabian Peninsula, where they are destined for the illegal exotic pet trade. This subject was a topic at the 4th Steering Committee Meeting of the Horn of Africa–Wildlife Enforcement Network (HA-WEN) held December 7 and 8, 2016, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Following the meeting, a three-day workshop brought together a small group of specialists to develop an action plan to combat the cheetah problem.

Dr. Laurie Marker and Patricia Tricorache represented CCF at the meeting, which was organized by the Horn of Africa–Regional Environment Centre and Network in collaboration with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority. In addition to government representatives from several of the

countries in the Horn, the meeting brought together experts from IUCN, Colorado State University, IFAW, and the Born Free Foundation's Border Point Project, DECAN Djibouti.



The group discussed creating a Wildlife Conservation Plan to protect animals in the Horn. One of the goals was to determine how local indigenous populations can play a greater role in preventing wildlife crimes. A second goal was to develop rapid response protocols for care of the cubs when confiscations occur. Plans around cross border cooperation were also developed.

"We were all overwhelmed learning what a big problem this is," said Dr. Marker. "But knowing there are many of us with common objectives who are willing to work together on the solution gives us hope."

HA-WEN members currently consist of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda. Increasing evidence shows that there is widespread trafficking of cheetahs in the Horn of Africa, with most animals destined for countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

## COMING TO ORDER THE GWL MEETING

CCF has been actively working in the Greater Waterberg Landscape (GWL) for the past 15 years, a large geographic consisting of the commercial Waterberg conservancy, four communal conservancies (African wild dog, Ozonahi, Otjituu, Okamatapati), Waterberg Plateau National Park and the affirmative action and re-settled farmers. The main objective of CCF's GWL program is to share vitally needed information with the communal farmers in the four key communal conservancies, who raise livestock (especially cattle), as their main source of income. In Namibia, a conservancy is an open system which means both livestock and wildlife can move freely across a wide area. People

share responsibility for the wildlife, so everyone who lives within the conservancies takes part.

The 1st GWL meeting of 2017 was held Feb. 6, 2017 at CCF in the new large group instruction room inside the Visitor Centre. The idea behind this special meeting was to bring together not only the committee members of the GWL, which is made up of people from each area of the GWL, but to also invite all key stakeholders. There were 20 people in attendance, from conservancy managers and committee members to representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and Namibia University of Science and Technology.

At the meeting, research conducted by CCF and Dr. David Joulbert was presented. In addition, the group looked back on the first year of the GWL project to determine successes and areas for improvement. Successes include the building of four conservancy offices donated by B2 Gold Mining Corp. and CCF, as well as the participation of conservancy members in CCF, MET and Namibian Development Trust's training courses. The takeaway of this analysis was to look at how the group could move forward to create benefits for all who reside in the GWL.



"We looked at important dates that are coming up such as the denning season for the wild dogs, MET training and harvesting of medicinal plants," said Dr. Louisa Richmond-Coggan, CCF's Ecology Manager. "The brain storming session in the afternoon produced multiple ideas on income generation and community development such as the GWL becoming a UNESCO Man and Biosphere reserve. All the attendees agreed that it was a worthwhile meeting that set a positive tone for the remainder of 2017."

**Keep up with the cheetahs by following  
CCF's social media.**

**Find us @CCFCheetah on Facebook,  
Twitter, Instagram, & Pinterest.**

*photo opposite page: Aerial View of the new Biomass Technology  
Demonstration Centre*

*photos this page: top: Illegal trafficking meeting in Ethiopia  
bottom: Greater Waterberg Landscape meeting group at CCF's Visitor Centre*



### BOW WOW! A HOLIDAY GIFT

CCF received a great Christmas present this year, nine healthy puppies from our female Karibib! These future guardians are now eight months-old and are growing quickly. They love playing with each other and spending time with their new friends in the goat pen. These puppies will go out to their new farms at 10 weeks of age and work to protect Namibian farmers' livestock from predation. Most farmers using a LGD report an 80% or higher reduction in livestock losses, so they are exceptionally eager to meet these new employees.



### THIS DOG'S LIFE

Look how CCF's Livestock Guarding Dog Ambassador Hercules has grown! Being the litter's lone survivor has not stunted his growth. Here he is sitting next to his mom Isha.

### COVER PHOTO:

The photo on the front cover was taken by Mark Frolick at the Cincinnati Zoo's breeding facility. Mark submitted his photos during our photo cover contest from issue 12 of Cheetah Strides. We had so many great submissions during our open call that we made an online gallery to view select works from everyone. Visit [cheetah.org/gallery/cheetah-strides-cover-photo-contest/](http://cheetah.org/gallery/cheetah-strides-cover-photo-contest/) to see more.

