



CCF is a Namibian non-profit incorporated association dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems.

RESEARCH

CONSERVATION

EDUCATION

cheetah.org



Dr. Laurie Marker, Founder and Executive Director of Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), is a conservation biologist and research scientist, and recognized as one of the world's leading experts on the cheetah. Dr. Marker has pioneered research, developed conservation models and cooperative alliances, and is credited with stabilizing the largest remaining population of wild cheetah in Namibia. Under her leadership since 1990, CCF has grown into a world-class research, education and conservation institution situated near Otjiwarongo, Namibia, on a 158,000-acre integrated wild life-livestock reserve and Model Farm. Since 2018, Dr. Marker has been working in Somaliland to stop the Illegal Wildlife Pet Trade (IWT) and has developed the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Center (CRCC) in the region of Geed-Deeble. This new facility cares for cheetahs confiscated from the Illegal Wildlife Trade. In addition, Dr. Marker and CCF were instrumental in the reintroduction of eight cheetahs to India by training Indian Project Cheetah team members and facilitating the transfer of the animals gifted by Namibia.

Dr. Laurie Marker

CCF Founder and Executive Director

Dr. Marker grew up with animals. She rode horses from four years of age, was a veterinary technician and had her own dairy goat herd and was a goat judge. Her first University studies were in agriculture, enology and viticulture at Napa College and University of California at Davis, and pioneered the Oregon Wine Industry. In 1974, Dr. Marker began working with cheetahs at Oregon's Wildlife Safari (1974-1988). While there, she developed one of the most successful captive cheetah breeding programs in the world and initiated a groundbreaking research project that brought her to Namibia for the first time in 1977. She hypothesized that a captive-born cheetah could be taught to hunt, and tested this theory with Khayam, a cheetah she hand raised from a small cub. Dr. Marker successfully taught Khayam to hunt, but during her time in Namibia, she learned that livestock farmers were killing hundreds of cheetahs each year as a perceived threat to their livestock and livelihoods. She returned to the USA and developed the International Cheetah Studbook, a registry of all cheetahs in captivity, to assist with captive management of the species and collaborated in research to show that the cheetah greatly lacked genetic diversity.

Already a species in peril due to habitat loss and lack of genetic diversity, the actions of Namibia's livestock farmers were driving the cheetah even closer toward extinction at an accelerated pace. Dr. Marker moved to Washington, DC as the Executive Director of the New Opportunities in Animal Health Sciences (NOAHS) Center at the Smithsonian's National Zoo (1988-1991), and searched for an organization to champion the cheetah. Between 1977 and 1990, she traveled back and forth to Namibia and other cheetah range countries, gathering data and networking with conservation biologists and researchers studying cheetahs and other predators.

In 1990, after an exhaustive but fruitless search for someone to take the lead on saving the species, Dr. Marker set up the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), sold her worldly belongings, and moved to Namibia in order to dedicate her life to supporting the long-term survival of the cheetah in the wild.

Her research in Namibia was the first of its kind in situ research into cheetah ecology, biology, demographics, and genetics. She worked outside protected areas, specifically with the livestock farmers who were living with and killing cheetahs. Using the findings of her research, she began developing conservation strategies to mitigate the conflict.

Living in a borrowed farmhouse outside of Otjiwarongo, for the first couple of years Dr. Marker drove door-to-door in an old Land Rover and surveyed rural farmers about cheetahs and their impact on the livestock farming industry. These early interactions inspired Dr. Marker to develop the highly effective, non-lethal predator control methods that CCF employs today. Her innovative strategies that balance the needs of people and wildlife sharing land have not only stabilized the cheetah population in Namibia, but have also helped mitigate human-wildlife conflict with large carnivore species in many regions around the world. In 1994, she introduced Livestock Guarding Dogs to Namibia. This program has grown to be one of the most successful of CCF's programs, with over 750 Kangal and Anatolian Shepherd Dogs being bred and placed with rural farmer's livestock, allowing for an 80-100% decrease in livestock loss.

Dr. Marker's rigorous scientific research and holistic conservation programs, that consider all stakeholders, have gained her the respect of an entire nation. The vital and ground breaking information she has assembled on cheetah health, reproduction, ecology, and genetics has proven invaluable in the management of both wild and captive cheetah populations around the world.

In 1994, Dr. Marker moved to CCF's Field Research and Education Centre, a working livestock farm which today is over 158,000 acres, a private game reserve and model farm, within the Waterberg Conservancy and the Greater Waterberg Landscape. Dr. Marker has worked through the cheetah's range and helped develop programs in many countries and has trained conservation scientists from most cheetah range countries.

Currently, Dr. Marker is working actively in Somaliland to stop the Illegal Wildlife Pet Trade in live cheetah cubs from the Horn of Africa to the Middle East. She has created the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Center (CRCC) in Geed-Deeble for animals confiscated by the government of Somaliland and is developing strategies in Somaliland and Ethiopia to address the root causes of threats to cheetahs in the Horn of Africa region.

Most recently, she has facilitated the introduction of eight chee-

tahs gifted from Namibia to India as part of Project Cheetah to reintroduce the species to India after being extinct for over 75 years.

Dr. Marker earned her DPhil in Zoology from the University of Oxford, WildCRU in the United Kingdom. In 2013, she was named an A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. She has published more than 150 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals, several book chapters and four books, including being the lead editor of *Cheetahs: Biology and Conservation*, a comprehensive textbook on cheetahs

Dr. Marker is the Chair of the Large Carnivore Management Network, a core member of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group, resides on the Scientific Committee of both Panthera and the Mountain Lion Foundation. Dr. Marker has been the recipient of many awards and was featured by TIME Magazine as a Hero for the Planet. She was also featured in the Smithsonian, National Geographic, Discover and The New York Times, and appeared on numerous television shows, including The Tonight Show, Good Morning America, The Charlie Rose Show and the Today Show. In 2021, Dr. Marker became a founding Trustee of the Arabian Leopard Fund, an organization working to return wild leopard and cheetah populations to Saudi Arabia.

AWARDS

2020 Explorer's Club President's Award for Conservation
2015 Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation
2015 E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Technology Pioneer Award
2015 Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal Award
2013 International Conservation Caucus Foundation Good Steward Award
2013 Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large, Cornell University
2013 Distinguished Alumni, Eastern Oregon State University
2011 Rainer Arnhold Fellow
2010 The Explorers Club Lowell Thomas Award
2010 Indianapolis Prize Finalist
2010 Tyler Prize for the Environmental Achievement Laureate
2009 BBC World Challenge Finalist
2009 St Andrews Prize for the Environment Finalist
2009 International Wildlife Film Festival Lifetime Achievement Award
2008 Tech Museum Intel Environmental Award
2008 San Diego Zoo Lifetime Achievement Conservation Award

2008 Society of Women Geographers' Gold Medal
2008 Indianapolis Prize Finalist
2005 Living Desert Tracks in the Sand - Conservationist of the Year
2003 Chevron-Texaco Conservationist of the Year
2002 Audi Terra Nova Awards Finalist, Southern Africa
2001 Humanitarian of the Year, Marin County Humane Society
2001 Paul Harris Fellowship, Rotary Club International, Windhoek, Namibia
2000 Burrows Conservation Award, Cincinnati Zoo
2000 Hero for the Planet, Time Magazine
1997 Distinguished Leadership Award, American Biographical Institute
1992 Conservationist of the Year, African Safari Club, Washington, DC
1988 White Rose Award, Oregon's Top Ten Women
1985 Outstanding Young Women of America
1981 Oregon's Young Careerist, Business and Professional Women, Southern Oregon Division



Dr. Laurie Marker speaking at an event in Somaliland



Dr. Laurie Marker caring for orphaned cheetahs confiscated from the illegal pet trade in Somaliland