

ISSUE N^o
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1^a 2022

CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



IN THIS ISSUE:

Research

Release Study

Camera Traps

Red Book





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VISIT

CCF's Research and Education Centre
Otjiwarongo, Namibia
open 364 days per year
www.cheetahecolodge.com

CCF's Headquarters USA

200 Daingerfield Rd.
Suite 200
Alexandria, VA. 22314
Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 5:00 pm
www.cheetah.org

Keep up with the cheetahs on social media!



@CCFCheetah

VOLUNTEER

Contact us to learn more about volunteering in the United States to help save the cheetah across its range in Africa.
volunteer@cheetah.org

KEY DATES

2022 EVENTS - KEEP THE WILD, WILD.

IN PERSON

SAVE THE DATE

EXPLORERS CLUB ANNUAL DINNER

DR. LAURIE MARKER - PRESIDENT'S AWARD FOR CONSERVATION
APRIL 23, 2022

ONLINE

WCN'S WILDLIFE CONSERVATION EXPO

APRIL 23, 2022

Contact donations@cheetah.org to become an event sponsor for these or future events.

EVENT SPONSORS

With special thanks to the following Conservation Circle members whose support help make Dr. Marker's Spring Tour Possible:

BROWN & BROWN INSURANCE
CHANTECAILLE
MYUS
NASHVILLE ZOO
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK
ZAWADI DECOR

Check the events page for upcoming events.

OTHER EVENTS

IN PERSON

A HEART OF GOLD EVENT

MARCH 27

ONLINE

VIRTUAL ENCOUNTER WITH GIRAFFE AT THE BRONX ZOO

JUNE 13, 2022

CALL FOR GIRAFFE ART

JUNE 14 - 20, 2022

GIRAFFE DAY

JUNE 21, 2022



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



I am writing to you from Somaliland where we are working in the field conducting community surveys. We want to learn more about community attitudes toward wildlife with a focus on predators. We are studying the potential capacity to develop community-based natural resource management around potential protected areas. In addition, we are assessing habitat and placing camera traps in areas where cheetahs have been reported, to better understand human wildlife conflict. These are the areas where cheetah confiscations have occurred in the past so we're trying to learn more about any livestock predation issues. We need to discover how much of the illegal trade is tied into conflict and also get information on potential trafficking routes.

Two days into our rough cross-country travels, a group of fifteen cheetah cubs ranging in age from a few weeks to a few months old were confiscated. Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) and Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) veterinary teams arrived late at night and took possession of the cubs near Burao. The cubs were all dehydrated, extremely hungry, and weak. Another team from CCF met the group and helped take the cubs safely back to our Cheetah Safe Houses in Hargeisa. Unfortunately, two of the cubs died shortly after arriving and the other cubs are not guaranteed to survive.

Our work in Namibia has also been going full speed with camera trapping and detection dog surveys in eastern Namibia and the continuation of rehabilitation and release of cheetahs back into the wild. During a recent trip to Erindi Game Reserve, we prepared five male cheetahs for final release into the wild, replacing their satellite collars while conducting health assessments. We also hosted a high-level delegation from India, who are looking to reintroduce cheetahs back into their country.

I hope you enjoy the stories in this issue of Cheetah Strides. We are working to bring the best techniques to mitigate human-wildlife conflict, restore the cheetah's habitat and end the trafficking of cheetah cubs into the illegal pet market. With your support we are saving the cheetah in the wild.

Laurie Marker | Dr. Laurie Marker
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

in the wild.



PARTNERSHIPS TO STUDY PREDATORS LARGE CARNIVORE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF NAMIBIA

Despite COVID restrictions for gatherings, the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia (LCMAN) held three ordinary meetings during 2021 and the Annual General Meeting was held at the end of November. All the meetings were held virtually via ZOOM. It was beneficial to members that are located in remote areas where distance and terrain make it difficult to attend in person meetings. The virtual meetings allowed these members to be more active this year.

Dr. Laurie Marker, the LCMAN Chair, and Lauren Pfeiffer, Dr. Marker's Personal Assistant and LCMAN secretariat, facilitated the meetings. Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) Assistant Director of Ecological Research, Dr. Bogdan Cristescu, also an active member with LCMAN, joined the association meetings this year along with our PhD candidates, Stijn Verschueren and Tim Hoffman. At each meeting, member organizations shared their technical reports from their organizations.

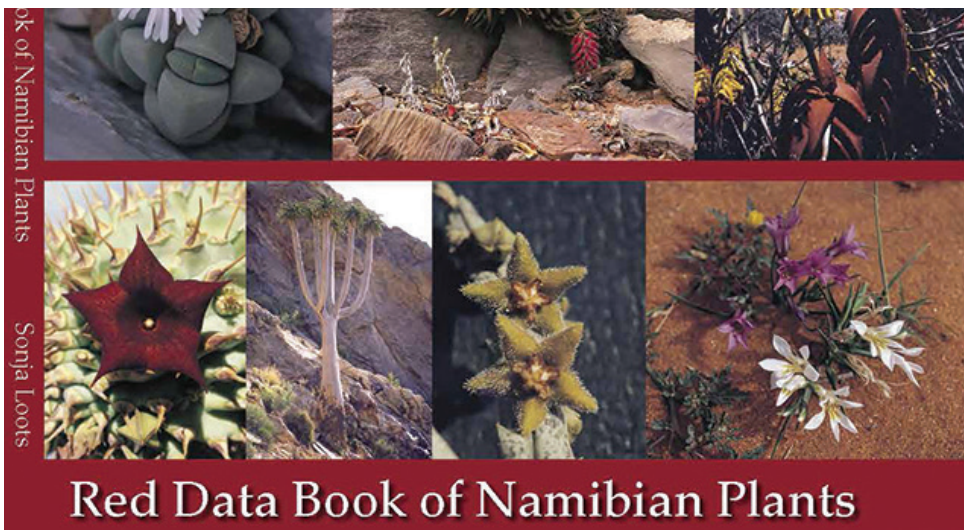
In 2022, LCMAN will be combining their efforts with Namibia's Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) into a new Carnivore Working Group and will be hosted within the Namibian Chamber of the Environment (NCE) The Carnivore Working Group will be open for new participants in 2022 and welcome those interested in carnivore conservation and management in Namibia.

DEVELOPING A RED DATA BOOK FOR CARNIVORES IN NAMIBIA

The Red Data Book or IUCN Red List is the most comprehensive collection of wildlife population data in the world. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was created in 1948 with the goal to maintain complete records on species population, track population declines and assign conservation status based on a universally recognized set of criteria. There is a worldwide listing available online at www.iucnredlist.org/ that can be explored by category ie: region, species, and status.

To complement the digital database, there are also print editions that serve as “breakout” standalone pieces, more tightly focused around central themes. Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) is participating in the creation of a Namibian Carnivore Red Data Book, a comprehensive scientific book on the 34 Namibian carnivore species. The work on the Red Data Book has been an ongoing project since the idea was suggested during Namibia’s 2017 National Action Plan Symposium.

The Namibia Carnivore Red Data Book has been coordinated by LCMAN, the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE), with input from the Ministry of Environment Forestry and Tourism (MEFT). For each Namibian carnivore species, historic and current distribution maps, conservation status and current knowledge has been compiled. The book is nearing publication, with hopes that it can be launched sometime in 2022. CCF staff are active in the production of the Namibia Carnivore Red Data Book. Dr. Laurie Marker, Dr. Anne Schmidt-Kuentzel, Matti Nghikembua, Nadja Le Roux, and Lauren Pfeiffer served as co-authors of the cheetah and African wild dog chapters, while Stijn Verschueren is recognised for his contributions towards the cheetah chapter.



Photos: opposite page: LCMAN meeting on ZOOM.

This page: Cover of the Red Data Book of Namibian Plants published in 2005.

RESEARCH PAPERS PUBLISHED

CCF's resource library has grown over the past year with many interesting papers being published by scientific peer-reviewed journals. Many more are in review or pending publication. Below is a list of the most recent published papers. To read the papers in full visit: <https://cheetah.org/resource-category/scientific-papers/>

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

November 2021 - Published in Conservation Evidence Journal - *Flashing lights to deter small stock depredation in communal farmlands of Namibia*, by Verschueren S., Torres-Uribe C., Briers-Louw W. D., Fleury G., Cristescu B., and Marker L. L.

December 2021 - Published in Journal of Veterinary Behavior - *Preliminary investigation into personality and effectiveness of livestock guarding dogs in Namibia*, by McConnell I., Marker L.L., and Rooney N.

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

October 2021 - Published in Forestry - An International Journal of Forest Research, *Restoration thinning reduces bush encroachment on freehold farmlands in north-central Namibia*, by Nghikembua M., Marker L. L., Brewer B., Leinonen A., Mehtätalo L., Appiah M., Pappinen A.

February 2022 - Published in Movement Ecology - *Categorising cheetah behaviour using tri-axial accelerometer data loggers: a comparison of model resolution and data logger performance*, by McGowan, N. E., Marks, N. J., Maule, A. G., Schmidt-Küntzel A., Marker L. L., Scantlebury, D. M.,

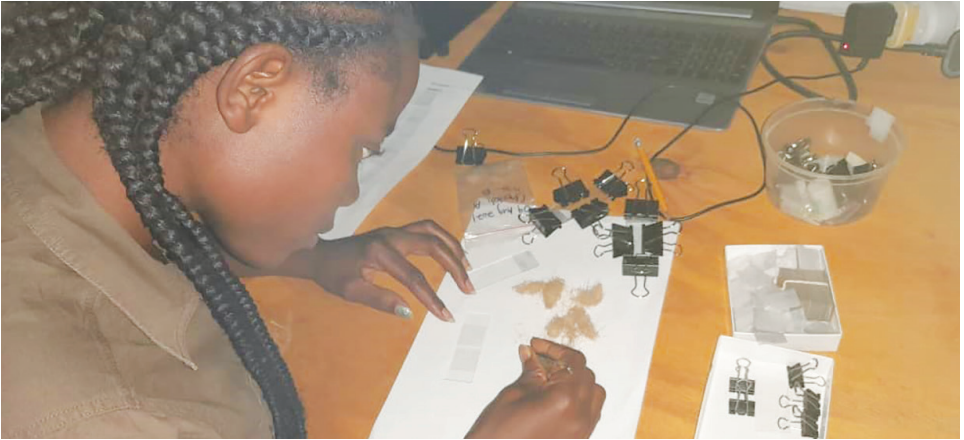
CHEETAH CARE, REHABILITATION AND RELEASE RESEARCH

December 2021 - Published in Zoo Biology - *Captive rearing of orphaned African wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) in Namibia: A case study*, by Marker L.L., Honig M., Pfeiffer L., Kuypers M., and Gervais K.

February 2022 - Published in Oryx - The International Journal of Conservation - *Recommendations for the rehabilitation and release of wild-born, captive-raised cheetahs: the importance of pre- and post-release management for optimizing survival*, by Walker, E., Verschueren S., Schmidt-Küntzel A., and Marker L.L.

February 2022 - Published in Animals - *Effect of a Probiotic Mixture in Captive Cheetahs (*Acinonyx Jubatus*) with Gastrointestinal Symptoms—A Pilot Study*, by Mangiaterra, S., Schmidt-Küntzel A., Marker L. L., Di Cerbo, A., Piccinini, R., Guadagnini, D., Turba, M. E., Berardi, S., Galosi, L., Preziuso, S., Cerquetella, M., Rossi, G.

FEATURED STAFF AT CCF



MARTHA ALFEUS

Martha is from Namibia and has worked for CCF in Namibia since 2021. She splits her time working for the ecology department to analyze CCF's game count data from 2005 to present and in the genetics department analyzing scat samples. Martha assisted in Dr. Mark Stanbeck's hornbill research project as a Project Assistant Intern in 2017. She helped to gather data at the nest boxes stationed throughout CCF's property. Martha graduated from University of Namibia (UNAM).



MICHELLE MAGLIOLO

Michelle is from South Africa and began working for CCF in Namibia this year. Her duties in the genetics lab include analyzing and sequencing the samples collected in CCF's field studies. She works in CCF's state of the art Life Technologies Conservation Genetics Laboratory, the only fully-equipped genetics lab in situ at a conservation facility in Africa. Her MSc project was a collaboration between the University of the Free State and SANBI (specifically the Pretoria National Zoological Gardens).

***This page: top:** Martha Alfeus working on hair samples **bottom:** Michelle Magliolo working on samples in the genetics lab*



CAMERA TRAPS IN SOMALILAND

During the recent field survey in Somaliland, Drs. Laurie Marker and Bogdan Cristescu, Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) Assistant Director for Ecological Research, set up camera traps at sites where cheetah activity was suspected. The team operated on the western side of the country where the roads in the more remote sections are very rugged. The areas of likely cheetah activity, prey animals are evident and CCF's team is gathering data on wildlife sightings, spoor, and any scat that they find.

Over the past few years of CCF's activity in the region have focused on areas where cheetah confiscations have occurred. The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) interventions have involved intentional illegal trafficking activity and unintentional side effects of human-wildlife conflict. Both situations result in cheetahs being removed from the wild at a very young age with no hope of ever being released. The quantity of animals currently in our care in Somaliland is a big incentive to push forward new research projects. Only when we learn how many animals remain in the wild and where they can be found will we be able to better support communities and prevent the cheetahs from getting caught in life threatening interactions with people.



The strategies for preventing human-wildlife conflict and the illegal wildlife trade are very different. In Namibia, CCF developed a set of environmental education, community outreach and holistic conservation programs that are backed by scientific research. For the work needed in Somaliland, we are using many of the successful models we have researched and adapted in Namibia. The first of two planned research trips into rural Somaliland this year will help us to build the framework of a new set of holistic programs that are custom designed for the region.

CCF's Somaliland Cheetah Safe House team members (pictured below left) Joaquin Garcia, Dr. Anahi Hidalgo, Xamse Yusuuf, and Ladan A Jama joined Drs Marker and Cristescu, and members of MoECC (Department of Wildlife) and Somali Consultant Association (SOCA) also accompanied the survey team.

CAMERA TRAPS AND CONSERVATION

Camera traps are a highly effective way to gather information with minimal disturbance to the animals that are being studied. Since 2005, CCF has used camera traps across our property in Namibia in throughout the Greater Waterberg Landscape giving a view into the natural behaviors of cheetahs and the animals that share its ecosystem. Assessing trends in abundance and density of animals is crucial to inform conservation and management strategies.

CCF places camera traps at known scent marking sites known as 'play trees'. Olfactory communication between animals plays a vital role in interactions as it allows for communication in the absence of the "message" senders. Furthermore, every mark can possess detailed information. We have found that Namibian cheetahs are highly selective when choosing sites for scent-marking, therefore selecting the right sites assists with better opportunities for camera trap photos.



Photos: Opposite page: top: Dr. Marker and CCF's team installing camera traps at a marking site in Somaliland **bottom:** Dr. Marker and CCF Staff in Somaliland.

This page: Throughout 2021, a coalition of two male cheetahs, known as the rockstars, named after Freddie Mercury and Elton John, has frequently been observed at the monitored play trees. The coalition has been sighted since August 2021, and were satellite collared and are being closely monitored. They are surviving well on CCF property.



FIFTEEN YEAR STUDY ON CHEETAH RELEASES

At Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), our conservation strategy focuses on keeping cheetahs in the wild. Over the years, CCF has developed a set of programs that have stabilized cheetah populations in Namibia. These programs are customizable for other cheetah range countries interested in supporting and bolstering their populations of cheetahs. The rehabilitation and release of wild born, orphaned cheetahs is also an important part of our efforts to save the species. But research projects that focus on the rehabilitation and release of large predators are uniquely challenging due to the types of threats that predators face in the wild. Having a multi-regional strategy for releasing cheetahs back into the wild requires the development of a repeatable and dependable protocol.

CCF has just published a compilation of the past 15 years of research on the rehabilitation and release of wild-born, orphaned cheetahs in the February 2022 edition of the journal *Oryx*, entitled *Recommendations for the rehabilitation and release of wild-born, captive-raised cheetah: the importance of pre- and post-release management for optimizing survival* by Eli Walker, Stijn Verschueren, Anne Schmidt-Kuentzel, and Laurie Marker.

The origin of this research extends back to the 1970's beginning with Dr. Marker's work in South West Africa, which is now the country of Namibia. As part of a research project with Wildlife Safari (a zoological park in Oregon, USA), she came to Africa to determine whether a captive born cheetah could learn to hunt. Her work continued in 1991 with the founding of CCF in the newly formed country of Namibia.

CCF's first goal was to keep cheetahs from being removed from the wild

Photos: This page: Dr. Marker leads a collaring and release of rehabilitated cheetahs **Opposite page: left:** Dr. Marker, Matti Nghikembua, and Jeff Corwin filming one of CCF's cheetah releases. **right:** Eli Walker, the lead author on the release paper, collars a cheetah

by working to address human-wildlife conflict within the farming community. This conflict had resulted in the loss of over 800 cheetahs per year in the 1980s. Many of the cheetahs that were dying were young and orphaned cubs whose mothers had been trapped or killed. Dr. Marker built our rescue and rehabilitation facility and began the work to put rehabilitated cheetahs back into the wild in 2008 with potential candidates. CCF's programs have grown over the years, and we've been able to address the main threats to the cheetah that mainly include livestock and wildlife management, bringing the plight of the cheetah into popular awareness in Namibia and around the world.

For cheetahs, human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss, and the illegal wildlife/pet trade are the three main threats causing the endangerment of the species across its range. Cheetahs often become injured or orphaned due to one or more of these threats. CCF often receives these animals at our rehabilitation facility in Namibia. Across the cheetah's range the species is still being removed from the wild at an alarming rate.



Because the population of cheetahs has diminished to fewer than 7,500 individuals remaining in only 9% of their historic range, the rehabilitation and release of orphaned cheetahs could be an important part of the conservation strategy. Our current research study showed high success rates of the release candidates in achieving independence (75-96%) and survival estimates were comparable to their wild counterparts. Moreover, several successful reproductive events occurred with our rehabilitated cheetahs, an important measure of release success.

Our work is directly important to global cheetah strategies in range countries where the cheetah has gone extinct in the not-too-distant past. The governments of countries like India, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia are now looking to re-establish cheetah populations. In current range countries, like Uganda, where cheetah populations have declined, there is a lot of interest in reinforcing and recovering their numbers. Planning for reintroduction in several countries is currently underway, and CCF is assisting where possible.



FEATURED VOLUNTEER *KARIN MICHALOVICOVA*

Karin Michalovicova is a student of veterinary medicine at Universitas Veterinaria et Pharmaceutica Brunensis in the Czech Republic. She has admired cheetahs as a unique species and was interested in helping to save cheetahs from illegal wildlife trade. When she found out about an opportunity to volunteer at Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) through Vets Without Borders, she reached out immediately. She worked with the vet team at CCF's Cheetah Safe House in Somaliland and learned a lot of new skills. Her duties included giving vaccinations and applying antiparasitics to the cheetahs. She also participated in giving x-rays and performing some cheetah dental cleanings under anesthesia.

She collected blood samples and helped to make improvements in the preparation of blood smears for analysis and sample preparation for Feline Coronavirus (FCoV) testing. Her duties also included working with a young leopard and a vulture that were injured and currently living at the safe house.

VISITING VETS CHOOSE TOURISM AT CCF

Tourism to Namibia has experienced a big decline over the past two years. The economic impact for the country has been devastating to the tourism industry in Namibia. In 2019, CCF welcomed more than 16k day visitors and overnight guests. During 2020 and 2021 combined we welcomed fewer than 4,500. Here are some of the people who took vacations at CCF in 2021.

Dr. Michael Thomsen, a Diplomat of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners of the Canine and Feline Practice in the USA and his wife Nikki Thomsen visited and stayed at Babson House for two nights.

Michael - "We were completely enamored watching the cheetahs run even if only at half their potential. We watched them three mornings in a row

and were never disappointed. The young cheetahs ran with so much enthusiasm, stopping on a dime in a cloud of dust and changing direction.”



Alex Shipp & Dr. Alexis Cox-Shipp and Carol “Candy” Cox visited in August and stayed at the Babson House. Alex and Alexis are big supporters of CCF. Alexis is a veterinarian from the USA who previously volunteered for CCF at our Cheetah Safe House in Somaliland. While they were at the Centre CCF hung a plaque to honor Candy’s late husband.

Alexis - “As a veterinarian, of course I was interested in cheetah rescue, rehabilitation, release when possible, and long-term care when not. But CCF is so much more. Getting to see the livestock guarding dogs ... touring the Bushblok operation, the garden that feeds CCF, the creamery, and the genetics lab was priceless! CCF is an amazing and complex study in conservation!”

Candy - “I love watching the cheetahs do their spectacular exercise run in the morning. I also love to watch the dogs set off in the mornings with their flock of goats.”



Photos: opposite page: Karin Michalovicova (second from the right) at CCF’s Cheetah Safe House in Somaliland

This page: top: The Cheetah Run at CCF photo by Michael Thomsen

bottom: left: Flowers in the garden at CCF photo by Alexis Cox **right:** The goats at CCF’s Model Farm photo by Candy Cox.

Kids

CORNER



STORIES FEATURING THE WORK OF CCF'S YOUNG SUPPORTERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.



Gloria, (top and left) really enjoys raising money for the cheetahs. Every time she makes some money, or finds change, she puts it in a “cheetah fund”! She even opted to give up her V-Day ice cream money, sending it to the cheetahs instead. We appreciate your generosity and we think you deserve a double scoop of chocolate chip!



Finn, has been raising money for cheetahs for two birthdays (in lieu of presents from his friends). Sadly, he skipped 2020 because there were no birthday parties, boo! In 2021, for his 6-year old birthday, he raised \$67. Finn has a cheetah costume that he loves to wear all year round!



Abigail and Alex held a lemonade stand to raise money for CCF. They raised \$25! Abigail also puts money aside from her allowance each week to make donations to CCF every time she accumulates \$20. Thank you Abigail and Alex!

Do you have a story about a young supporter that you would like to share? Send us an email including a short description and some photos and we will include it in an upcoming issue of *Cheetah Strides* or on our website!

Email: info@cheetah.org



LIFE AT CCF *DR. ANA AND THE KIDS*

On Christmas Eve last year one of our vets, Ana Basto with the help from our vet intern at the time, Maya Laincz, made the tough decision to complete an emergency c-section on one of our beloved dairy goats. Here are the three kids with Ana at birth (left) and now (right).

CHEETAH STRIDES CHALLENGE

EGGsellent Cheetah Strides Challenge!

Namibia's resident "bunnies" are the scrub hare and the African savanna hare. Hares like these are a bit bigger than rabbits but the eggs in Namibia are a lot bigger too! They are laid by the largest bird species in the world, the ostrich.

Namibia is in the Southern Hemisphere and the seasons are opposite to the northern, but we would love to see your best spring themed nature scene using the native species of Namibia!

How to Participate

Send your drawings to info@cheetah.org. Make sure your name and age are included!

Deadline for submission is March 31

Your info and drawings will be posted to CCF's website by April 15th!

LEARN MORE ABOUT CCF



PO Box 2496
Alexandria, VA. 22301



CCF's Environmental Education Program needs your support.
For more info on what we do and how you can help visit:
www.cheetah.org/about/what-we-do/education/