

ISSUE N°
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CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



IN THIS ISSUE:

Surveys

India

Events

LGDonkeys?





DONATE

PO Box 2496
Alexandria, VA. 22301
info@cheetah.org
1.866.909.3399
www.cheetah.org/donate

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 - **MEET DR. LAURIE MARKER AND HELP CCF KEEP THE WILD, WILD.**

IN PERSON

SAVE THE DATE

SAILING WITH CCF'S DR. LAURIE MARKER ON THE EMPRESS YACHT
SEPTEMBER 25, 2022

WILD CHEETAH, WILD PARTY IN DC
OCTOBER 1, 2022

CCF PRESENTATION WITH DR. LAURIE MARKER AT SAFARI WEST
OCTOBER 9, 2022

CHEETAH TALK AND BOOK SIGNING AT THE BOWERS MUSEUM
OCTOBER 15, 2022

WILD CHEETAH, WILD PARTY IN PORTLAND
OCTOBER 16, 2022

CCF LECTURE AT NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY
OCTOBER 20, 2022

CHEETAH TALK AND PRESENTATION AT ZOO MIAMI
OCTOBER 21, 2022

FUNDRAISER FOR CCF AT WILD WONDERS
OCTOBER 28, 2022

CHEETAH TALK AT THE PHOENIX ZOO
OCTOBER 30, 2022

Check the events page for upcoming events.

OTHER EVENTS

ONLINE

SAVE THE DATE
INTERNATIONAL CHEETAH DAY
DECEMBER 4, 2022



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



Conservation of species requires global cooperation. For more than 12 years, I have consulted with the government of India and their scientists on how to bring cheetahs back to the landscape. On Friday, September 16th, the project finally came to fruition with the gift from the Government of Namibia of eight cheetahs to India. I was honored to be supervising this historic relocation effort on

behalf of Namibia.

We chose three male and five female adult cheetahs (all between two to five-and-a-half-years-old) as the ideal candidates to make the 18-hour, transcontinental journey to India's Kuno National Park. We conducted an extensive assessment of their health, wild disposition, hunting skills, genetics and reproductive health/potential to ensure their success in India.

The cheetahs were all vaccinated, fitted with satellite collars, and kept in quarantine before the journey. The team that accompanied me included veterinarian Dr. Ana Basto and cheetah reintroduction specialists Eli Walker, and Barth Balli. To help the staff at Kuno acclimate the cheetahs, Barth has remained in India for another brief period of quarantine. He will also train and assist them in our soft release procedure. CCF's involvement in the reintroduction project will continue and evolve over time as we plan for future visits and releases.

Without our many years of research and practice in rehabilitating and releasing cheetahs, this project could not take place.

I am now launching a fundraising tour of the United States, and I am very excited to meet with friends and supporters at in-person events again. We are hosting our anchor events in DC and Oregon after a two year pause due to COVID-19. This year, we have a new name for both our gala events - *Wild Cheetah, Wild Party*. As we continue to highlight CCF's efforts to *Keep the Wild, Wild*, I hope you will join us at one of the events listed to the left.

Please enjoy the stories in our 24th issue of Cheetah Strides and find out a bit more about the work we've been doing at our Field Centres in Namibia and Somaliland. Thank you for reading and I hope to see you soon!

Dr. Laurie Marker
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

in the wild.



COUNTING WILDLIFE SPECIES AT CCF

CCF’s long-term wildlife monitoring program in Namibia continues with the assistance of volunteers and student interns. The research conducted on CCF farms helps us to understand the patterns and trends of game density, movements, demographics, and how the habitat is used. The monitoring we do involves visual road counts, categorizing vegetation types, animal densities and distributions. After the information is collected, it is later correlated with separate data collected on rainfall and temperature.



BIG FIELD AKA “LITTLE SERENGETI”

CCF’s Big Field, also known as “Little Serengeti”, is a beautiful area and very picturesque for visitors as it attracts a high number of free-ranging game species. Because of the amount of animals that call Little Serengeti home, it is where we usually take our guests for our Cheetah Drives and Sundowners. It is an uncultivated field of 1500 hectares (3700 acres) (15 km² or 5.8 acres²) and provides an ideal case study to monitor wildlife, especially prey species. The Little Serengeti contains high prey densities for cheetahs and leopards and CCF’s ecology team monitors population trends to understand who is using the land and how it is being used. The information we gather informs future landscape management strategies. CCF has been conducting monthly counts since 2004 and the field habitat has changed with wildlife numbers increasing steadily over the years.

We usually do replicate counts (three routes each sampled daily for three consecutive days, every month). The three approximate five-mile routes on the field are Chewbaaka Road, Midfield Road and Osonanga Road. The most common species are: oryx, warthog, steenbok, eland, and warthog.



WILDLIFE COUNTING AT NIGHT

When some wildlife goes to sleep at night, many more species are awake and active. At CCF, we study these species too, especially collecting information about predator/prey relationships. Some livestock predation occurs at night and the information we collect helps us to build human-wildlife conflict mitigation strategies. To gather a full range of data, we conduct night counts focusing on nocturnal species using spotlights on both sides of our vehicle. Night counts are conducted in monthly circuits. The most frequently seen species in our night counts are: scrub hare and black-backed jackal. We also see caracal, leopard, duiker, spring hare, and striped polecat. All the data from our wildlife counts is entered into our main database in FileMaker Pro 18 for further analysis.

Photos: opposite page: Top: A young cheetah, **Bottom:** Clockwise from the top: duiker, leopard, olive baboons **This page:** a black-backed jackal

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

June 2022 - Published in Journal of Veterinary Behavior - *Factors Affecting Livestock Guarding Dogs' Proximity to Their Herd and Association with Perceived Effectiveness*, by Aslam A., O'Flaherty C., Marker L. L., Rooney N., Volume 51, May 2022, Pages 43-51



ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

August 2022 - Published in Landscape Ecology, *Habitat thresholds for successful predation under landscape change*, by Atkinson, H., Cristescu, B, Marker L. L., Rooney N., (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10980-022-01512-x>

CHEETAH CARE AND HEALTH RESEARCH

June 2022 - Published in Developmental Psychobiology - *Early life experience and sex influence acoustic repertoire use in wild-born, but hand-reared, captive cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*)*, by Bouchet H., Lemasson A., Collier K., Marker L.L., Schmidt-Küntzel A., Johnston B., and Hausberger A. Volume 64, Issue 7, November 2022, e22309

June 2022 - Published in Biology - *Chronic Stress-Related Gastroenteric Pathology in Cheetah: Relation between Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factors*, by Mangiaterra S., Marker L. L., Cerquetella M., Galosi L., Marchegiani A., Gavazza A., Rossi G., 2022 Apr 15;11(4):606. doi: 10.3390/biology11040606. PMID: 35453805; PMCID: PMC9028982



FEATURED STAFF AT CCF



CHRIS WADE - MANAGEMENT, SOMALILAND

KARLENE PARRISH - ANIMAL HEALTH, SOMALILAND

From western Australia, we happily welcomed Chris and Karlene as they returned to CCF in Somaliland. Chris is working as Assistant Project Manager and Karlene is our Clinic Manager and Staff Health Officer.

Chris and Karlene are not strangers to Somaliland or the African continent, having been with CCF for a short time in 2020 prior to COVID-19, and having lived and worked in both Namibia and Uganda. Chris has a trade background, but more recently worked in infrastructure and project management. Karlene is a registered nurse that worked mostly in acute and emergency care in a rural setting. Both have a long history with conservation and wildlife care with SAVE African Rhino Foundation, Rhino Fund Uganda, Giraffe Conservation Foundation, Twala Trust Animal Sanctuary, Association of Trust Schools Zimbabwe, and Oana Flora & Fauna. Gathering Data in the Horn of Africa

SPONSOR A CHEETAH

Help support our efforts to rehabilitate and provide longterm care for cheetahs at our Field Centres.

www.cheetah.org/donate/sponsor/





GATHERING DATA IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

CCF's Legal Intelligence for Cheetah Illicit Trade (LICIT) project partnership with International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and Legal Atlas will come to a close on September 31st. The three-year project was funded by the government of the UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

We are being assisted in the final push of our community awareness campaign, by teams of experts drawn from Jigjiga University, officials from the Ethiopian Somali Regional State Bureau of Environmental Protection, Ethiopia's Rural Land Administration and Pastoral Development Bureau. We are working to cover zones in six of the 11 regional states of Ethiopia.

Earlier this year, Dr. Marker completed 42 surveys in Somaliland with Dr. Bogdan Cristescu, CCF's Assistant Director for Ecological Research, CCF staff from Somaliland and officials from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC). The team traveled across 15 villages (many were villages where cheetahs have been confiscated) interviewing both individuals and focus groups. By talking to the pastoral farmers in this area, CCF is working to understand the current distribution of cheetahs and level of conflict with cheetahs. This information, combined with knowledge about local attitudes toward and acceptance of (CBNRM) community-based natural resource management or conservancies, will help us identify the best places to recommend for inclusion into conservancies in Awdal.



The conclusion of the field work is just the beginning of the project. The next step will be to analyze all the data we gathered. We expect to generate baseline information on the threats to cheetahs in the Horn of Africa to help us understand the impacts of cheetah trafficking and human-wildlife conflict. We will be able to assess the rural community's current knowledge of wildlife, including predators. We can then alter our education programming and develop better conservation strategies for the region.

RESEARCH AT THE MODEL FARM

LIVESTOCK GUARDING... DONKEYS?!



When we first began CCF's Livestock Guarding Dog (LGD) program in 1994, we were highlighting a different type of working dog that the rural farmers of Namibia were not accustomed to. Successful LGDs need to have good guarding behaviors like intimidation. They also need to be large and have a loud bark. LGDs are not like herding dogs, which have been long used on Namibian farms. In countries like Somaliland, most dogs are stray street dogs and not highly regarded by people. We would like to try using strays for the LGD program, but it may never really catch on. Instead, donkeys could potentially make good candidates for alternative guardians.

Our goal with studying the effectiveness of LGDonkeys is to gather objective evidence rather than just what is largely anecdotal evidence so far. We are mostly testing the effectiveness against leopards, cheetahs, and other predators on Namibian livestock farms. Donkeys are intelligent, protective, larger than dogs, they make lots of noise when they are alarmed and could be an option to help integrate into cattle herds. As with all our programs, we base everything on research, so time will tell if donkeys can help us to mitigate human-wildlife conflict and what their success rates may be at preventing livestock loss to predation.

Photos: Opposite page: The team in Ethiopia conducts community surveys at various locations **This page:** CCF's veterinarian Ana Bastos takes a selfie photo with the LGDonkey research team.



A FUTURE FOR CHEETAHS IN INDIA

The cheetahs arrived in India on the 17th of September and were released into Kuno National Park by India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. After arrival, the cats will be held in smaller quarantine enclosures for about a month, until they pass medical quarantine. Following this brief period, the cheetahs will then be moved into larger holding enclosures (bomas) to acclimate them to the new environment so that they begin learning what prey species are available being released into Kuno. CCF believes the cheetahs will be able to adapt to the environment without difficulty; there are differences in the habitat (vegetation structure and prey species available) between India and Namibia. The pre-release holding period will give the cheetahs a safe environment for adjustment.

KUNO NATIONAL PARK SITE VISIT

In June 2022, Dr. Marker and the Cheetah Project Team conducted a site visit to Kuno National Park, in the state of Madhya Pradesh in India. The park was being assessed for readiness to accept the donation of cheetahs from Namibia.

In August 2022, CCF staff members Eli Walker and Barth Balli visited Kuno to finalize preparations prior to the arrival of eight cheetahs. Eli and Barth focused on the infrastructure in Kuno and conducted training for Kuno staff focusing on ongoing care for the quarantined cheetahs.

During their visit, Eli and Bart worked with the local team in India to inspect the quarantine facility and holding bomas, providing recommendations for the last necessary steps. They ensured the facilities were ready for

Photos: This page: The main gates of Kuno National Park **Opposite page:** India's Cat Plane- a passenger plane that was retrofitted to accommodate the cheetahs from Namibia. The seats in one section were removed to fit cheetah crates and also make space for the vets and cheetah caretakers.

the arrival of the cheetahs in September.

Reintroducing any species is an extremely difficult task that requires many years of dedicated effort and perseverance in the face of hardship. From CCF's years of research releasing cheetahs back into the wild, we have learned of key actions (protocols) we can take to help maximize the probability of survival for released animals. Eli and Barth shared CCF's protocols; they also discussed logistics for the ongoing, long-term monitoring of the cheetahs once released.

Finally, they toured Kuno assessing the habitat conditions and suitability of the park. Cheetahs do well in open grasslands as well as in more moderately dense vegetated areas and Kuno provides ample options for hunting.

The success of the effort will depend on the cheetahs, and we will be closely monitoring them post release. We are confident that the India government and the Kuno team is as prepared to do everything possible to ensure the project is a success.



PRECIOUS CARGO TRAVELS BY AIR

On Friday, September 16th, Dr. Laurie Marker and CCF staff traveled to India delivering eight wild born VICs (very important cheetahs) from the Namibian government. The group is the first to be translocated from southern Africa to Asia to create a new meta population, in a place where cheetahs once roamed freely, but went extinct 70 years ago. The government of Namibia gifted the first eight individuals as part of a larger, multi-year agreement to help conserve the species through India's Project Cheetah.

The cheetahs flew out of Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek, Namibia's capital. After a brief ceremony to acknowledge Namibia's donation and the significance of the mission, the cheetahs were loaded onto a private B747 "Big Cat" jet painted to resemble a tiger. After an overnight trip, they landed in Gwailia, India and were transferred to helicopters where they were then transferred to Kuno National Park in the state of Madhya Pradesh and released into their holding areas by India's Prime Minister, Nerendra Modi on Saturday, September 17th.



CCF'S SOCIAL SURVEYS *LEARNING ABOUT PREDATORS FROM PEOPLE*

Hello, I am _____ and I work with the Cheetah Conservation Fund. I am here today to gather information about your village and local wildlife.

This is the first line from one of CCF's recent social surveys focused on ecology in the rural areas of Somaliland (mentioned on page 6). Our newest efforts in the Horn of Africa are part of the expansion of CCF's research across the cheetah's rangeland, both current and potential.

In Namibia, farmer surveys were one of the very first data gathering actions that Dr. Laurie Marker took for insight on the presence of predators in the landscape. In those early days, farmers were surveyed about whether they experienced human-wildlife conflict and to what extent their herds were impacted, which predators they had seen and how many they had killed. They were also asked whether they used any mitigating strategies to prevent predation.



Our team at CCF East has been conducting baseline surveys, both social as well as using camera traps and our detection dogs in Gobabis, located in the central eastern part of Namibia. The most recent trip lasted six weeks, from 8 April to 14 May 2022. CCF Staff interviewed 53 farmers who owned a total of 88 farms in our study grid, covering approximately 90% of the study area. CCF staff keep the tone conversational and focused on the knowledge and experiences of the individual, not on what the individuals have heard from others. Questions include:

Do you think it's important to have wildlife around your village? Why?

Which wildlife species have you seen inside or within one day's walk from your village?

We primarily interviewed farm owners (85%), though some preferred that we speak to their farm manager. Of the 88 farms covered, most (93%) were commercial farms. All farmers raised livestock, primarily cattle, and 15% also raised game species.



Data analysis is currently underway to produce a summary report of our findings so that we can prepare a manuscript for publication. The survey data will allow us to map perceived conflict and tolerance levels of cheetahs and leopards in the study area. The following questions help us understand farmer perceptions and their tolerance of large predators.

Which methods do you use most to mitigate livestock losses to predators?

Are you interested in learning more about how to reduce conflict with wildlife?

It is important that we learn from the farmers what they are currently doing to prevent human-wildlife conflict. We want to know if they have success using certain techniques that we may not be aware of. We also want to provide them with the techniques that we have already learned from our research and from other farmers, with the goal of protecting livestock and the cheetahs that share their landscape.

Photos: opposite page: Top: Dr. Laurie Marker focused on helping farmers from the beginning of CCF **Bottom:** CCF staff works with community members to gather information **This page: left:** staff also ask about the health of the herds when visiting farms **right:** An interview with a farmer experiencing human-wildlife conflict

Kids

CORNER



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



Riyah and her friend Isabella and sister Shalom had the goal for their summer to be to raise money to help save the cheetah from extinction. They baked cookies and made a lemonade and baked goods “Cheetah-nAID” stand. They also talked to friends and relatives about the cheetah.



Sophia (8) has loved cheetahs since doing an animal research project on them for school. She started a lemonade stand to raise money for CCF and sold cookies and artwork too. She made posters filled with cheetah facts and jokes to help her customers learn more about cheetahs too.



Erin is 7 years old and loves cheetahs. She loves all animals, but especially cats. Erin is a member of our Cubs Club and is a Young Ambassador for CCF UK. Erin recently attended the cheetah day at Hamerton Zoo Park where she was selling cookies and collecting money to donate to CCF.

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



CHEETAHS CHOOSE WINNING ARTWORK

Resident cheetahs Khaleesi, Peter and Senay were recently treated to an art show in their enclosure as part of our Kids' Art Competition. The cheetahs chose Ester Canzio and her artwork *Wonder C.* (left) and Orson Grey who created *Thundering Babies* (right) as the winners of the Cheetah's Choice award.

These awesome artists, and all the other talented kids who submitted artwork, received a year of cheetah sponsorship. The Best in Show and Honorable Mention also won an autographed photo of Dr. Laurie Marker.

CHEETAH STRIDES CHALLENGE

Create a Cheetah Sculpture!

How to Participate

Make a \$100 donation to CCF and we will send you foldable cheetah made by Papercraft World.

Important - Please write "Cheetah Strides Challenge Sculpture" on the donation form in the "Leave a comment" section.

Deadline for photo submission is December 1, 2022

Send a photo of your finished folded cheetah to info@cheetah.org. Make it a selfie or include the family. Or take a series of photos along the way as you are assembling. We will feature you and your cheetah on our website!





LEARN MORE ABOUT CCF

CCF's Field Centre in Namibia has a state-of-the-art genetics laboratory. For more info on our research and how you can help with a donation, please visit: www.cheetah.org/about/what-we-do/research/



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