

ISSUE Nº
25
1st 2023

CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



IN THIS ISSUE:

[New Centre](#)

[Genetics](#)

[Five Grants](#)

[FFA SLD](#)



Cheetah
CONSERVATION FUND



DONATE

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

VISIT & VOLUNTEER

CCF's Research Field Centre
Otjiwarongo, Namibia
open 364 days per year

CCF's Field Centre
Geed-Deeble, Somaliland

CCF's Headquarters USA
200 Daingerfield Rd.
Suite 200
Alexandria, VA. 22314
Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 5:00 pm
cheetah.org/usa

Learn more about volunteering at one of our field centres in Africa or at home in the United States. Help CCF save the cheetah across its range in Africa.
cheetah.org/get-involved/volunteer/

Keep up with the cheetahs on social media!



@CCFCheetah



KEY DATES

MEET DR. LAURIE MARKER AND HELP CCF
MAKE THE WILD A BETTER PLACE

IN PERSON

SAVE THE DATE
SAN DIEGO HUMANE SOCIETY
MARCH 25, 2023
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

REGIS COLLEGE
MARCH 30, 2023
DENVER, CO

WHALE WATCHING WITH DR. LAURIE MARKER
APRIL 8, 2023
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

EVENING WITH DR. LAURIE MARKER
APRIL 12, 2023
SEATTLE, WA

ANIMAL ARK CHEETAH DAY
APRIL 15, 2023
RENO, NV

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION NETWORK EXPO
APRIL 22, 2023
PALO ALTO, CA

Check the events page for upcoming events.
cheetah.org/get-involved/ccf-events/

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

SAVE THE DATE
INTERNATIONAL CHEETAH DAY
DECEMBER 4, 2023
ANNUAL GLOBAL CELEBRATION OF
THE CHEETAH - JOIN US!



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



I hope this newsletter finds you well. I am currently writing to you from Somaliland, where we are putting the finishing touches on the cheetah compounds at the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (CRCC). Our goal is to move the cheetahs from our Safe Houses in Hargeisa to the new Centre in Geed-Deeble. This move involves complex logistics and we will be running facilities in two places, the CRCC and Hargeisa, for the next few months until all the cheetah compounds are completed. Your continued support during this time will be greatly appreciated.

Over the past year, we have been building the new centre, and I am thrilled to report that we are nearly finished. We have already moved our first group of orphan cheetahs into their new large, natural enclosures at their new home in Geed-Deeble. Modeled after CCF Namibia's International Research and Education Centre, the CRCC will serve as a home for the orphan cheetahs under our care, which currently number 92. This new centre will allow us to provide better care, management, and enrichment for the cheetahs, and we are grateful for the support that has made this move possible.

Recently, I went to India to welcome the second group of cheetahs for Project Cheetah. The group of 12 cheetahs, 6 males, and 6 females arrived from South Africa on February 18th. I also visited the eight Namibian cheetahs that we brought in on September 17th, 2022. CCF staff, Eli Walker, and Barth Balli, have been with them since their arrival in September, training the India Forestry rangers and researchers on cheetah rehabilitation care and behavior.

In mid-March, I will be embarking on my spring fundraising and awareness tour in the United States. I look forward to meeting many of you, our CCF supporters and friends, to share more with you about our programs to help save the cheetah and discuss how we can work together to ensure the survival of this iconic species.

Dr. Laurie Marker
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

in the wild.



FIVE GRANTS RECEIVED

IWT PREVENTION BENEFITS FROM INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

CCF has received funding for five critical projects aimed at ending the illegal wildlife trade in cheetahs in the Horn of Africa. Cheetahs are illegally removed from the wild in the Horn of Africa and taken to be sold as pets in the illegal pet trade, despite being listed as an Appendix 1 species under the Convention for International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES). Our research indicates that as many as 300 cheetahs were taken from the region for the pet trade from 2010 to 2019. Most of these cheetahs died before reaching their destination, posing a threat to the already low cheetah population in the wild.

We have made significant progress in combating cheetah trafficking in the past decade, both in Somaliland and the greater Horn of Africa region. The funding for these projects will help to increase law enforcement and community awareness, build local governance structures, and reduce the demand for illegal cheetah trade. The projects address law enforcement, wildlife conservation, education, livelihood development, and demand reduction.

The strategies are centered on support for the Somali Regional State (SRS) of Ethiopia and Somaliland's ability to fight the trafficking of wildlife, which is a favored transit route for cubs trafficked out of the Horn of Africa.

Photos: Opposite page: Top to bottom clockwise: Somaliland's Ministry officials and authorities conduct a confiscation, Cheetah cub undergoes an entry exam post confiscation, Dr. Laurie Marker conducts a field survey with CCF's Team in Somaliland. **This page:** Cheetah cubs in their crate after confiscation await lifesaving interventions including veterinary treatment and medicines.

The five projects include a two-year grant from the IUCN Save Our Species Fund to assess Community Based Natural Resource Management and Conservancies (CBNRM) as viable wildlife management strategies in Somaliland, a two-year grant from the European Union to develop governance structures in Somaliland, the continuation of CCF's Legal Intelligence for Cheetah Illicit Trade (LICIT) project with a three-year grant from the UK government, a one-year grant from Rainforest Trust to assess, map, and legally document Geed-Deeble National Park, and a five-year research grant from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to study wild populations of cheetahs in the Horn of Africa.

These projects will enable us to further our research and develop long-term strategies to combat the live trafficking of cheetahs. CCF currently cares for 92 cheetah cubs at our Cheetah Safe Houses in Hargeisa, Somaliland, which will be moving to a sanctuary for these confiscated cheetahs in Geed-Deeble, the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (See page 8).

Our efforts to protect cheetahs from the illegal wildlife pet trade have received a boost with the funding for these five critical projects. The activities being funded will increase law enforcement, and community awareness, and help to reduce the demand for illegal cheetahs.

By working together, we can help protect these magnificent creatures and ensure their survival for generations to come.



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/>



ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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

October 2022 - Published in *Mammal Research*, *Reducing identification errors of African carnivores from photographs through computer-assisted workflow* by Verschueren S., Fabiano E. C., Kakove M., Cristescu B., Marker L. L., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13364-022-00657-z>

January 2023 - Published in *Scientific Reports*, *Response of woody vegetation to bush thinning on freehold farmlands in north-central Namibia* by Nghikembua M., Marker L. L., Brewer B., Leinonen A., Mehtätalo L., Appiah M., Pappinen A., <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-26639-4>

February 2023 - Published in *Oryx*, *Cheetahs persist in the wild in Somaliland's remote Awdal region.* by Marker, L., Connolly, E., Saed, A.H., Reasoner, E., Aden, K.Y., Cristescu B., <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0030605322001442>

REWILDING RESEARCH

December 2022 - Published in *Animals*, *Rewilding Apex Predators Has Effects on Lower Trophic Levels: Cheetahs and Ungulates in a Woodland Savanna* by Ruble D., Verschueren S., Cristescu B., Marker L. L., <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani12243532>

CONSERVATION RESEARCH

December 2022 - Published in *Frontiers* - *Women's thirty-year contribution to cheetah conservation: An insight into volunteer-based conservation program supported by female scientists*, by Marker L. L., Pfeiffer L., Maketo T., Pöntinen A., <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcsc.2022.1028851>

FEATURED STAFF AT CCF



ANASTASIA TURENKO

GENETICS TECHNICIAN, NAMIBIA

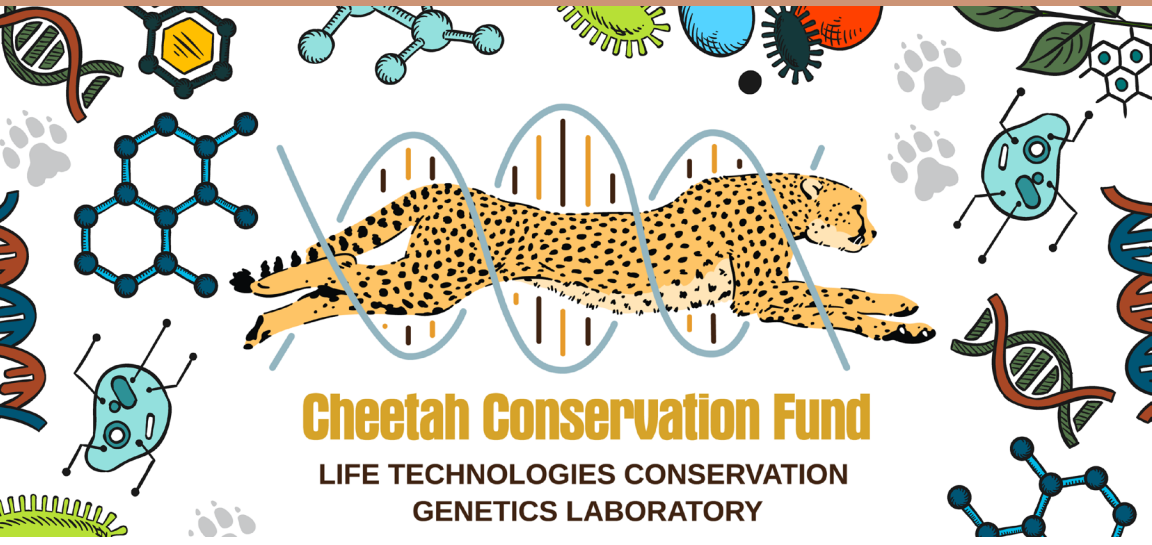
Anastasia Turenko is a genetics technician working in the Genetics Department at CCF in Namibia. She is involved in the cheetah genetics landscaping project that aims at discovering underlying patterns of genetic diversity in a homogenous (panmictic) population. Turenko first heard about CCF while working in the laboratory at the Theodosius Dobzhansky Center for Genome Bioinformatics, where she honed her bioinformatics skills on wild cat projects. Her supervisor, Professor Stephen O'Brien, one of CCF's scientific advisors, encouraged her to apply for the open genetics position at CCF and she left her lecturing position in Medical University to join the organization.

Turenko is an alumnus of Saint-Petersburg State University in Russia, where she studied biology. She has a deep passion for science and is particularly interested in genetics and epigenetics.

SPONSOR A CHEETAH

Help support our efforts to rehabilitate and provide longterm care for cheetahs at our Field Centres. [cheetah.org/donate/sponsor/](https://www.cheetah.org/donate/sponsor/)





GRB AND GENETICS AT CCF

STUDYING CHEETAHS IN NAMIBIA

CCF's Genetics laboratory is an important part of our work to save the cheetah in the wild. Our sample collection and analysis provides crucial data on the genetics of cheetah populations around the world. Most of the samples used for our genetic studies are non-invasive. An increasingly extensive scat sample collection from wild cheetahs in Namibia and neighbouring countries is kept at CCF. Opportunistically we also obtain blood samples from cheetahs and analyse those alongside the scat samples. In addition to genetic samples, we bank sperm, serum, plasma, white and red blood cells, hair, and skin samples on all cheetahs worked up in our clinic or in the field. All samples are part of CCF's Genome Resource Bank (GRB).

Since 1991, blood and tissue samples have been obtained from over 900 individual cheetahs. These samples are used for overall health and genetic purposes, with backups stored at both CCF Namibia and the Smithsonian Institution in the USA. With the creation of CCF's genetics laboratory, most samples are now held onsite at our Field Research Centre in Namibia.

Currently, CCF holds the world's largest wild cheetah database of biological material, which also creates the need to curate all the samples and the development of database management systems.

RANGEWIDE SAMPLE COLLECTION

CCF has a collection of wild cheetah scat samples from various countries including Angola, Niger, Algeria, Botswana, South Africa, and Kenya. Most of those samples were obtained through invaluable collaborations with in-country conservationists.

The illegal pet trade of cheetah cubs is another important focus area for our genetics lab, focusing on both source and destination countries. Between

Photos: opposite page: Top to bottom clockwise: Cape vulture, red-billed oxpecker, Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill, African hoopoe.

2004 and December 2022, we received over 1000 samples from 184 individuals, mostly cubs rescued from the illegal wildlife trade. We also received a number of samples from private collections, whose country of origin is often only presumed. The results obtained from these studies are investigating the provenance of animals from the illegal pet trade. This information is sensitive and will be made public when possible.

In the UAE, in addition to the genetic samples, a collaboration with cheetah holding facilities and veterinary clinics led to the successful collection and viable banking of cheetah sperm, and to the creation of a Genome Resource Bank in that country. This GRB contains incredibly valuable cheetah sperm samples, some represent very small wild source populations.

BIRD RESEARCHERS FLOCK TO CCF



CCF's genetics laboratory is committed to supporting biodiversity conservation and sustainable land use. In addition to studying cheetah genetics, the laboratory collaborates with researchers studying various animal species. Recently, CCF added bird sexing as a tool for collaborators.

In 2022, CCF's genetics laboratory received 23 vulture and 36 oxpecker samples from the University of Namibia. The laboratory extracted blood samples and completed their analysis, providing important information for further research and conservation efforts for these bird species. In addition, CCF hosted students from Professor Manuel Martin-Vivaldi for their study on hornbills and hoopoes and Dr. Mark Stanback for his long-term research on hornbills.

CCF is proud to support these important bird research projects and contribute to advancing our understanding of the natural world. The laboratory's work promotes the conservation of biodiversity and helps researchers better manage and protect various animal species.



NEW CENTRE FOR SOMALILAND CCF MOVES INTO THE CHEETAH RESCUE AND CONSERVATION CENTRE

In partnership with the Somaliland Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), we have successfully moved some of the cheetahs confiscated from the illegal pet trade from our Cheetah Safe Houses in Hargeisa to their new home at the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (CRCC) in Geed-Deeble.

In the past five years, we have worked closely with MoECC to care for the cheetahs rescued from the illegal pet trade, and with 20 to 40 cubs rescued each year, the three Safe Houses have been built to keep up with the growing number of cubs.

In 2021, CCF signed a 30-year agreement with MoECC and the government of Somaliland to develop the first national park in the country at Geed-Deeble and build a Rescue and Conservation Centre for the confiscated cheetahs. After over a year of hard work, the CRCC is ready to welcome some of the cheetahs, providing a permanent sanctuary for the confiscated cubs.

The CRCC has vast outdoor enclosures that mimic a natural environment. We have built a veterinary clinic and have professional staff to provide ongoing care. The CRCC will also eventually be open for training to provide environmental education for the people of Somaliland. We are currently looking for funding to build the Education and Training Centre. The main threats to cheetahs across their African range are human-wildlife conflict, illegal pet trade, and habitat loss.

Most of our work to conserve cheetahs in the wild requires strong

Photos: This page: Dr. Laurie Marker at the CRCC site in Geed-Deeble **Opposite page:** Enya in the field with her backpack and her favorite reward toy

cooperation and understanding within the communities that share the cheetahs' landscape. The successful establishment of the CRCC has made us better able to help the people of Somaliland live alongside cheetahs, like our efforts in Namibia.

The transfer of the first groups of cheetahs to the CRCC took place at the end of February. The move was smooth, and the animals are settling into their new home well. The positive impact that the CRCC will have on the conservation of cheetahs in the region is expected to be significant. We are grateful for the support of conservation NGOs, zoos, and veterinary volunteers who stepped forward with donated funds, supplies, and time, making the CRCC a reality. We thank all the donors who provided funds and equipment for the new Centre and veterinary clinic, as their generosity was crucial in making this dream a reality.

ENYA SNIFFS FOR MILES

CCF'S SCAT DETECTION TEAM COVERS NEW GROUND



Our scat detection dog team works hard to improve its methodology and increase the number of cheetah scat samples found in the field. The scat collected from the field provides valuable genetic information on the animals at the genetics laboratory as part of CCF's ongoing conservation efforts. Last year in Namibia, the team covered a total of 453 km of transects and collected 250 scat samples from potentially 14 different wildlife species, with 84 of those being identified as cheetah and African wild dogs.

For three years, Tim and Enya, have been travelling to Angola twice a year to collect scat samples as part of a collaborative carnivore project. They will also begin a new project in Somaliland, funded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as part of a five-year grant to study wild populations of cheetahs in the Horn of Africa. For the Somaliland project, a new molecular technique will be used to analyze the collected samples, providing insight into the types of animals cheetahs are eating and potentially causing conflicts within the pastoral farming community.



NAMIBIA CENTRE POWERS UP *INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS BOOST OPERATIONS*

We've made significant progress and growth to our power infrastructure in Namibia. For the past few years elevating our energy systems has been a major focus, with ongoing investments aimed at improving efficiency and making our operations greener and more sustainable.

One of the biggest upgrades has been to our centre's electrical system. We've reduced our diesel generator usage by 50% annually despite a 15% increase in demand for power. This has been achieved through innovative, cost-effective and environmentally friendly solutions. Despite operating an off the grid research centre that's open to the public 364 days per year, we experience an impressive 99.995% cumulative uptime in our power system.

Part of our operation includes a series of farm outposts within the bounds of CCF's reserve. The electrical systems at farms Padberg and Boskop were both updated in 2022. At Boskop we reprogrammed our operations leading to a more than 60% reduction in generator run time and overall improved our energy efficiency. At Padberg we installed a new solar power system with a capacity of 30 kilovolt-amperes (kVA) and a 62 kilowatt-hour (kWh). The system can store energy for use when the photovoltaic (PV) solar panels are not generating enough power.

The new solar system achieved a nearly 95% solar-powered operation, which means that most of the power needed at Padberg is generated by the PV panels, reducing the reliance on other sources of energy.

Photos: opposite page: top: Participants in the FFA training workshop with their certificates **Bottom:** left: Education happening outside in a rural primary school, right: Classroom programs include a backdrop of support materials in languages used by participants. **This page:** Aerial photo of CCF's Campus in Namibia.

FUTURE FARMERS OF AFRICA IN SOMALILAND

CCF and Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e.V. (WHH) have joined in partnership under a grant from the European Union. CCF's part of the program will include launching our Future Farmers of Africa (FFA) program in Somaliland. Also, the Taiwan Forestry Bureau has provided funds specifically for FFA and we recently began a series of workshops. We are introducing predator-friendly livelihood development options, sustainable natural resource management, and human-wildlife conflict prevention and resolution. We are focusing on two regions where the majority of cheetah confiscations occur.

Our partnership with WHH will benefit Somaliland's national wildlife and environmental institutions, helping decision-makers to develop their capacity, strengthen their interdepartmental coordination, and establish communication channels within the community. We are also providing relevant training for parliamentarians and law enforcement through Legal Atlas and a Somaliland-based attorney.



Expanding Future Farmers of Africa in Somaliland and improving the established anti-trafficking and human-wildlife conflict mitigation will achieve a sustainable reduction of wildlife trafficking while mutually reinforcing rural livelihoods. By providing local communities with the necessary tools to protect cheetahs and manage environmental issues within the framework of the law, we can help ensure the survival of these magnificent creatures for generations to come.

Kids

CORNER



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



My Big Question:

How do cheetahs adapt to survive in the

Sub-Question #1:

How do cheetah parents care for their y

Sub-Question #2:

How have cheetah habitats changed?



The @cherrydalecheetahs support our work by sponsoring cheetahs as a group. Every year on Earth Day, Cherrydale primary school in Steilacoom, WA celebrates the cheetah by holding a school wide fundraiser to support CCF's work. This year they will be sponsoring Rocket!

A fifth grade teacher in Briarcliff, New York contacted us for an end of elementary school capstone project. One of her students Kayla loves cheetahs and was investigating how cheetahs adapt to their environment. As part of her project, we answered a series of interview questions for her.

Meet CCF Kids Georgina and Orson, 8-year-old twins from California. They got to meet Dr. Marker at an event at the Bowers Museum, where they took this photo. The family encourages the kids' love of cheetahs by creating fun educational games and activities at school.

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



TIKA NAMES A PUPPY

The puppy above is one of twenty-six new LDG puppies born between December and early February. Umut (meaning Hope) was named by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency - TIKKA, after a recent series of powerful and devastating earthquakes impacting Turkey and Syria. TIKKA has been a major supporter of CCF's Model Farm donating new puppy pens and a yogurt making facility at our Dancing Goat Creamery in the past couple of years.

CHEETAH STRIDES CHALLENGE



Earth Day - April 22

Invest in our Planet - Social Media Challenge

In honor of Earth Day 2023, we challenge you to create a social media post that highlights the importance of investing in our planet.

How to Participate

Create your post on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter and make sure to tag both @ccfcheetah and the business accounts you think should show their support with a donation to Cheetah Conservation Fund.

Make sure to creatively communicate why businesses should invest in our planet by donating to CCF. Use the theme Invest in Our Planet and include information about why you think the cheetah needs our help and how CCF works to save the species in the wild.

Tags and Hashtags to use so we can see your post:

@ccfcheetah, #InvestInOurPlanetCCF, #SaveTheCheetah



LEARN MORE ABOUT CCF

CCF's Field Research Centre in Namibia serves as a hub of multinational research projects happening across the cheetah's range. www.cheetah.org/about/what-we-do/research/



PO Box 2496
Alexandria, VA. 22301