

Cheetah Spots

CCF: Helping to ensure the survival of wild cheetahs through sustainable conservation practices.

Spring 2014



Cheetah Facts

- 1 Can accelerate from zero to 100 km/hr in three seconds.
- 2 Average life span in the wild is ten to twelve years.
- 3 Cubs live with their mothers for 18 months to two years.
- 4 Most cheetahs are found in eastern and southwestern Africa



A special visit to Werribee

The Victorian contingent of the Cheetah Conservation Fund Australia met at Werribee Open Range Zoo on Saturday 20th September. It was a blustery day, but our enthusiasm couldn't be dampened as we had the privilege of experiencing a special introduction to Inkosana and Kulinda, the two resident cheetahs. Inkosana, an 11-year-old male, lost his companion and brother several months ago. Kulinda, a two-year-old female, recently arrived from Monarto Zoo. Our heartfelt thanks go to Paul Rushworth and the staff at Werribee for their time. Paul gave us a special behind the scenes tour, an opportunity to see both cheetahs up close. He also told us of the zoo's work to provide enrichment (using a tailor made cheetah run) and how they set up the enclosures to ensure proper health and care of the cheetahs. One lucky young CCFA member, Thomas Stitt, had the thrill of feeding Kulinda! But don't worry – a specially designed feeding tray ensured Kulinda got only her regular food (no hands).

Read more on Inkosana and Kulinda on our back page.

"A Day in the Life of a Cheetah keeper" begins on Page 2

Keep reading to learn all about the exciting jobs of two of Monarto Zoo's Zookeepers and their role in helping to save this amazing and beautiful species.



A day in the life of a Cheetah keeper

Jaimee Foote and Michelle Lloyd, carnivore keepers at Monarto Zoo, tell us of how they spend their days breeding cheetahs, raising awareness, and educating Zoo visitors.

Being a zookeeper, especially a carnivore keeper, is not really your average job; in fact it becomes your life. You wake in the morning happy and wanting to go to work each day. It truly is a unique opportunity to make a difference by either breeding or raising awareness, educating people about the plight of our endangered species. The cheetah section is always busy as is each section at Monarto Zoo.

The day always begins with a morning debrief meeting of all keeping staff. It's then to the

meat room to gather your morning treats including treatment needed and training meat. We set off in the ute to go up to the cheetah area.

There are eight cheetahs at Monarto the ratio being 3:5 male/female. We have three main exhibits and a breeding complex comprising six breeding yards for our female cheetahs. First visit is to our platform exhibit to check which of our four ambassador cheetahs is there.

We then go in, treat if needed, cuddle, then if time permits, we

fit in a quick training session.

We do a lot of valuable conditioning and training with our cheetah for vet purposes, this reduces the stress of being in captivity. Once the interaction is complete the exhibit requires fence and water checking, as well as a clean. Each exhibit requires the same maintenance once the animals have been moved away.

Next it's off to the breeding complex. Once all animals are

Our Meet the Cheetah Tour runs three days a week. This tour has been Zoos SA's most popular tour since its introduction in July 2005.

checked, treated (if needed) and placed into their required areas, what we call the "runbys" can begin. This is the process we undertake each morning in the breeding season: the two males are sent through the females night locked pens whilst the females are in the day yards attached. It is critical for us to know cycling behaviours and pick up on these signs. If there is enough interest from both

animals an introduction may occur. If both animals aren't showing the highest level of interest, then an introduction could turn aggressive.

We were faced with hand rearing a litter of six cubs due to the queen's illness. The three males in the litter became our famous Ambassador Cheetahs, which have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for cheetah



conservation and conservation programs as a whole. It requires two keepers to give the cheetah tour, one keeper to present and the other to observe both cheetah and people, to ensure safety standards are met. People have to be 16 or over to participate, and the maximum number



Serval experience at
Werribee Open Range
Zoo



Servals are solitary cats found across much of Africa. Servals are considered rare in many areas of their distribution, including the whole of South Africa.

"Visiting the Servals at Werribee is an opportunity not only to marvel at these amazing animals, but also to learn about the threats to many species, what the international community is doing to try to conserve these species, and how Zoos Victoria is contributing to the fight. Remember: your visit helps to fight species extinction." – Werribee Zoo

Continued

of people in one group is four. The experience of getting up close and personal to a cheetah is indescribable.

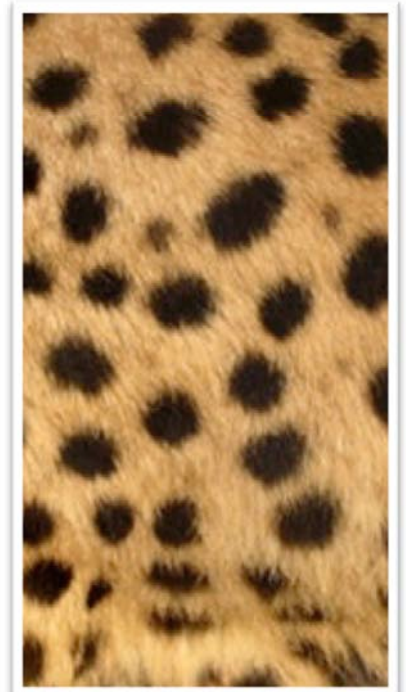
After the tour and the morning break, it's back to the meat room to prepare the cheetahs' meals for the day, and to cut up treatment and training meat for tomorrow. Our next duty is with the fennec foxes to clean, feed, condition and enrich. Then it's off to the other carnivore section where our painted dogs, hyena and African lions live. This again requires cleaning, feeding, conditioning and enrichment. We give varying types of enrichment which stimulate natural behaviours in our carnivores. Each day is different as a cheetah keeper, with meetings to attend, animals to weigh etc. and a never ending list of extra jobs to do.

It's now time for a lunch break when all keepers hang out together at an old homestead on site. After lunch, it's back to the meat room to collect the cheetahs' food, jump into the ute and head back to the cheetah breeding complex. Now all the breeding yards can be cleaned, food pads scrubbed, water trough cleaned and any poo or bones picked up. It's time to go to the platform exhibit, where a daily cheetah presentation is conducted. The keeper heads into the exhibit with one of our hand-reared cheetahs, so we can give visitors interesting facts, highlight conservation awareness, perform training and conditioning and feed the cheetah. This is a great opportunity to reach out to our visitors and get them inspired about the cheetah and its conservation.

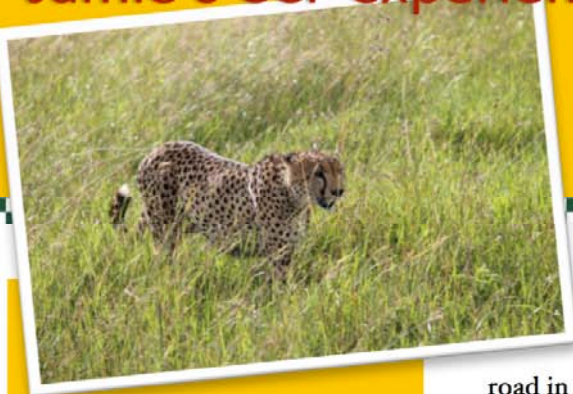
All the cheetahs get fed now. Firstly, they are secured in a safe area, their food is placed on

their feeding pads and they are let out for feeding. All our cheetahs are starved on Mondays and Thursdays so no feeding is required on these days. Odd jobs can be complete during this time. Once all cheetahs are happily feeding a final check of all gates and locks can be completed before leaving the area for the night.

Off to the pit to dispose of any waste and then to feed the lions. This can be daunting, especially when you have twelve very hungry lions. After washing dishes and tidying, the fennec foxes get their final feed of fruit and vegetables. Back at the homestead, it's time to complete the cheetah daily diary and compile electronic records. The radio is put back on charge and it's time for home.



Jamie's CCF experience



I travelled to Namibia to visit CCF as a volunteer in April 2013. Not a day goes by when I don't look back on my two weeks there with fond memories.

When I departed Sydney for Namibia (with a short stopover in Johannesburg) I was quite nervous about what to expect from my African holiday. It all started a few years prior when browsing the internet and social media and stumbling upon an organisation called 'Cheetah Conservation Fund' (or CCF for short). Many days were spent reading about the plight of the cheetah, Africa's most endangered big cat. The future for cheetahs did not look good, but fear not, Laurie Marker (CCF founder) and her team were there to make sure the cheetah won its race for survival.

After spending a night in Windhoek (Namibia's capital), I was met at my hotel by CCF Operations Manager Brian who already had on board other volunteers and interns from as far away as Switzerland and the USA. The drive to CCF was certainly no ordinary one, watching Baboons and Warthogs scamper off the

road in front of our vehicle certainly reminded me that I was a long long way from Sydney's peak hour traffic and the sea of red lights that I am normally used to.

We arrived at CCF just in time for dinner and a quick introduction to everyone before we sat down to enjoy our meal. An early night ensued as we were up early the next day to be given a tour of the facilities by Brian before starting our normal daily volunteer duties.

CCF is big, and I mean really BIG! Accommodation, research centre, cafe, gift shop, creamery, museum, genetics Lab and of course cheetahs! This place has it all, and, boy, was I was impressed! After spending the day taking in all that Brian had told us, we eagerly awaited what tasks we would be set for the following days.

So what did I get up to for the following two weeks? Let me see, off the top of my head and I'm certain to miss a few.....I learned how CCF was working with the local farmers to educate and assist them with living and appreciating predators in an ecosystem, I cleaned cheetah and goat pens, fed livestock guarding dogs, prepared and fed meat to the cheetahs with the husbandry team, sat in the watch tower for 12 hours counting wildlife, searched for cheetah poop with scat detecting dogs, assisted in catching cheetahs for their yearly medicals and helped the vets when needed in the clinic.

I must say I always let out a little 'woo hoo' when I saw my name next to the following days task of 'Cheetah Husbandry'. Spending the day feeding CCF's Cheetahs was every animal lover's dream. From throwing bits of meat over fences to standing in the back of a ute holding up a piece of meat to make a Cheetah run, this was an experience I would never forget.

After a long day's work, we all gathered around the camp fire to speak of the day's activities and to forge new friendships that I still keep to this day. As much fun as it was to work with the animals day in day out, it was equally enjoyable to be surrounded by such driven people who are devoting their lives to the survival of the cheetah.

Before I knew it, my time at CCF had come to an end and I had to say a regretful goodbye. As I took the long drive back to Windhoek airport, I reminisced over the past two weeks with a smile from ear to ear. To anyone that is considering going to CCF as a volunteer, I could not recommend the experience more.

Jamie Bonnar



New Friends

Werribee is home and sanctuary to one male Cheetah, Inkosana, who is entering his senior years. Kulinda, a female born to Nakula at Monarto Zoo in 2012, travelled from South Australia to Victoria earlier this year to provide him with companionship. Her name means 'protect' in Swahili and she is friendly and relaxed. Encounters between the two have been across the wire up till now, but the keepers are working towards a face-to-face introduction. It was fascinating to observe how interested Kulinda is in her older companion, following his every move along the fence.

Cheetah Conservation Fund Australia

<http://www.cheetah.org.au>



International Cheetah Day Special Event!

We will be holding a special fund raising event filled with fun, education, and special guests in South Australia to coincide with International Cheetah Day (the 4th of December). Stay tuned for event details to be emailed to all members.

Thank you to all our members

Kathleen Ager	Jaimee Foote	Johan, Linda, Matthew, Daniel and Erik Vloedmans
Eleanor Ager	Michelle Lloyd	Lauren Hayes
The Wetter-Kirby family	Marlene Foote and family	Helen El-Hassan
Trudi Bradshaw	Chris Stitt	Gary Surman
Pierre Van Osselaer	Sean Van Osselaer and family	Jennifer Surman
Victoria Stroud	Steven Prassas	
Jamie Bonnar		