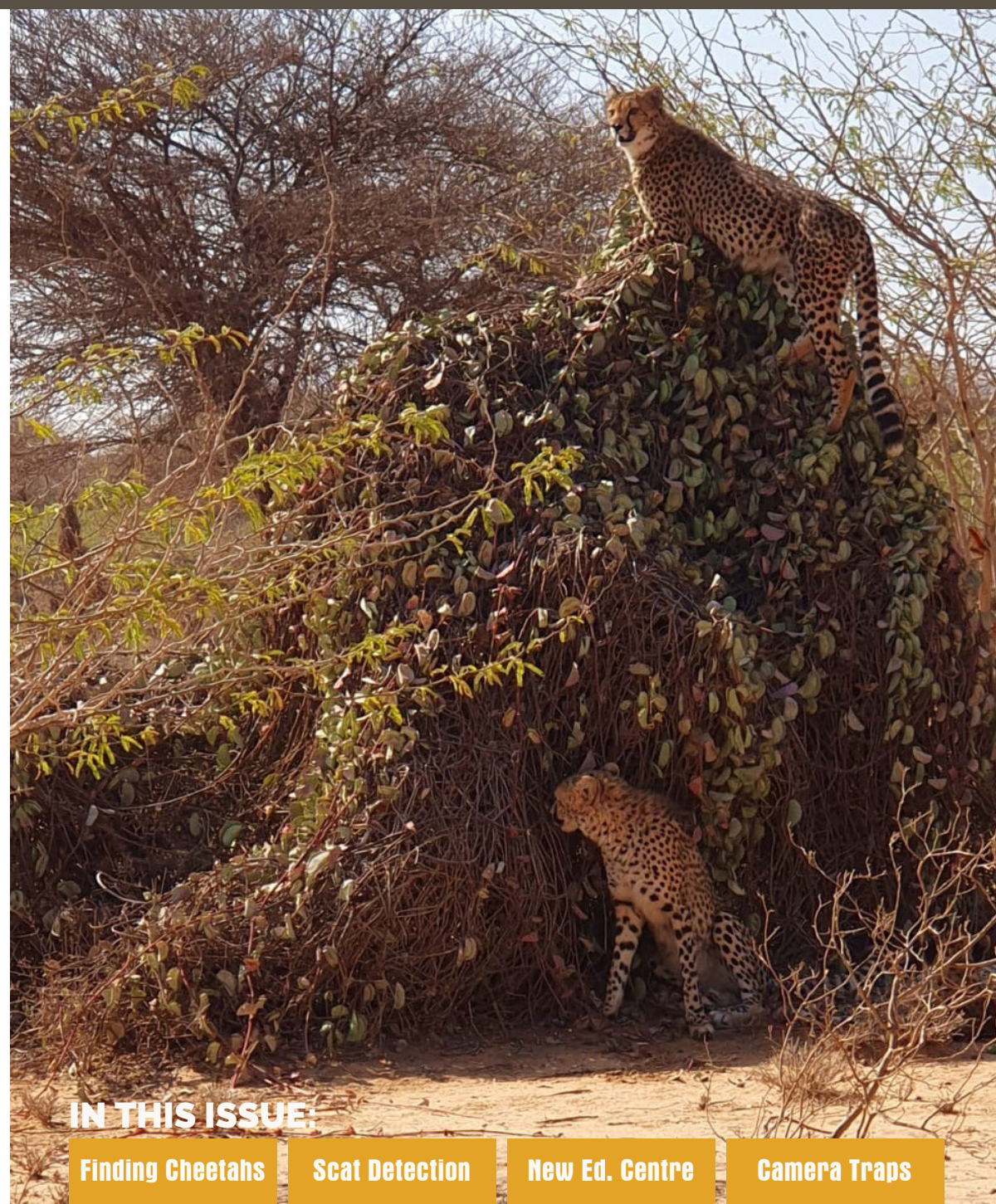


ISSUE N°  
**29**  
1<sup>st</sup> 2025

# CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



## IN THIS ISSUE:

Finding Cheetahs

Scat Detection

New Ed. Centre

Camera Traps





## DONATE

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

## VISIT & VOLUNTEER

### International Research and Education Centre

Otjiwarongo, Namibia  
open 364 days per year

### Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre

Geed-Deeble, Somaliland

### CCF's Headquarters USA

200 Daingerfield Rd.  
Alexandria, VA. 22314

**Volunteer** to help CCF save the cheetah!

[cheetah.org/get-involved/volunteer/](https://cheetah.org/get-involved/volunteer/)

**Keep up with the cheetahs on social media!**



**@CCFCheetah**



## KEY DATES

IN PERSON EVENTS WITH CCF'S FOUNDER

### OAKLAND UNIVERSITY LECTURE

APRIL 14, 2025  
ROYAL OAK, MI

### EXPLORERS CLUB MEET & GREET

APRIL 15, 2025  
COLUMBUS, OH

### TALK AT SUNSET ZOO

APRIL 23, 2025  
MANHATTAN, KS

### LECTURE AT KANSAS CITY ZOO

APRIL 25, 2025  
KANSAS CITY, MO

### MEET & GREET CCF'S FOUNDER

MAY 1, 2025  
WASHINGTON, DC

Check the events page for more details about where Dr. Marker will be.

[cheetah.org/get-involved/ccf-events/](https://cheetah.org/get-involved/ccf-events/)



## ONLINE EVENTS

### CHEETAH FIT CHALLENGE

JUNE 1 - JUNE 15, 2025

### JURIED CHILDREN'S ART COMPETITION

DEADLINE EXTENDED  
MAY 15, 2025

### INTERNATIONAL CHEETAH DAY

DECEMBER 4, 2025  
ANNUAL GLOBAL CELEBRATION OF THE CHEETAH - JOIN US!

## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



This year, Namibia made history by inaugurating its first female president. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah's swearing-in ceremony in March was a powerful moment in a country built on the principles of independence, unity, and care for the land. Just weeks earlier, we mourned the passing of Founding President Dr. Sam Nujoma, who was our International Patron for our first 25 years, and championed those ideals from the start.

Under his leadership, Namibia became the first nation in the world to embed conservation into its constitution. Recognizing the land and its wildlife as essential to national identity has shaped everything we do.

When I first arrived in 1990, President Nujoma encouraged my efforts to develop a center for cheetah conservation in the heart of the country. Since then, CCF has grown into a global leader in big cat conservation, but our roots remain firmly planted in Namibia's soil. That enduring partnership, with the Namibian people and government, continues to drive our success.

Our teams are now managing more than 143,000 acres of habitat in Namibia, monitoring cheetahs both in care and in the wild, and training the next generation of conservation scientists. We've placed over 800 livestock guarding dogs with farmers to reduce conflict, expanded our Future Farmers of Africa program, and continue developing innovative tools for land restoration and community benefit.

In Somaliland, we now care for 99 rescued cheetahs (photo above), young animals intercepted from the illegal wildlife/pet trade. We are building our Educational Centre Complex with the support of the Royal Commission for AlUla, and will soon be training rangers, and working closely with local communities to create a conservation model that's grounded in long-term care and conservation.

Beyond the field, I've continued to represent CCF in global conservation forums, recently at the CITES Standing Committee in Geneva. I also met with our CCF partners across Europe. Our voice is part of a broader movement to protect ecosystems through collaboration, science, and action.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurie Marker".

Dr. Laurie Marker  
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

# in the wild.

## SCIENCE THAT MOVES WITH THE CHEETAH

### *CHEETAHS IN THE WEST: 'THE DARWIN PROJECT'*

In 2024, CCF's research teams documented cheetahs across western Namibia, an area traditionally overlooked in cheetah distribution studies. This work was part of an ongoing interdisciplinary study coordinated by Dr. Anne Schmidt-Küntzel and Dr. Bogdan Cristescu and funded by The Darwin Initiative. The research combined extensive camera-trapping (led by Bogdan) with scat-detection surveys followed by genetic analysis to identify carnivore species and individual cheetahs (led by Anne).

The expedition to the west was made feasible by the work of CCF's Detection Dog Trainer Tim Hofmann who searched the area tirelessly with detection dog Enya to find cheetah scat and who coordinated and assisted with the camera trap placements. These methods provided crucial evidence of cheetahs navigating communal lands characterized by rugged terrain, rocky canyons, and semi-arid landscapes. Data from this project helps fill critical knowledge gaps, revealing cheetah adaptability.



“Every new scat tells a story,” said Dr. Schmidt-Küntzel. “And every day in the field brings us closer to understanding how cheetahs survive. We’re thankful for dedicated staff and students bringing samples to the laboratory so we can continue this important research.”

This research directly informs conservation strategies, guiding conflict mitigation efforts and improving our understanding of how cheetahs persist in fragmented habitats.

**Photos: This page:** Collecting scat samples **Opposite page: top:** Tim and Enya searching for scat **bottom:** Tresia and Tim with Enya



## **PEAKS AND PAWS: SCAT FOUND IN FISH RIVER CANYON**

Tresia Shihepo, currently a Master's student with CCF's genetics laboratory (and a former intern), is part of Namibia's next generation of wildlife researchers. Her current research mainly focuses on African wild dogs, but she also contributes to other projects, thus having a significant impact on broader carnivore conservation efforts.

In early 2025, Tresia had the opportunity to join CCF's scat-detection dog trainer, Tim Hofmann, and his detection dog Enya on an expedition into the dramatic yet challenging Fish River Canyon landscape in southern Namibia. Their objective was clear: identify cheetah marking sites and collect scat samples for genetic analysis to better understand the southern extent of cheetah distribution.

At first, progress was slow, hindered by extreme temperatures that limited the team's search window. But on the final day, they identified twelve distinct cheetah marking sites within the canyon area. Many sites yielded multiple scat samples, along with fresh cheetah spoor. The team also collected opportunistic scat samples from brown hyena, leopard, and jackal, highlighting the canyon's broader carnivore biodiversity.

The Fish River Canyon findings significantly extend CCF's data on cheetahs in southern Namibia. For Tresia, the expedition marked an important step forward in her research career, emphasizing how essential field experience and dedicated teamwork are to effective conservation.



## RESEARCH PUBLISHED AND IN PROGRESS

CCF's resource library has many interesting papers being published by scientific peer-reviewed journals. Many more are in review or pending publication. To read the papers in full visit: [www.cheetah.org/resource-category/scientific-papers/](http://www.cheetah.org/resource-category/scientific-papers/)

**Published** – Journal Namibia Scientific Society / Volume 71 – 2024  
*Assessing Two Detection Dog-Based Sampling Strategies Targeting Cheetah Scat in Diverse Environments of Central-East Namibia*

**Authors:** Hofmann T., Verschueren S., Balkenhol N., Hamalwa H., Neumann S., Marker L., Schmidt-Küntzel A.

A new study tested two different scat sampling methods, walking transects and vehicular surveys, across a variety of Namibian landscapes, including freehold farms and communal conservancies. Walking transects yielded more random scat and marking sites, while vehicle-based surveys covered more ground quickly and identified conspicuous scent posts.

Together, the two strategies confirmed cheetah presence even in areas with suspected low densities, making this a scalable, minimally invasive monitoring approach with applications far beyond Namibia. The work reinforces the importance of tailoring survey methods to each habitat.

**Q. What** is the best method for finding scat?

- ☐ walking
- ☐ driving
- ☒ it depends!

**A.**

**Walking transects** give diverse (complete) results effectively across **all study areas** (road network, cheetah density, habitat, etc...).

**Driving transects** are great for detecting marking sites and when conditions are right, driving is a super-efficient option.

The infographic features a brown background with paw prints and a silhouette of a cheetah walking next to a vehicle wheel.

## ADVANCING CONSERVATION SCIENCE

CCF is leading a study on how **livestock impacts biodiversity at shared waterholes**, focusing on plants, birds, beetles, and mammals. The goal is to guide sustainable land use alongside wildlife.

Our biomonitoring team is using camera traps to identify which species are triggering **livestock guarding dog (LGD) alerts**, helping refine predator-friendly farming strategies.

CCF proudly hosted **ConGen Global 2025**, gathering world-leading scientists at our Namibia headquarters to advance conservation genetics. The successful event reinforced Namibia's essential role in global conservation genetics, spotlighting both scientific collaboration and local leadership in conservation.

## FEATURED STAFF AT CCF

### **DR. MATTI NGHIKEMBUA, ECOLOGIST, MENTOR, AND CONSERVATION CATALYST**



When Dr. Matti Nghikembua first interned at CCF in 1997, he didn't know that cheetah conservation would become his life's work. But that initial encounter, sparked by one of CCF's early education programs, set him on a path that led from intern to staff member to CCF's Chief Ecologist and Forest Steward.

Now, with over 25 years of service and a newly earned PhD, Matti is one of Namibia's leading voices in habitat restoration and rangeland science.

Matti's doctoral dissertation, titled "Wildlife activity patterns and encroaching woody vegetation response to bush thinning on farmlands in north-central Namibia," examined how strategic bush thinning affects everything from ungulate movement to predator activity, vegetation structure, and soil health. His research, published in the journal *Dissertationes Forestales*, adds critical insight to how Namibia can restore degraded grasslands for both livestock and wildlife.

At CCF, working alongside of Dr. Bruce Brewer, Matti oversees landscape-scale restoration programs, supports the production of sustainable biomass products like BUSHBLOK® and biochar, and collaborates with government and private stakeholders through the Namibia Biomass Interest Group (N-BiG). His work ensures that conservation, energy, and community development can move forward together.

Matti also mentors interns and young scientists, carrying the same torch that once inspired him as a student. His journey is a profound example of how one person can make a long-term conservation commitment and how wildlife species and the people who live alongside them benefit.

### **RESTORING RANGELANDS IN NAMIBIA**

Bush encroachment has degraded vast areas of Namibia's savannah, limiting both grazing capacity and wildlife habitat. Dr. Matti Nghikembua's research shows that strategic bush thinning can reverse this trend. Restored grasslands improve forage for wildlife and livestock, supports biodiversity, and makes open space available for cheetahs to hunt. This science-backed approach is now guiding CCF's land management strategies across 143,000 acres.





## CONSERVATION - NAMIBIA

### ***FARMING WITH CHEETAHS IN MIND***

At CCF's Model Farm in Namibia, conservation and agriculture are fully integrated. Our land is not just productive, it's protective. The team is always working to advance new predator-friendly practices that demonstrate how well managed livestock farmland can support livelihoods and wildlife.

As part of our recent habitat restoration efforts, we conduct rotational livestock grazing to help increase plant cover and reduce soil degradation. Cattle health protocols ensured compliance with Namibia's Farm Assured Namibian Meat (FanMeat) certification scheme, a national program that guarantees high-quality, traceable, and ethically raised beef for domestic and export markets. CCF's small-stock team also conducted scheduled parasite control and vaccination campaigns for goats and sheep, safeguarding herds while minimizing predator conflict.

Meanwhile, vehicle maintenance and infrastructure upgrades kept 500 miles of internal roads navigable for field teams monitoring wildlife, conducting game counts, and supporting Model Farm programs.

Wildlife monitoring on restored land showed encouraging signs. Oryx, warthog, duiker, and steenbok densities were stable, especially during Namibia's spring (Oct/Nov) which is the hot and wet season. These open landscapes also support predators, with leopard and jackal sightings confirming the use of key corridors.

At the center of it all is a belief that conservation doesn't stop at the reserve boundary, it extends into every kraal, pasture, and water point where people and predators share space.

**Photo: this page:** Dr. Laurie Marker at CCF's Model Farm

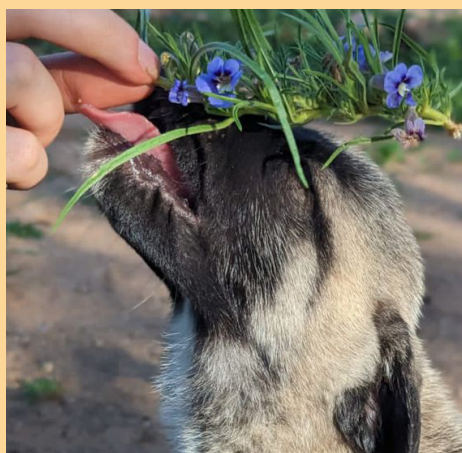
## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - NAMIBIA

Spanning more than 143,000 acres, CCF's Namibia headquarters is among the largest integrated conservation-focused Model Farms on the continent, where predator-friendly research, agriculture, and wildlife coexist by design.

Strategic bush thinning across CCF's properties continues to reshape the landscape, restoring visibility and movement corridors critical to cheetah for hunting. Once overgrown areas now support higher prey densities and easier wildlife passage, including sightings of cheetah, leopard, jackal, and bat-eared fox.

CCF field teams continue to provide farmers with hands-on training in livestock care, predator deterrence, and wildlife tracking, equipping them with practical tools to reduce conflict and support coexistence.

## SPOTlight ON SPONSORS



Each year, CCF's Livestock Guarding Dog (LGD) program places puppies with farmers across Namibia to prevent human-wildlife conflict. These dogs grow up to become frontline defenders, keeping cheetahs and other predators away from livestock without harm.

This February, we invited supporters to help name two of our newest LGD puppies, one male, one female, born at our Model Farm. Every \$5 vote helped fund the program, and voters chose from a list of name pairings for this future working duo.

Thanks to an enthusiastic response from our global community, the votes are in! Dulce and Dante are the winning names, and they're already growing fast. Once trained, these pups will be placed with farmers where they'll make a lasting impact.

With every name and every donation, you're helping write a story of coexistence, one that begins with a bark and protects cheetahs for years to come.



## CONSERVATION – SOMALILAND

### *IMAGES REVEAL WILDLIFE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA*

In 2024, CCF expanded its conservation reach in Somaliland with a major milestone: the deployment of 154 motion-triggered camera traps across the vast and remote Awdal Region. Led by CCF's ecologist Dr. Bogdan Cristescu and Liomba-Junior Mathe (Leo), CCF's new PhD candidate, the Somaliland Camera Trap Project, is the country's first large-scale, non-invasive effort to assess the biodiversity in the country and to assess the distribution, status, and population ecology of cheetahs in the wild.

This project builds on earlier work in Geed-Deeble, where CCF piloted wildlife monitoring near the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (CRCC). Initial camera trap deployments in that region revealed a surprisingly rich ecosystem, including golden wolves, hyenas, wild cats, gerenuk and dik-diks, and demonstrated the potential for broader landscape-scale assessments. The cataloging project now continues in the west of the country.

The Awdal Region is rugged, untamed, and largely unexplored by science. Leo, working with a team from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) and CCF, deployed cameras across diverse terrain: rocky hills, dry riverbeds, grass-dotted plains, and ancient thickets. The results have been stunning. So far, the survey has captured images of Soemmerring's gazelle, Speke's gazelle, Dorcas gazelle, Gerenuk, Klipspringer, Spotted hyenas, African golden wolves, Caracals, Desert warthogs, Hamadryas baboons, Salt's Dik Dik, and the Greater kudu, Somaliland's national animal.

These sightings reveal that in arid and remote regions, biodiversity remains vibrant though many of the species are threatened, vulnerable or regionally endangered. CCF's camera trap data will help fill long-standing knowledge gaps about cheetah range, prey availability, and habitat conditions in Somaliland. Most importantly, it will provide much-needed evidence for conservation law enforcement and anti-trafficking efforts across the Horn of Africa.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS - SOMALILAND



In February, CCF hosted a Conservancy Governance Workshop in Somaliland, supported by the UK Defra LICIT grant. The new Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Mr. Cabdillahi Cisman Jamac (Geelijire), opened the event, welcoming over 100 community members from the two developing conservancies. The workshop was led by Fiesta Warinwa from Kenya, alongside CCF's community legal representative Sidiq, and Dr. Laurie Marker.



### FROM CCF EAST: HOPE, RESCUED FROM IWT

Confiscated from a poacher attempting to sell her to a lodge manager, this female pangolin, now named Hope, was rescued in a joint operation between CCF East and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT). With permits in place, she was safely transferred and released in coordination with the Pangolin Conservation and Research Foundation which works closely with CCF.

Her story is a rare glimpse into the complex work of species protection beyond cheetahs, and a reminder that CCF will step in to address conflict and rescue efforts for all Namibia's threatened wildlife when needed.

**Photos:** *This page:* Laurie and governance workshop participants in Somaliland  
*Opposite page:* Placing camera traps in Somaliland



## FROM THE GROUND UP: GROWING CONSERVATION THROUGH EDUCATION

The key to CCF's success from day one has been education. Long before permanent facilities or published research, CCF's earliest work began in farmer outreach, training communities to reduce conflict and build coexistence with cheetahs. That commitment remains at the center of everything CCF does today, and in 2024, it took major steps forward across both Namibia and Somaliland.

In Somaliland, the most visible milestone is rising from the ground: a permanent Education Centre now under construction at the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (CRCC) in Geed-Deeble. Supported by the Royal Commission for AIUla, the new centre is designed to host farmers, groups and community leaders, provide training for wildlife rangers and monitors and public programs. It will include classrooms, a welcome center and a museum focused on cheetahs and the biodiversity of the Horn of Africa. Constructed with local labor and materials, the facility represents more than infrastructure, it's a long-term investment in local ownership of wildlife protection.

While not open to the general public like CCF's headquarters in Namibia, the CRCC in Somaliland currently serves as a controlled learning environment for invited groups, trainees, and community partners.

Through scheduled visits and hands-on training, participants observe animal care routines, veterinary procedures, and species-specific enrichment, building local capacity for conservation. In the past two years, staff has conducted extensive outreach across the region, educating communities about wildlife trafficking, Somaliland's protected species laws, and the ecological importance of predators like the cheetah. In the past year, our CRCC has also had support from several zoo partners including staff from the Oklahoma City Zoo. Kenneth Kelley from the Zoo's maintenance

department joined our CRCC staff for the second time to assist with the development of cheetah compounds and important infrastructure projects. This year he was joined by William (Billy) McFarland.



Meanwhile, in Namibia, CCF's Education Department kicked off its 2025 Conservation Education Outreach with energy and purpose. In January, educators visited 11 schools in Otjiwarongo, engaging both primary and secondary students in lessons about cheetahs, ecosystems, and the role of humans in wildlife conservation. This outreach is part of a growing effort to shape the next generation of environmental stewards across Namibia.

The education team also extends its reach internationally. In February, Calum O'Flaherty and Tim Hofmann presented at the first-ever African Canines in Conservation Conference in Johannesburg, hosted by the Endangered Wildlife Trust and Africa Massive. Calum shared results from CCF's snake aversion training for livestock guarding dogs, while Tim presented findings from his PhD research and scat detection work tracking elusive species like cheetahs and African wild dogs.

**Photo: this page: left:** Representatives from the Oklahoma City Zoo in Somaliland **right:** Ignatius at a school in Namibia **Opposite page: left:** Education Centre in progress

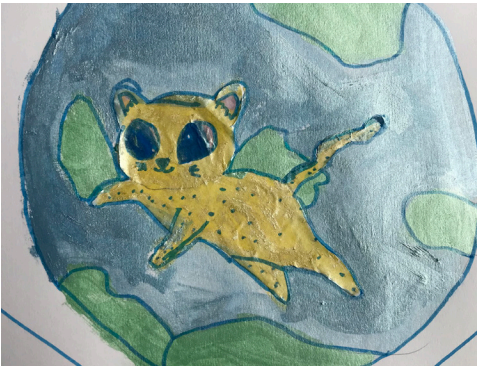


## VISITING STUDENTS FROM THE USA

CCF hosted 36 University of Hampshire students from March 16–18, led by Professor Andrew Conroy and Lecturer Cheryl Parker included participants from agriculture, nutrition, and food systems programs. They experienced first hand how diverse disciplines can support one shared goal: helping cheetahs thrive in the wild.



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



## ART INSPIRING CHANGE

Last year's Online Art Competition showcased powerful wildlife-themed art, celebrating conservation through creativity. View the featured pieces in our online gallery.

[www.cheetah.org/ccf-blog/for-kids/ccf-art-competition-2024/](http://www.cheetah.org/ccf-blog/for-kids/ccf-art-competition-2024/)

### New Competition

**Clean Air for All** - Calling young artists ages 6-9 and 10-15! Submit your drawings, paintings, or 2D mixed media pieces, showing a world with clean, healthy air. All accepted work will be featured in CCF's online exhibition.

### Enter Today

[www.cheetah.org/events/clean-air-for-all-a-childrens-art-competition/](http://www.cheetah.org/events/clean-air-for-all-a-childrens-art-competition/)



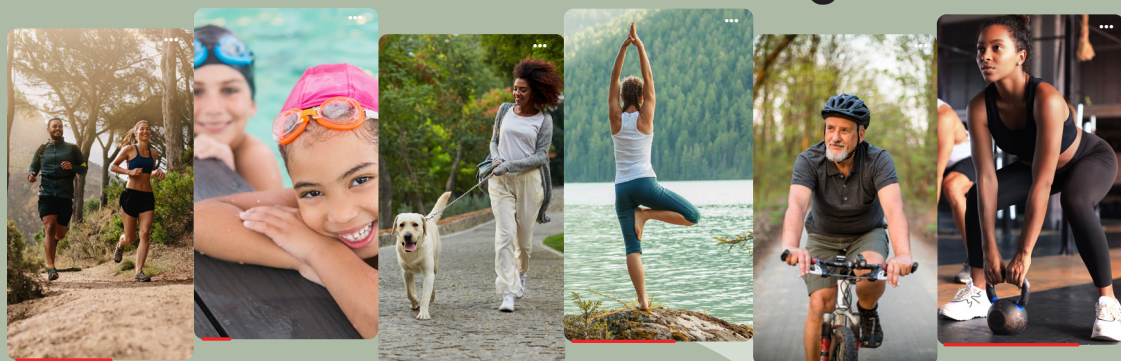
Do you have a story about a young supporter that you would like to share? Send us an email including a short description and some photos and we will include it in an upcoming issue of *Cheetah Strides* or on our website!

Email: [info@cheetah.org](mailto:info@cheetah.org)



Watch new episodes of CheetahTV premiering every other Wednesday at 1:00pm ET. Subscribe @CCFCheetah and click the bell on YouTube to catch every premiere.

## Cheetah Strides TikTok Challenge



### Show Us Your Cheetah Workout!

In the wild, cheetahs depend on strength, agility, incredible speed—and rest—to survive. Now it's your turn: show us your cheetah-inspired fitness routine! How do you blend strength, agility, speed, and recovery into your workouts?

### Challenge Instructions

Post your workout videos, tag us, and join the global Cheetah Fit Challenge, kicking off June 1!

### Use the Hashtags

#CheetahWorkout  
#CheetahFit  
#CheetahFit2025

Share and Tag Us @ccfcheetah



**2025 INTERNATIONAL COURSE  
RECENT ADVANCES IN CONSERVATION GENETICS  
#ConGen2025**



PO Box 2496  
Alexandria, VA. 22301

**CONSERVATION GUIDED BY RESEARCH**

CCF's conservation programs are built on scientific research that spans the past 40+ years. Our research is available to YOU too!  
[www.cheetah.org/learn/resource-library/](http://www.cheetah.org/learn/resource-library/)