

ISSUE Nº
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CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



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VISIT & VOLUNTEER

International Research and Education Centre

Otiwarongo, 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/

Keep up with the cheetahs on social media!



@CCFCheetah



THANKS TO YOU

Unlike most NGOs, which rely mainly on institutional grants and large foundations, **over half of Cheetah Conservation Fund's (CCF) support comes directly from individuals.** Just as the savanna grasslands provide the foundation for life in cheetah country, our grassroots supporters provide the foundation for everything CCF does

WAYS TO GIVE

Donor Advised Funds (DAF)

Recommend a grant to CCF directly from your DAF account

Combined Federal Campaign (CFC #12164)

Federal employees can support CCF through payroll deduction during the annual campaign

Corporate Matching Gifts

Check our donation form online to see if your company participates.

Bequests (Chewbaaka Society)

Leave a lasting legacy by including CCF in your will, life insurance, or retirement plan.

Recurring Donations, Sponsorships, and Stock Gifts

Provide steady support for CCF's work, sponsor a cheetah or Livestock Guarding Dog, or make a gift of stock.

EVENTS

INTERNATIONAL CHEETAH DAY

DECEMBER 4, 2026

Annual Global Celebration of the cheetah - Join Us!

DR. LAURIE MARKER US TOUR

SPRING 2026

EVENTS TBA

Contact info@cheetah.org to request a speaking appearance by Dr. Laurie Marker

FROM THE FOUNDER



This year marks ten years since CCF established a permanent presence in Somaliland. In 2016, the Somaliland government determined that confiscated cheetah cubs would no longer be transferred out of the country. They would stay, and they would be cared for on home soil. That single policy change moved CCF from an advisory role into a hands-on partner in one of the largest cheetah rescue efforts anywhere in the world.

The progress over the past decade is measurable. In 2011, more than half of all confiscated cubs died because the region lacked the facilities and veterinary supplies to save them. Today, the survival rate for new arrivals is among the highest of any rescue program in the world.

We have done so much to build the infrastructure, but infrastructure alone does not save cheetahs. It is the people who make it matter: the veterinarians, the husbandry teams, the enforcement officers, and the community partners whose relationships with CCF have deepened over the past decade.

From the earliest days, Minister Shukri H. Ismail championed our mission within the government, helping shape the policy framework that made permanent cheetah care possible on Somaliland soil. Dr. Edna Adan Ismail, founder of the Edna Adan University Hospital in Hargeisa, stepped in during some of our most difficult moments, providing emergency medical resources for cheetahs when our own supplies fell short. Her willingness to help saved lives. Our partnership with the University of Hargeisa has brought veterinary students and researchers directly into the work of caring for confiscated cheetahs, building a generation of Somali professionals trained in wildlife medicine. During my last trip to Somaliland, I met with the new University president Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Sulub (pictured above).

Our mission remains what it has always been: saving the cheetah in the wild. Every confiscated cub we care for now strengthens the case for ending the illegal trade in the future.

Dr. Laurie Marker
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

in the wild.

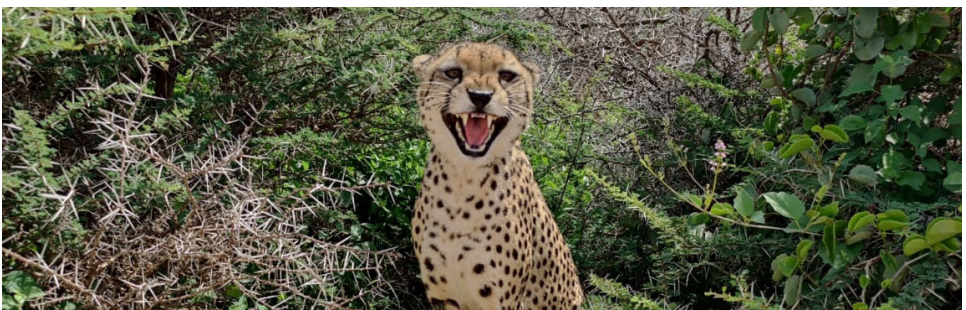


A DECADE IN SOMALILAND

THEN AND NOW

In 2016, when Somaliland's government determined that confiscated cheetahs must remain within the country, CCF's team operated out of temporary safe houses in Hargeisa with limited veterinary supplies and devastating mortality rates. In 2012 alone, 26 cubs were confiscated, and only one was known to be alive by year's end. Today, the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre sits on an 800-hectare site at Geed-Deeble, with purpose-built enclosures, a veterinary clinic, and an Education and Training Centre opened on International Cheetah Day, December 4, 2025, by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Mr. Cabdillahi Cismaan Jamac. Mortality has dropped 85% since 2011, reaching zero among new arrivals in the first half of 2025. But the need has not slowed: six confiscation events in 2025 brought 34 cheetahs into care, including 11 cubs intercepted at the port of Berbera in a joint police, coastguard, and ministry operation. At year's end, the CRCC was caring for 128 cheetahs, with 30 cubs under twelve months old. No other facility in the world holds a comparable number of animals previously living in the wild and removed due to direct human intervention.

The shift from crisis response to durable infrastructure was made possible through partnerships with the Somaliland Ministry of Environment



Photos: This page: top: Safe houses 1 - 3 **bottom:** Cheetah at the CRCC in expansive natural enclosure **Opposite page:** Nathalie Santerre, Cheetah Keeper at the CRCC

and Climate Change, the Royal Commission for AlUla, the Government of Taiwan, and donors worldwide. CCF is assisting the MoECC in rewriting national wildlife protection law, training members of the judiciary, and building community governance through conservancy workshops held in Boroma and Hargeisa in 2025. Phase 2 of the CRCC, including a 15-kilometre perimeter fence and two 200-hectare rewilding enclosures, begins development in 2026. With fewer than 500 cheetahs estimated to remain in the wild across the Horn of Africa, the scale of this work is extraordinary. CCF does not breed cheetahs. Captive care is a bridge, not a destination. The end goal remains keeping cheetahs in the wild.

INGENUITY IN ACTION



When Head Cheetah Keeper Nathalie Santerre noticed changes in the Madar Group's behavior at the CRCC, she called for an examination. Dr. Ashley Marshall confirmed that the trio, Madar, Rama, and Sunny-Joe, all had pneumonia. With limited equipment on hand in Somaliland, Nathalie improvised: she rigged a functioning nebulizer chamber from a crate, tubing, and a small nebulizer device, allowing each cheetah to inhale saline as a fine mist directly into their lungs. She then administered oral antibiotics and continued targeted treatments using the makeshift chamber. Over a few days, the trio's breathing improved, fevers dropped, and energy returned. All three are continuing their course of antibiotics and doing well.

It is exactly this kind of resourcefulness, born from experience and necessity, that defines the team at the CRCC. A decade ago, the infrastructure to support even basic veterinary intervention did not exist in Somaliland. Today, staff like Nathalie are improvising solutions in real time to save lives.

BECOME A SPONSOR

Support CCF's cheetah rehabilitation efforts
www.cheetah.org/donate/sponsor/

RESEARCH PUBLISHED AND IN REVIEW

CCF's resource library has many interesting papers published in scientific peer-reviewed journals. These papers are available online at our website. To read the papers in full visit cheetah.org/resource-category/scientific-papers/

CHEETAH & CARNIVORE ECOLOGY

Published - Ecological Solutions and Evidence, *Combining detection dogs and camera traps improves minimally-invasive population monitoring for the cheetah, an elusive and rare large carnivore*. Authors: Verschueren S, Hofmann T, Schmidt-Kuntzel A, Kakove M, Munyandi B, Bauer H, Balkenhol N, Leirs H, Neumann S, Cristescu B, Marker L. 2025

Published - Ecology and Evolution, *Detection dog survey detects African wild dog presence and a shared marking site*. Authors: Hofmann T, Verschueren S, Shihepo T, Cristescu B, Anderson N, le Roux N, Neumann S, Balkenhol N, Marker L, Schmidt-Kuntzel A. 2025

Published - Science Advances, *When the wild things are: Defining mammalian diel activity and plasticity*. Authors: Devarajan K et al. [224 co-authors]. 2025

Published - Wildlife Biology, *Promoting human-carnivore coexistence through outreach in Namibia's eastern communal conservancies*. Authors: Marker L, Shipingana D, Fleury G, Pfeiffer L, Pontinen A, Cristescu B, Nghikembua MT. 2025



WILDLIFE HEALTH & DISEASE

Published - Frontiers in Conservation Science, *Fecal microbiota is more stable during degradation and more diverse for ex situ cheetahs in Namibia compared to the US*. Authors: Maly MA, Roberts RB, Keady MM, Maxwell M, Schmidt-Kuntzel A, Marker L, Breen M, Muletz-Wolz CR, Crosier AE. 2025

Published - Namibia Scientific Society Journal, *One Health, One Mission: Cheetah Conservation Fund fighting against rabies to protect wildlife, domestic animals, and communities in Namibia*. Authors: Hidalgo A, Basto A, Marker L, Schmidt-Kuntzel A. 2025

FEATURED STAFF AT CCF

JESS SORRENTINO

DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATE - CCF HEADQUARTERS US



Jess Sorrentino first interned at CCF Namibia in 2009, an experience that left a lasting mark. Over the following decade, she built a career as a zookeeper across multiple countries, but never lost touch with Dr. Laurie Marker, regularly consulting her on studbook information and genetics. That ongoing relationship is what brought Jess back. In September 2018, Dr. Marker asked her to travel to Somaliland to take over care of newly

confiscated cubs when Dr. Marker herself had to leave the country. By the time Jess arrived, three more cubs had been rescued on top of the one she was expecting. She found makeshift enclosures, almost no medical supplies, and animals in crisis. She barely slept, feeding cubs around the clock, performing CPR on one for three hours before letting her go. She also earned a memorable bite from Mist on her very first day after reaching for a dropped piece of food.

What Dr. Marker had set in motion in Somaliland, from the first government meetings to the purchase of the safe houses to the veterinary partnerships that kept cubs alive, was still in its earliest and most fragile stage when Jess arrived. The fact that it has grown from those improvised beginnings into the fully operational CRCC is, in Jess's view, a direct reflection of Dr. Marker's vision and persistence.

After returning to the US, Jess earned a Diploma in Wildlife Forensics before joining CCF full time in 2023 as a Development Associate, where she now manages relationships with zoological institution partners worldwide, drawing directly on her field experience to communicate the Somaliland centre's needs.

Jess describes the transformation as almost unbelievable: what once felt like an impossible mission in an impossible place has become something permanent, dignified, and deeply meaningful. She credits the shift to Dr. Marker's refusal to accept that the situation was hopeless. "She saw what it could be before any of us did," she says, "and she just kept going."



JOIN US AT AN EVENT

Meet Dr. Marker and CCF Staff Member, Dionne Stein in the US
cheetah.org/get-involved/ccf-events/



CONSERVATION - NAMIBIA

A NEW FAMILY FINDS ITS WAY

In early September 2025, CCF received a young male cub, roughly six months old, from a private game reserve. His mother had been killed by a predator and he was found ten days later, severely dehydrated and malnourished. The veterinary team treated him for dehydration, parasites, and gastrointestinal illness. After ten days of intensive care, he had fully recovered.

Days later, a female cheetah named Nicky and her two male cubs, about seven months old, arrived at CCF after being caught in a trap cage on a farm. The cheetah team saw an opportunity. They introduced the orphaned cub to Nicky and her cubs in the hope that she would accept him as her own.

She did. All four cheetahs bonded, and in November they were transferred together to a soft-release boma at the N/a'an ku se Foundation's TimBila Nature Reserve, where they will acclimatize before returning to the wild.

It is a rare outcome and a reminder of what is possible when the right tools, partners, and timing come together.

CCF EAST: WHY CHEETAHS NEED US ON THE GROUND

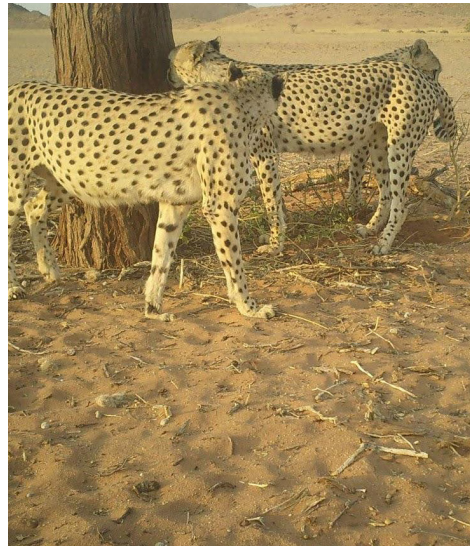
Cheetahs in Namibia share the landscape with farming families whose livelihoods depend on their herds and flocks. When a cheetah crosses a farm boundary, that encounter can end in cooperation or in conflict. CCF East, based in Gobabis, exists to tip the balance toward cooperation, one farm at a time.

By the end of 2025, CCF East had contacted 348 farms across the Omaheke Region, with 184 actively enrolled in the Early Warning System. Participating farmers receive real-time WhatsApp alerts when a satellite-collared cheetah

Photo: this page: Nicky and her cubs pre-release **opposite page: left:** Cheetah in a trap cage at pick from a farm **right:** Cheetahs monitored on camera traps

enters their property, giving them time to bring in livestock rather than reach for a firearm. Those who sign a Memorandum of Agreement can also track collared cheetahs through a dedicated EarthRanger platform.

The numbers show that the system is working. Of 348 farms contacted, only 23 declined to participate. In the second half of 2025 alone, the team responded to multiple calls from farmers and MEFT, collaring and releasing cheetahs back into the wild, assisting with the relocation of two leopards, and bringing four orphaned cubs from the Gobabis area into CCF's care in November after their mother was killed in a human-wildlife conflict incident. One of those cubs arrived with a significant leg wound that is healing well. All four will remain at CCF until they are old enough to return to the wild.



But the reality remains difficult. In 2025, six collared cheetahs were lost, along with an estimated ten cubs. Some were killed by predators, some struck by vehicles, and some died in encounters with farmers protecting their animals. A single collared female, Mina, crossed at least 73 farms in twelve months. Another, Tupuka, roamed across 24 farms in under four months. Every boundary crossing is a new encounter, and not every farmer has the tools or the willingness to respond with restraint.

That is exactly why this work exists. Every farm that joins the Early Warning System is one more place where a cheetah has a chance. Every call that ends in a collar and a release instead of a bullet is a step forward. And every orphan brought into care is proof that even when the outcome is not perfect, the infrastructure to respond is in place and growing.

In November, four cubs arrived from Gobabis with no mother and no options. Today, they are safe, fed, and healing. CCF's field team answered the call. It is what the team does, every day, across a landscape where cheetahs and people are still learning to share the land.



CONSERVATION – SOMALILAND

MIST AND CLOUD: A LIVING CASE STUDY

On August 4, 2018, just days after Somaliland formally ratified its wildlife protection laws, authorities confiscated six cheetah cubs from traffickers. The case was among the first to result in criminal convictions, with two smugglers sentenced to prison. It was a turning point: proof that the law could be enforced and that animals intercepted under it would remain in-country, under CCF's care.

The six cubs were named Mist, Cloud, Little Star, Moonlight, Rainbow, and Sunshine. They arrived at the temporary safe house in Hargeisa in fragile condition, typical of trafficked cubs taken too young from the wild. The safe house had limited veterinary supplies, no permanent infrastructure, and a team that improvised daily to keep animals alive.

Rainbow and Sunshine died in the years that followed, largely from feline infectious peritonitis before effective treatments became available. Moonlight, who underwent a complicated orthopedic surgery for a broken leg during the safe house era, survived for years but has recently passed as well. Three of the original six remain: Mist, Cloud, and Little Star.

Their journey has tracked every phase of Somaliland's conservation progress. They lived through the safe house era, endured viral outbreaks common to the early population, and were translocated to the CRCC at Geed-Deeble as permanent infrastructure replaced the makeshift facilities where their lives began. On March 31, 2024, Mist and Cloud moved from a temporary enclosure into a newly constructed permanent home. Their health, once precarious, improved significantly after the move to a more natural environment.

Now eight years old, they are cared for by a husbandry team that knows their individual temperaments. Mist is the more intense of the two, particularly at feeding time, and is fed individually to manage her aggression.

Cloud carries the marks of her earliest days: bone fractures, likely from nutritional deficiencies or trauma as a trafficked cub, that have since healed but are managed with joint and calcium supplements.

When Mist and Cloud arrived in 2018, the safe house held 31 cubs and the team was bracing for the next round of confiscations with almost no resources. Today, the CRCC provides professional care for 128 cheetahs across purpose-built enclosures, a veterinary clinic, and a newly opened Education Centre. The distance between those two realities is measured in years of infrastructure, training, enforcement, and partnership.

Their survival is not a single victory. It is the accumulation of a decade of work. Their lives reflect the full arc of Somaliland's conservation story, from crisis to permanence.

SPOTlight ON SPONSORS

SANDY SHEPARD SUPPORTS LGDS

Sandy Shepard first supported CCF in 2011 and has been a Livestock Guarding Dog sponsor since 2017. In February 2026, after more than a decade of giving from California, she and two friends traveled to Namibia to see CCF's work firsthand. They stayed at the International Research and Education Centre in Otjiwarongo, toured the Model Farm, and met the cheetahs and guarding dogs she had been supporting from afar.

"I was drawn to CCF's focus on coexistence—protecting cheetahs by supporting farmers and their livelihoods. After years of following the work from California, seeing it in person was extraordinary; a morning with a cheetah purring under the veranda as I had my morning coffee made it feel deeply personal and real."

To learn more about sponsoring a Livestock Guarding Dog, visit cheetah.org/get-involved/sponsor/



Photos: *This page:* **top:** Sandy (left) and Lynn Eichinger (right) meet CCF's Scat Detection Dog **Opposite page:** Mist and Cloud



SOMALILAND'S FIRST SESSION AT THE NEW EDUCATION CENTRE

On December 4, 2025, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change officially opened the new Education and Training Centre at the CRCC in Geed-Deeble. Nearly 100 people attended the ceremony, including four Ministers and dignitaries from Somaliland and other countries, among them the United Kingdom's Head of Office in Somaliland. The facility, supported by the Royal Commission for AlUla and constructed with local labour and materials, had been completed in July and tested in August when it hosted a Discovery Channel documentary crew of approximately 20 people.

Thirteen days later, on December 17, the centre held its first education session. The participants were not foreign visitors or international delegates. They were local health professionals: two veterinarians, a public health student, and a group of nutritionists from the surrounding community. The session covered CCF's conservation work, the importance of cheetah protection, the mechanics of the illegal wildlife trade, and basic wildlife rescue techniques.

It is a small beginning with large implications. For the first time, Somaliland has a permanent facility dedicated to training its own people in wildlife conservation. The curriculum will expand to include rural and pastoral farmers, rangers, and veterinary students, drawing on a locally adapted version of CCF's Future Farmers of Africa programme. A decade ago, the infrastructure to support even basic veterinary care for confiscated cubs did not exist in Somaliland. Today, the country has a centre built to ensure that the next generation of Somali professionals can carry this work forward on their own terms.

Photo: this page: Students in CCF's Education Centre in Somaliland **Opposite page:** Tresia Shihepo on the job from collecting samples to the lab

FROM INTERN TO AWARD-WINNING SCIENTIST



When Tresia Shihepo joined CCF's genetics laboratory as an intern in March 2023, she was learning the fundamentals of conservation genetics in one of the most active wildlife laboratories in southern Africa. Two years later, she stood before an international audience at the Organisation of Women in Science for the Developing World conference in Windhoek and won the award for best post-graduate presenter.

Tresia is now a Genetics Laboratory Assistant and MSc student at the lab, working alongside fellow MSc students Valencia Shipapo and Lapaka Petrus, both of whom also presented their research at the OWSD conference. The laboratory is led by Hafeni Hamalwa, who followed the same path: he first joined CCF as an intern in 2017 and completed his MSc in 2022.

CCF's genetics laboratory has been an official placement for undergraduate students from the University of Namibia since 2017 and from the Namibia University of Science and Technology since 2018. In January 2025, the lab team participated in ConGen Global, an international conservation genetics course hosted at CCF that brought more than 40 students and faculty from around the world to Otjiwarongo.

The pipeline from student to scientist is deliberate. CCF's research depends on Namibian professionals who understand the landscape, the species, and the communities they serve. Tresia's recognition in Windhoek is proof that the investment is paying off.





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



Emmie sponsors a cheetah named Iphupho and is a member of CCF's Cub's Club. In December 2025, she celebrated her eighth birthday at CCF's International Research and Education Centre in Namibia, where she and her family stayed at Babson House and saw CCF's work up close. The team at the centre even baked her a birthday cake.



Seven-year-old **Vincent** from Germany, known to his family as "Vinci," loves cheetahs so much that he gave a presentation about them at kindergarten, covering their special characteristics and hunting techniques.

When asked what he likes best about cheetahs, he says it is their faces, the tear streaks that act as natural sunglasses, their spots, and that they can run so fast. He sponsors Rocket at CCF, gets his face painted as a cheetah at every birthday party, and dreams of becoming a cheetah researcher in Namibia one day.

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



Watch new episodes of CheetahTV, including an interview with Jeff Corwin. Premieres scheduled on alternating Wednesdays at 1:00pm ET. Subscribe @CCFCheetah YouTube and click the bell for notifications.



Cheetah Strides Social Media Challenge

THE #10ForCheetahs CHALLENGE

To celebrate ten years of CCF's permanent presence in Somaliland, we're challenging you to share your "10 Things I Love About Cheetahs" and help raise awareness for their conservation!

How to Join:

1. Create a TikTok, Instagram Reel, or YouTube Short listing your 10 things. It can be ten facts, ten favorite moments, ten reasons you support CCF, or ten things most people don't know about cheetahs. Make it funny, make it serious, make it yours.
2. Tag @ccfcheetah and use the hashtag #10ForCheetahs so we can see and share your video.
3. Spread the word and encourage your friends to take the challenge too!

Every participant will have their social media handle painted on a rock and placed in a dedicated garden at the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre in Geed-Deeble, Somaliland. Your account handle, on a rock, at the centre you helped build. We'll photograph it and post it to social media throughout the year.



PO Box 2496
Alexandria, VA. 22301

BE OUR GUEST - VISIT CCF TODAY

Experience conservation in action at CCF's International Research and Education Centre in Otjiwarongo, Namibia, open 364 days a year. Meet resident cheetahs, tour the Model Farm, and see firsthand the work that goes into saving the world's fastest cat. cheetah.org/get-involved/visit-ccf/