



CCF BY THE NUMBERS

CCF is an international non-profit incorporated association dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems.

RESEARCH

CONSERVATION

EDUCATION



THE SPECIES ACROSS ITS RANGE

<7,000

adult cheetahs

37%

projected decline over three generations (2017 - 2032)

<7,000: CCF, Working Landscapes, Living Ecosystems (2026) · 37% decline: IUCN Red List (Durant et al. 2022)

9%

of historic range still occupied

Durant et al. 2017

~1,200

cheetahs in Namibia

CCF/LCMAN assessment, 2026 · presented at UNCCD COP17

ENDANGERED

Horn of Africa cheetah - uplisted 2023, supported by CCF genetic evidence

IUCN; Schmidt-Küntzel et al. 2024

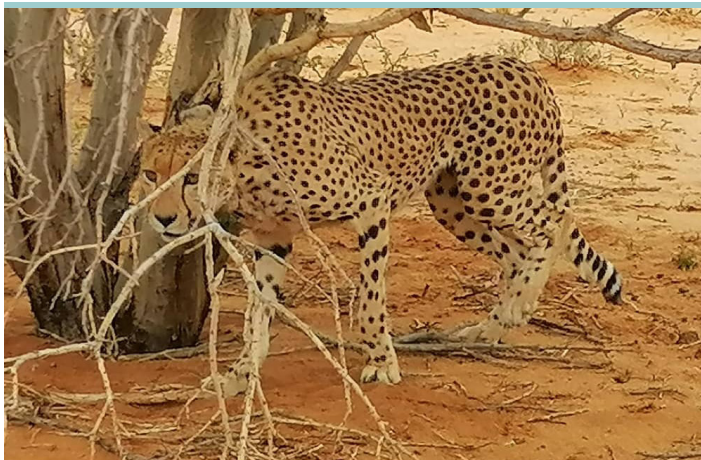
VULNERABLE

Global species status

IUCN Red List

APPENDIX I

CITES since 1975 - CMS since 2009



~1,500

cheetahs cared for since 1990

670+

returned to the wild

CCF program records - rescued, rehabilitated, and farmer trapped cheetahs released into existing wild populations.

RETURN TO INDIA - PROJECT CHEETAH

29

translocated
from three
countries

The world's first intercontinental translocation of a large carnivore: 8 cheetahs from Namibia (2022) and 12 from South Africa (2023) founded the population, joined by 9 from Botswana in 2026. Second-generation India-born cubs arrived in 2025.

India population as of mid-2026: 50+ and growing, across Kuno National Park and Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

SINCE THE BEGINNING

800

livestock guarding dogs
placed since 1994;
231 active

1,000+

More than 1,000 cheetah samples analyzed at CCF's genetics laboratory since 1991, from clinic blood and tissue to scat located by detection dogs, including 292 individuals rescued from the illegal wildlife trade (2004–2024).

PROGRAM OUTCOMES 2025

980

farmers trained
through Future
Farmers of Africa

123

rescued cheetahs
in care at the CRCC,
Somaliland

348

farms reached by
the Predator Early
Warning System;
184 active

17,161

visitors to the Field Research
and Education Centre in
Namibia

18,498

Namibian learners in CCF's
education programs, plus 632
teachers

Figures are updated annually from the CCF Annual Report and when new figures are presented internationally. This page is the sole source for population and program statistics across the fact sheet series.

Cheetah
CONSERVATION FUND

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photo by Corey Raffel

The cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus*, is one of the oldest of the world's cats, with ancestors reaching back more than five million years. It is the fastest animal on land, and every part of its body evolved for the chase. A small head, a lean, aerodynamic frame, long legs, an extraordinarily flexible spine, and a muscular tail that works like a boat's rudder allow the cheetah to reach speeds of up to 70 mph (112 kph) and change direction in a split second. From a standing start, a cheetah can hit 60 mph (96 kph) in about three seconds. Its claws are semi-retractable, closer to a dog's than to those of other cats, and grip the ground like the cleats of a running shoe, while hard, textured foot pads work like tire treads through fast, sharp turns.

That speed came at a price. Everything the cheetah gained in acceleration, it gave up in strength. That trade-off, made millions of years ago, shapes its survival today.

The Cheetah: The Fastest Animal on Land

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Cheetahs have a thin frame with a narrow waist and a deep chest. Oversized nostrils draw in extra oxygen with each breath. An enlarged heart and lungs, supported by robust arteries and adrenal glands, circulate that oxygen with remarkable efficiency. This is the engine behind the sprint.

Adults weigh 75 to 125 pounds (34–55 kg) and measure 40 to 60 inches (100–150 cm) from head to hindquarters, with another 24 to 32 inches (60–80 cm) of tail. Most stand 28 to 36 inches (70–90 cm) at the shoulder. Males are slightly larger, with bigger heads, but the difference is modest. Telling the sexes apart by sight alone is difficult even for experienced observers.

COAT AND MARKINGS

The cheetah's undercoat ranges from light tan to deep gold, marked with solid black spots. The spots of a leopard or jaguar are open in the center, like rings; the cheetah's are solid, which is the quickest way to tell these spotted cats apart. Remarkably, the spots are not only in the fur. The cheetah's skin is spotted too, and the black fur grows from the black spots on the skin beneath.

Distinctive black "tear marks" run from the inner corner of each eye down along the nose to the mouth. They are thought to work the way a rifle scope's matte finish does, cutting the sun's glare so the cheetah can focus on prey across long, bright distances. The tail ends in a bushy tuft ringed by five or six dark bands. These markings camouflage a hunting cheetah, and they are also believed to act as a signal: a flag that helps young cubs follow their mother through tall grass. The tail tip varies from white to black between individuals.

A CAT UNLIKE OTHER CATS

The cheetah stands apart from the other large cats in more than build. It cannot roar. It growls when threatened, hisses or spits when alarmed, and otherwise communicates in high-pitched chirps, bubbles, and barks. Alone among the large cats, the cheetah can purr continuously, on both the inhale and the exhale.

Built for flight rather than fight, cheetahs pose no natural threat to humans. A cheetah lacks the heavy claws and jaw strength of the other big cats, and its instinct when confronted is to flee.

THE CHEETAH'S LIFE

A cheetah's life passes through three stages: cubhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Gestation lasts around three months (93–95 days), and litters typically number three to five cubs, though litters from a single cub to as many as eight have been recorded. Newborns weigh just 8.5 to 15 ounces (240–425 grams) and arrive blind and helpless, smoky-gray, with a mantle of long hair running from neck to tail. The mantle serves the cub twice over: it hides the cub in dry grass, and it makes the cub resemble a honey badger, one of the few animals most predators will not risk approaching.

Within a day or so of birth, the mother must leave to hunt, and the early weeks are the most dangerous of a cheetah's life. The cubs stay concealed in a nest, which their mother moves regularly to avoid detection, until they are six to eight weeks old. She raises them entirely alone for the next year and a half.

At about six weeks, the cubs begin following their mother on her daily hunts. Their education has begun. Between four and six months they are at their most active and playful, using their sharp young claws to climb the tall “play trees” where they wrestle with siblings, practice balance, and survey their world. By one year, they are participating in hunts, learning the full sequence: detect, stalk, chase, trip, and the suffocating bite. At 18 to 22 months, mother and cubs separate. The siblings stay together a while longer; when the young females begin to cycle and attract dominant males, their brothers move on.

MALE COALITIONS

Male cheetahs from the same litter often stay together for life, forming coalitions that hunt more successfully and defend themselves better than any male could alone. After leaving their mother and sisters, young males roam as “dispersal males” for several years before establishing a territory, which they may then have to defend, or lose, to stronger coalitions. Cheetah home ranges are enormous, spanning roughly 1,500 to 2,300 km² (580–890 mi²) in Namibian research.

LIVING FAST

The cheetah's life is as fast as its stride, and often as short. CCF's research indicates that cheetahs in the wild and in captivity typically live 8 to 12 years, though some of CCF's resident orphans in Namibia have reached 18. Cub mortality is severe but varies enormously by landscape. In Tanzania's Serengeti, studies found that around ninety percent of cubs did not survive their first three months, most lost to lions and hyenas. On Namibian farmland, where large predators

are fewer, roughly half of each litter reaches independence. Among adults, territorial combat between males is a leading cause of death, and adult mortality is one of the tightest limits on the growth of cheetah populations.

AN ANCIENT SURVIVOR

Relatives of the modern cheetah once ranged across much of the planet. Around 20,000 years ago, the drastic climate shifts of the last Ice Age erased roughly three-quarters of the large mammal species of North America, Europe, and Asia, and very nearly the cheetah with them. The species survived through a tiny remnant population, and every cheetah alive today carries the genetic legacy of that bottleneck: a uniformity that still affects the species' health and resilience. Humans have been captivated by cheetahs for millennia. The ancient Egyptians kept and revered them, but the species has never bred readily in captivity, and for centuries captive collections were sustained by taking cheetahs from the wild.

BUILT FOR SPEED, NOT FOR FIGHTING

The cheetah's evolutionary bargain explains its modern predicament. Inside Africa's parks and reserves, the larger predators the cheetah cannot afford to fight, chiefly lions and hyenas, kill its cubs and steal its kills, holding cheetah numbers down even in protected land. CCF's research shows that the great majority of cheetahs live outside protected areas, on the farmlands and rangelands where those competitors are scarce. That places the species' future squarely in human hands. Across its range the cheetah faces declining prey, shrinking habitat, poaching, the illegal wildlife trade, and indiscriminate trapping and shooting. Its populations are fragmented and threatened throughout Africa, and the Asiatic cheetah survives only in Iran, in critically small numbers.

The fastest animal on land cannot outrun habitat loss. Its survival depends on the same landscapes people depend on, and on the willingness of the people who share them.



LEARN MORE

For current population estimates and status listings, see CCF by the Numbers at:
<https://bit.ly/CCFFactSheets>



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**RESEARCH
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The Cheetah Conservation Fund conducts research on the biology, ecology, and genetics of cheetahs worldwide, and that research forms the foundation for everything else CCF does in conservation and education. CCF was the first predator research program to operate outside a protected area, working directly with the local communities where cheetahs actually live. Its findings do not stay in journals: CCF science has shaped livestock management across Namibian farmland, guided international policy, and changed the cheetah's official conservation status.

Research

GENETICS, HEALTH AND REPRODUCTION

CCF conducts ongoing biomedical research by collecting and analyzing samples from cheetahs across their range, including blood, skin, tissue, sperm, and fecal samples. Since 1991, samples have been obtained from over 1,000 individual cheetahs, building one of the deepest health records that exists for any wild carnivore and yielding insights into disease, stress, hormones, and reproductive fitness in the wild population.

Sampled cheetahs undergo comprehensive examination under anesthesia, including measurements and weight assessments for morphometric studies and analysis of dental structure and reproductive condition. Together these examinations track the health of the world's cheetah population over time.

LIFE TECHNOLOGIES CONSERVATION GENETICS LABORATORY

CCF's Life Technologies Conservation Genetics Laboratory is the only fully capable facility of its kind at an in-situ conservation site in Africa. The lab produces, analyzes, and interprets genetic results entirely in-house, studying gene flow, patterns of genetic variation, and behavioral ecology across habitats. Visiting researchers from other organizations use the facility as well, extending its benefit to many species beyond the cheetah and helping train a generation of conservation geneticists across Africa.

The laboratory's reach extends to the Horn of Africa, where CCF scientists have genotyped samples from confiscated cheetahs to determine their origins. That work produced one of the most consequential results in the organization's history: in 2023, the IUCN uplisted the Horn of Africa cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*, to Endangered, a reclassification supported directly by CCF's genetic evidence. It stands as proof that laboratory science conducted in the field can change a species' standing in international conservation law.

GENOME RESOURCE BANK

To safeguard the species' genetic diversity, CCF cryopreserves sperm, tissue, and blood in its Genome Resource Bank, operational since 1991 and among the most extensive repositories ever assembled for a threatened species. CCF collaborates with the Smithsonian Institution to advance cryopreservation methods, and has extended the model abroad, helping establish a sperm bank in the United Arab Emirates and training practitioners in collection and freezing techniques that preserve the diversity of source populations.

CCF's leadership in reproductive science has produced a series of firsts: in 2007, working with the Smithsonian's National Zoo and the University of California at Davis, researchers produced the first in vitro cheetah embryos developed to the blastocyst stage. CCF science also contributed to the birth of the first cheetah cub conceived by artificial insemination using frozen sperm from Namibia, and the first cubs born through in vitro fertilization in the United States.

BEHAVIOR, DEMOGRAPHICS AND HOME RANGE

CCF researchers study cheetah movement to understand home ranges, habitat preferences, territorial behavior, and the other behaviors on which survival depends. Since the early years of the program, CCF has tagged, released, and radio-tracked cheetahs using VHF and satellite collars, building a long-term picture of how cheetahs use the landscape. Working alongside CCF conservationists, researchers evaluate relocation, reintroduction, and non-invasive monitoring techniques to strengthen wild populations.

COUNTING AN INVISIBLE CAT

Cheetahs are notoriously difficult to count. They are secretive, wide-ranging, and thinly spread, and conventional census techniques undercount them. CCF researchers have developed and refined complementary methods, including radio telemetry, spoor counts, camera traps, and scat detection dogs, using known density estimates to calibrate population figures. The resulting data identifies where human-carnivore conflict is likely and gives decision-makers the evidence to act before conflict escalates.

SCAT DETECTION DOGS

CCF pioneered the use of scat detection dogs for cheetah research in Namibia. Specially trained dogs locate cheetah scat, known to researchers as “black gold,” across landscapes where the cats themselves are almost never seen. Samples go to CCF’s genetics laboratory, where extracted DNA identifies individual cheetahs and reveals population structure without a single animal being captured or handled. The detection dog team operates in Namibia and Angola.

ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH

CCF evaluates cheetah habitat and prey availability while monitoring the other carnivores that share the cheetah’s ecosystem. This work includes assessing vegetation and growth patterns, designating land for ecological

management, and studying how bush encroachment affects biodiversity. Long-term studies track how wildlife species use habitat, document hunting practices and prey preferences of different cheetah populations, and develop methods for restoring prey species in cheetah range countries.

HUMAN-CARNIVORE CONFLICT

Because most cheetahs live outside protected areas, alongside rural livestock farming communities, conflict research sits at the center of cheetah conservation. CCF develops management approaches that serve farmers’ livelihoods and wildlife at once, evaluating and implementing non-lethal predator control tools and livestock management techniques. The most celebrated result is the livestock guarding dog program, which protects herds so effectively that removing cheetahs from the landscape becomes unnecessary. These techniques reach farmers through CCF’s Future Farmers of Africa training, and CCF’s Model Farm demonstrates them working at commercial scale.

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE STUDIES

CCF’s research capability is central to its fight against the illegal wildlife trade. In partnership with Somaliland’s wildlife authorities, CCF established the Cheetah Research and Conservation Center, where cheetahs confiscated from the pet trade are rescued and rehabilitated. Genetic samples collected from every confiscated animal allow CCF scientists to trace trafficking routes back to source populations, and samples contributed by veterinary and breeding facilities in the UAE extend that picture across the demand side of the trade. This is the evidence base behind the 2023 uplisting, and it continues to grow with every case.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

CCF maintains long-term research partnerships with academic and research institutions around the world, spanning the full breadth of cheetah science, and works closely with zoos and wildlife parks on projects involving



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CCF tracks and combats the trafficking of cheetahs, assisting in confiscations of cubs destined for the illegal pet trade. The trade involves live cheetahs as well as parts (skin, bones, teeth, claws) and runs primarily between East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, where cheetahs are prized as pets. Cubs are sourced from wild populations in Ethiopia, Somaliland, northern Kenya, and Somalia, and smuggled mostly through Somaliland toward Yemen for distribution across the Gulf States. CCF has maintained a database of cheetah trafficking incidents since 2005, and that record has become one of the most powerful weapons against the trade.

Illegal Wildlife Trade

THE PROBLEM

CCF's research indicates that some 200 to 300 cheetah cubs are smuggled out of the Horn of Africa each year, and many more die before transport. The cubs are typically just 3 to 10 weeks old, taken while their mother is out hunting or in retaliation for perceived livestock predation. Removed from their mothers before learning the skills needed to survive, confiscated cubs can almost never be returned to the wild; they arrive in poor condition and require intensive care simply to live. Set against the critically small wild population remaining in the affected areas of the Horn of Africa, an offtake of this size is unsustainable.

2016: THE TURNING POINT

Before 2016, there was nowhere in Somaliland to house confiscated wildlife. Cheetahs intercepted from the trade were transferred abroad, to the Born Free Foundation's sanctuary in Ethiopia and the DECAN Refuge in Djibouti, and many of the youngest did not survive long enough to be moved at all.

In 2016, the government of Somaliland reversed its policy and decided that confiscated animals would remain in the country. CCF's team in Hargeisa, the capital, stepped in to care for the cheetahs intercepted from the trade, housing them first in temporary shelters. From that decision grew a lasting partnership with Somaliland's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, built on awareness, capacity building, and regional cooperation.

The partnership produced results on every front. In September 2018, CCF formalized a veterinary collaboration linking European universities with the University of Hargeisa and the University of Burao, bringing visiting veterinarians to assist with cheetah care and lecture to Somaliland's veterinary students. In August 2018 came a landmark legal victory: two men caught attempting to smuggle six cheetahs out of Somaliland were convicted and sentenced to three years in prison, the first successful prosecution of cheetah traffickers in Somaliland's history.

And the sanctuary that in those early years was only an ambition now exists. CCF's Cheetah Research and Conservation Center at Geed-Deeble gives the rescued cheetahs of the illegal trade a permanent, purpose-built home, and gives Somaliland a national capability that did not exist before 2016.

THE LAW CATCHES UP

The legal ground under the cheetah trade is shifting, and the United Arab Emirates has led the change. In December 2016, the UAE enacted a national law banning private ownership of exotic and dangerous animals, reserving the keeping of wild animals to zoos, wildlife parks, and breeding and research centers. It was the first move of its kind in the region, striking at the status-pet culture that drives demand.

A decade later the UAE went further, enacting sweeping penalties for wildlife trafficking itself: up to 15 years' imprisonment and fines reaching AED 2 million, alongside tightened border controls, under a declared zero-tolerance policy toward the exploitation of endangered species. Ownership was outlawed first; now the smuggling routes themselves carry crushing legal risk.

CCF welcomes this momentum while preparing for its consequences. As enforcement expands, the region will need facilities and trained personnel ready to receive confiscated animals, a capacity that remains scarce across the Gulf. CCF promotes training and protocols for the initial care of confiscated cheetahs, and continues demand-side education in the neighboring Gulf States where such laws do not yet exist.

THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Wild, exotic animals are in high demand in the Gulf States. Alongside tigers, lions, sun bears, clouded leopards, jaguars, chimpanzees, orangutans, and other protected species, cheetahs are kept as pets in houses and private compounds across the Peninsula, and evidence indicates that most were sourced illegally from the Horn of Africa. Even cheetahs that survive the crossing often die young from poor nutrition and inadequate care.

CCF works on the demand side as well as the supply side. Dr. Laurie Marker has visited the UAE to raise awareness and organized training for veterinarians in proper cheetah care, and CCF's alliances in the UAE contribute samples from captive cheetahs to its DNA database. CCF monitors developments across the Gulf States directly and through its collaborators and allies on the ground.

SOUTH AFRICA

CCF has received reports of cheetah skins, skulls, and other parts sold in traditional medicine markets, most visibly the Faraday and Mai Mai markets in Johannesburg, where CCF associates, including Dr. Marker herself, have documented dozens of cheetah products offered openly. The origin of these products is unknown; South African experts suggest free-roaming wild cheetahs from borderland farms, or captive-breeding facilities. South Africa is the world's largest breeder and exporter of cheetahs, traded under CITES Appendix II, and the possibility that wild-caught animals enter that legal trade has been raised at the CITES level.

SCIENCE AGAINST THE TRADE

CCF's genetics laboratory in Namibia maintains a growing DNA database built from wild, captive, and deceased cheetahs, created to identify the origins of animals in the illegal trade and support criminal investigations. Genetic samples are collected from every confiscated cheetah, and

contributions from veterinary and breeding facilities in the UAE extend the picture across the demand side of the trade. Since 2012, CCF researchers have also monitored the online dimension of the trade, documenting live cheetahs offered for sale on e-commerce and social media platforms.

This evidence produced a historic result. In 2023, the IUCN uplisted the Horn of Africa cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus soemmeringii*, to Endangered, a reclassification supported directly by CCF's genetic analysis of confiscated animals. The science built to prosecute traffickers ended up changing the subspecies' standing in international conservation.

PUBLIC POLICY

CCF has carried the cheetah into the international policy arena for nearly two decades. In 2007, CCF became a founding member of the Coalition Against Wildlife Trafficking (CAWT), and in 2010 the cheetah was formally added to CAWT's agenda. Drawing on its trafficking database, CCF supported the proposal by Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda that placed illegal cheetah trade on the agenda of CITES CoP16, the first time the issue was discussed globally. A CITES-commissioned study on cheetah trafficking followed at the 27th Animals Committee, and after the 65th Standing Committee meeting in 2014, an inter-sessional working group surveyed laws and trade activity across CITES Parties, with a workshop hosted by the State of Kuwait. The group's recommendations, adopted at SC66 and carried into CoP17 in Johannesburg in 2016, produced a Cheetah Trade Resource Kit for enforcement and an online Cheetah Forum.

The work continues through the CITES Big Cat Task Force, which strengthens enforcement cooperation, trade-route intelligence, and forensic identification across the eight big cat species most threatened by illegal trade, and through the CMS Advisory Committee on Illegal Killing and Trade and the joint CITES-CMS African Carnivores Initiative.



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Most of Namibia's cheetahs live on farmland, sharing the landscape with the people whose livestock and game enterprises depend on it. The cheetah's future there is not a fencing problem or an enforcement problem; it is a knowledge problem. CCF's education programs work at every level of that landscape, teaching schoolchildren the value of wildlife, training farmers in methods that let livestock and predators coexist, and preparing the next generation of African biologists, geneticists, and ecologists to carry conservation forward long after any single program ends. Education is what makes every other CCF program sustainable.

Education



FUTURE CONSERVATIONISTS OF AFRICA

CCF educators present programs in schools throughout Namibia, engaging the nation's youth on the value of wildlife and the importance of healthy ecosystems. The school outreach program has run continuously since 1994, reaching learners and their teachers in every region of the country.

The classroom is only the beginning. Student groups travel to CCF's Field Research and Education Centre for immersive two-day environmental courses, staying at Camp Lightfoot, CCF's overnight facility for young learners, which hosts groups of up to 35. For many Namibian children, this is their first close encounter with the species their country is known for, and with the scientists who study it. Together, these activities form the Future Conservationists of Africa (FCA) program.

FUTURE FARMERS OF AFRICA

Future Farmers of Africa (FFA) is CCF's adult education program, built for the land users and managers who share the cheetah's range. FFA teaches integrated livestock and wildlife management as practical skills with direct economic value: livestock health and veterinary care, husbandry, fire prevention and suppression, livestock valuation, predator spoor identification, distinguishing the kill techniques of different predators, and the best practices that reduce livestock losses.

Week-long courses run at the Field Research and Education Centre, using CCF's Model Farm and its working agricultural enterprises as the training ground. One-day workshops travel to the communal conservancies of the Greater Waterberg Landscape, reaching the most remote rural farming communities. Non-lethal predator control runs through all of it, including the use of livestock guarding dogs, a method CCF introduced to Africa in 1994. A farmer who can protect a herd without a rifle has no reason to remove a cheetah from the landscape; that is the theory of change, taught one course at a time.

TRAINING CONSERVATION LEADERS

Cheetah survival across a dozen range countries depends on people using an informed, integrated approach that incorporates humans, wildlife, and habitat together. Since 2005, CCF has conducted month-long international training courses that bring conservation managers, scientists, and community representatives from cheetah range countries in Africa and Iran to Namibia to learn side by side. Alumni of these courses now lead cheetah conservation programs in their home countries, a multiplication of capacity that no single organization could achieve directly.

INTERSHIPS AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

CCF is an official fourth-year placement site for students of Namibia's two major universities, the University of Namibia and the Namibia University of Science and Technology, and welcomes interns from undergraduate and graduate programs around the world. Aspiring biologists, geneticists, and ecologists pursuing master's and doctoral degrees work on research and thesis projects at CCF year-round, alongside visiting international student groups. Through its work in the Horn of Africa, CCF is also supporting the development of university-level curriculum abroad, extending the training model beyond Namibia.

EDUCATION TAKES ROOT IN SOMALILAND

CCF's education mission followed its rescue work to the Horn of Africa. Since 2018, a veterinary partnership linking European universities with the University of Hargeisa and the University of Burao has brought visiting veterinarians to Somaliland to assist with cheetah care and lecture to the country's veterinary students, building medical capacity where none existed for wildlife.

That foundation now has a permanent home. The Education and Training Complex at CCF's Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre, sponsored by the Royal Commission for AlUla, was completed in 2025 and officially opened by Somaliland's Minister of Environment and Climate

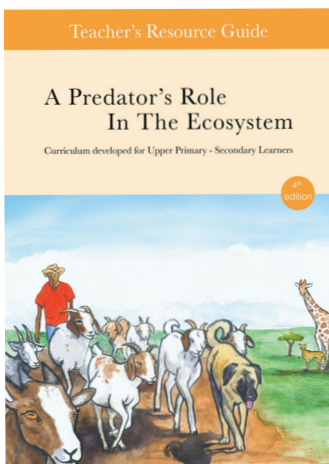
Change on the 4th of December, International Cheetah Day. Its first sessions brought together local veterinarians, health professionals, and students to learn conservation principles, the workings of the illegal wildlife trade, and basic wildlife rescue techniques, and a dedicated curriculum is in development. The teaching materials came prepared: in 2023, CCF adapted both its farmer training guide and its Teacher's Resource Guide for the Horn of Africa, publishing them in the Somali language. Alongside the Centre's classrooms, CCF and the Ministry conduct awareness visits to the rural communities where trafficking begins, and CCF is supporting the development of cheetah-focused university curriculum in Ethiopia, extending the education model across the Horn of Africa.

TEACHERS AND CLASSROOMS

CCF equips educators as deliberately as it teaches students. Its Teacher's Resource Guide, "A Predator's Role in the Ecosystem," gives Namibian teachers a complete environmental curriculum built around the cheetah, and the International Cheetah Day Conservation Passport brings the species into classrooms worldwide each December. Teacher participation is built into the school outreach program itself, so the lessons stay in the classroom long after CCF's educators leave.

PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES

CCF's knowledge is published at every level, from peer-reviewed science to children's books. *Cheetahs: Biology and Conservation* (Elsevier, 2018) is the definitive scientific reference on the species. *A Future for Cheetahs* (Dr. Laurie Marker and Suzi Eszterhas) and *Chewbaaka: My Life at Cheetah Conservation Fund* (Dr. Laurie Marker and Jessie Jordan) carry the story to general and young readers. CCF's scientific papers are available at cheetah.org, and CCF maintains the International Cheetah Studbook, the global registry of captive cheetahs, continuously since 1988.



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RESEARCH

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Conservation



HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT MITIGATION

Ninety percent of Namibia's cheetahs live on livestock and game farms, outside protected areas, on land that also supports most of their natural prey. That geography defines cheetah conservation. It puts the species in daily contact with rural farming communities, where predators have historically been seen as threats rather than as working parts of a healthy ecosystem, and where, for an economically disadvantaged farmer, the loss of even a single animal can be devastating.

The cost of that collision is a matter of record. During the 1980s, Namibia's cheetah population was cut in half, with more than 8,000 cheetahs removed from the landscape by livestock and game farmers. Dr. Laurie Marker founded CCF in response to that catastrophe, and in 1991 CCF began the research into conflict mitigation from which nearly every program on this sheet descends. The strategy has never changed: make coexistence more profitable than conflict, and the killing stops on its own. CCF Bush and Bushblok®

LIVESTOCK GUARDING DOGS

CCF's most effective non-lethal predator control tool is a dog. Anatolian shepherds and Kangal dogs, breeds that have guarded flocks in Turkey for millennia, are bred, trained, and placed with Namibian farmers at minimal cost. Raised with the herd from puppyhood, the dogs bond with the animals they protect, and their size and thunderous bark deter predators before any attack begins. CCF research shows farmers using these dogs experience over an 80 percent reduction in predation, and studies show they become far less likely to harm cheetahs; a protected herd removes the reason to shoot.

The program has run since 1994, when CCF introduced the livestock guarding dog to Africa, and its success has inspired similar programs in South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, and other regions worldwide.

THE MODEL FARM

Every technique CCF recommends to farmers is tested first on CCF's own working Model Farm, where predator-friendly livestock management must prove itself against the same conditions farmers face. What works is then carried outward through farmer publications, agricultural shows, farmers' association meetings, colleges and universities, and the Future Farmers of Africa training courses, supported by field tools like the Guide to Integrated Livestock and Predator Management and the Kill ID chart, which helps farmers determine which predator, if any, was responsible for a loss before anyone reaches for a rifle.

	Species	Tracks Front/Back	Prey Location	Prey Size	Claw Marks	Stomach	Fang Location	Parts Eaten	Bones	Other Evidence	cm	mm
A	Domestic Dog		Anywhere	0-40kg	None					Wool, fur, skin & remains scattered. No marks on throat.	1	10
B	Caracal Kosbat		10-25kg	10-25kg						Wool, fur pulled out & scattered. Does not eat skin or guts. Red scent on prey skin.	2	20
C	Black Backed Jackal		Anywhere	0-50kg	None					Face & ears chewed or torn. Does not eat skin or guts. Red scent on prey skin.	3	30
D	Cheetah Jagapand		Over 10kg	Over 10kg						Does not eat skin or guts.	4	40
E	Leopard		Over 10kg	Over 10kg						Wool, fur pulled out & scattered. Does not eat skin or guts.	5	50
F	Brown Hyena		Anywhere	0-50kg	None					Wool, fur, skin and remains scattered.	6	60
G	Spotted Hyena		Anywhere	0-40kg	None					Wool, fur, skin and remains scattered.	7	70
H	Genetids Hetero		Anywhere	0-10kg	None					Wool, fur, skin and remains scattered.	8	80
I	Lion		Anywhere	Over 10kg	Over 10kg					Wool, fur, skin and remains scattered.	9	90
J	African Wild Dog		Anywhere	0-40kg	None					Wool, fur, skin and remains scattered.	10	100

THE TOOLS FOR CONFLICT MITIGATION

CCF provides training resources to assist in Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation. Their farmer training book "A Guide to Integrated Livestock and Predator Management" and teacher's resource book "A Predator's Role in the Ecosystem" are used to educate farmers, teachers, and students on non-lethal measures to prevent livestock losses. CCF's educational teams utilize resources like the Kill ID chart to aid in their training activities. These materials are provided to all participants in CCF's coursework, teacher, and field training programs.

THE PREDATOR EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

CCF's newest conflict mitigation tool replaces suspicion with information. Under the Early Warning System, farmers whose land overlaps the ranges of GPS-collared cheetahs receive automatic alerts on WhatsApp the moment a collared cheetah crosses the virtual boundary of their farm. A farmer who knows a cheetah is present can protect livestock that night; a farmer who does not know blames the cheetah for every loss. The program runs from CCF East, the Human-Carnivore Conflict Field Station in Gobabis, and operates in partnership with Namibia's Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism, which also works with CCF on the release of rehabilitated cheetahs into the monitored system and the translocation of cheetahs from conflict incidents.

CONSERVANCIES: LINKING PEOPLE TO WILDLIFE

CCF has played a crucial role in advancing Namibia's conservancy system, one of Africa's great conservation successes. Conservancies require defined membership, boundaries, committees, and the equitable distribution of benefits, formally linking the fate of local communities to the fate of the wildlife they live alongside. CCF is an active member of the Waterberg Conservancy, a founding member of the Greater Waterberg Landscape initiative and a contributor to its steering committee, and a member of the Namibian Association of Community-Based Support Organizations (NACSO). With partner organizations and the Ministry, and with support from the Darwin Initiative, CCF is extending human-wildlife conflict mitigation work into communal conservancies in Namibia's east and west.

The model is now being exported. In collaboration with the Somaliland government and local NGOs, CCF helped establish the Somaliland Association of CBNRM Support Organizations (SACSO), bringing the conservancy approach that reshaped Namibian conservation to the Horn of Africa.

RESTORING THE CHEETAH'S HABITAT

Cheetahs hunt in open and semi-open savannah, but decades of drought, climate change, and overgrazing have driven thornbush encroachment across Namibian farmland,

closing the landscape to the cheetah's hunting style and squeezing out prey. In 2001, CCF answered with the CCF Bush project: selectively harvesting invasive thornbush to reopen habitat, then converting the harvested biomass into BUSHBLOK®, an eco-friendly, low-emission, high-heat fuel log that gives habitat restoration a sustainable market. The project is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC® C004580) for responsible forest resource management, earned the Tech Museum's Intel Environment Prize in 2008, and provides employment through the Biomass Technology Demonstration Centre. CCF's ambition is larger still: ecological standards for expanded bush harvesting that could restore significant tracts of cheetah habitat across Namibia.

CONFRONTING THE ILLEGAL TRADE

Conservation on the land is undermined if cheetahs are stolen from it. CCF has monitored and fought the illegal trade in cheetahs since 2005, maintaining the world's most extensive cheetah trafficking database, supporting confiscations through the proper authorities, training the staff of cheetah-holding facilities in proper care, and carrying the issue into CITES and CMS forums where its recommendations have shaped international policy. CCF's full campaign against the trade, from the rescue operation in Somaliland to the genetics that changed the subspecies' legal status, is the subject of its own sheet in this series.



LEARN MORE

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RESEARCH

CONSERVATION

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Facilities: Namibia



CCF's Field Research and Education Centre sits at the base of the Waterberg Plateau near Otjiwarongo, Namibia, on a Model Farm and Private Wildlife Reserve of more than 58,000 hectares (over 143,000 acres). It is a working conservation campus where research, education, farming, and tourism operate side by side, and it is open to the public 364 days a year. Visitors experience the cheetah in its natural habitat through the Cheetah Run, cheetah feedings, and safari drives, and leave as something CCF counts on: ambassadors who carry what they have learned home to their own communities.

The Centre has welcomed visitors from around the world since 2000, and ecotourism revenue flows directly back into cheetah conservation. Everything a guest sees is real and working. The goats in the creamery are guarded by CCF's own livestock guarding dogs, the laboratory processes samples from active field research, and the farm that hosts training courses runs as a commercial operation. The Centre does not demonstrate CCF's model; it is CCF's model.

VISITOR CENTRE

The Visitor Centre is a modern, multi-purpose building housing the main reception, the Cheetah Café, the gift shop, classrooms, administrative offices, a large instruction hall, and the Life Technologies Conservation Genetics Laboratory. It is the front door of the campus and the hub of every visit.

CHEETAH MUSEUM

The museum hall presents the global and Namibian history of the cheetah, the biology and ecology behind CCF's research, and CCF's conservation initiatives, opening with a multi-language video that introduces visitors to the organization's work worldwide.

CHEETAH SANCTUARY

The Centre is the permanent home of CCF's resident cheetahs, orphaned or injured animals that cannot survive in the wild. Their lifelong food and veterinary care is funded through CCF's cheetah sponsorship program, which lets supporters anywhere in the world take personal responsibility for an individual cheetah.

LIFE TECHNOLOGIES CONSERVATION GENETICS LABORATORY

Located in the Visitor Centre, the laboratory is the only fully capable genetics facility at an in-situ conservation site in Africa. It supports research on cheetahs and far beyond: African wild dogs, lions, brown hyenas, even soil and plants. Visitors can meet the researchers at work and learn about active projects, science conducted in public view.

HAAS FAMILY VETERINARY CLINIC

The Haas Family Veterinary Clinic provides prompt care for cheetahs, livestock guarding dogs, goats, and other animals in need. On-site dental procedures and surgeries spare animals the stress of transport. CCF's veterinarians and interns also study cheetah diseases here and curate the sample collection of the Genome Resource Bank, one of the world's largest biological repositories for a wild species.

MODEL FARM AND DANCING GOAT CREAMERY

The Model Farm practices predator-friendly farming on integrated livestock and wildlife land within CCF's reserve, serving as the training facility for community members and university students in agriculture and food sciences. Livestock farming with cattle, goats, and sheep is the primary business, and the farm's profits support CCF's conservation and education programs. Its sidelines demonstrate what diversified farm income can look like: grapevines producing a cheetah-friendly Namibian wine label, and the Dancing Goat Creamery, where milk from CCF's dairy goats, guarded by CCF livestock guarding dogs, becomes cheese, ice cream, fudge, and soap.

CHEETAH CAFÉ

The Cheetah Café in the Visitor Centre is open daily, serving dishes built on locally grown and sourced vegetables, meats, and cheeses, including feta, chèvre, ricotta, ice cream, and fudge from the Dancing Goat Creamery a few hundred meters away.

BIOMASS TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION CENTRE

The BTDC researches and develops clean-burning energy products from sustainably harvested thornbush, including pyrolysis-based electrical generation, briquette logs, charcoal hex logs, and lump charcoal. Its flagship product, BUSHBLOK®, is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC® C004580) for responsible and sustainable forest resource management.

STAYING AT CCF

Babson House is a private, gated luxury accommodation with three bedrooms for up to six guests, with views of the Waterberg Plateau over a wildlife habitat that is home to several resident cheetahs.

Cheetah View Lodge offers modern bush chalet-style suites a short walk from the Visitor Centre, including twin units and spacious family suites, with full food and beverage service at the lodge's private restaurant and an open-air veranda for wildlife watching.

Camp Lightfoot is the permanent camping facility for groups of up to 35, used primarily by farmers and school

groups for two-day immersive educational stays.

A CAMPUS THAT RUNS ON ITS OWN PRINCIPLES

A conservation campus in semi-arid Namibia has to practice what it teaches, and at CCF that begins with sun and water. Solar arrays help power the Centre, rainwater is recovered, and water is recycled into the Centre's gardens, so that scarce resources do their work more than once before returning to the landscape.

Those gardens are a story of their own. The Chewbaaka Memorial Garden, named for CCF's beloved ambassador cheetah, together with the Centre's greenhouse, produces fresh vegetables and fruit for CCF's staff and volunteers, the Cheetah Café, and Babson House guests. In a country that imports the great majority of its fruits and vegetables over long distances, growing food on-site cuts emissions, costs, and food miles at once. The garden is kept chemical-free the old way: diverse plantings invite the beneficial insects that manage the unwanted ones, and sunflowers draw the pollinators. Even the soil tells the CCF story, built up from aged manure from the Model Farm's animals, compost from the kitchen's food scraps, and wood dust from BUSHBLOK production, so that the same thornbush harvested to reopen cheetah habitat ends up growing the tomatoes in the café.

The Centre's energy ambitions extend beyond its own fences: the BTDC's research into pyrolysis-based electrical generation from harvested thornbush points toward a renewable energy source for rural Namibia.

VISITING THE CENTRE

The Centre is reached by road from Otjiwarongo, and the roads are passable by ordinary vehicles. An airstrip is available for charter arrivals, and CCF drivers can be chartered for transfers to and from the airport. The Visitor Centre, museum, and Cheetah Café are wheelchair accessible, as are the Centre's accommodations, and the museum's introductory video plays in multiple languages. Visitors who would like arrangements made in advance are welcome to contact ccfadmin@cheetah.org before arrival. Current hours, activity times, and booking are at cheetahecolodge.com.



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RESEARCH

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Facilities: Somaliland



The Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (CRCC) exists because Somaliland decided its confiscated cheetahs would stay home. In partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, CCF operated Cheetah Safe Houses in Hargeisa from 2018 to 2023, sheltering the growing number of cubs confiscated from the illegal wildlife trade. Construction of a permanent centre began on the 16th of December 2021, and in 2023 the operation was consolidated at a single purpose-built home: the CRCC at Geed-Deeble. Designed to emulate CCF's renowned Centre in Namibia, it is the first facility of its kind in the Horn of Africa, the region where most cheetah confiscations occur, and it serves as the main intake point for every cub the trade gives up.

THE SITE

The CRCC occupies 800 hectares (nearly 2,000 acres) in Geed-Deeble, a forest reserve an hour's drive from Hargeisa. It is the permanent home of cheetahs rescued from the illegal pet trade and from human-wildlife conflict by the Ministry and placed under CCF's care, and its campus has grown steadily since opening: a gate house, dedicated recovery areas, expanded enclosures, cub management areas, and the workshops and infrastructure of a working conservation station.

NATURALISTIC ENCLOSURES

The CRCC's enclosures are expansive, 2 to 5 hectares (5 to 12 acres) each, giving the animals a naturalistic environment with the freedom of movement and play essential to their wellbeing and rehabilitation.

VETERINARY CLINIC, LABORATORY AND NURSERY

A fully equipped veterinary clinic and laboratory provide world-class care on-site, staffed by professionally trained international veterinarians who live at the Centre, so that confiscated cubs receive immediate medical attention for the damage the trade inflicts. The cub nursery is designed for the youngest arrivals, and an emergency quarantine area isolates and treats animals that could pose a health risk to the others in care.

OFF THE GRID

The CRCC generates its own power. Solar arrays with battery storage allow the Centre to operate fully off the grid, a necessity an hour from the capital and a statement of principle for a conservation facility, and the campus infrastructure, from its water crossing to its workshops, is built for self-sufficiency as the Centre continues to expand.

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMPLEX

What the CRCC's early plans promised, it has delivered. The Education and Training Complex, sponsored by the Royal Commission for AlUla, was completed in 2025 and officially opened by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change on the 4th of December, International Cheetah Day. Its classrooms serve students, teachers, pastoralists, wildlife caregivers, eco-rangers, and the CRCC's own staff, and its first sessions trained local veterinarians and health professionals in conservation and wildlife rescue. CCF envisions the CRCC as a training hub for the next generation of African conservation leaders, with programs spanning biology, ecology, pastoralism, rangeland management, and wildlife conservation.

VISITING THE CRCC

The CRCC is a working rescue facility first, and it receives visitors on that basis: by arrangement, in small numbers, and on the animals' terms. Interest is growing steadily, from Somaliland's own citizens discovering their wildlife heritage to international guests and film crews carrying the story abroad, and the Centre's long-term vision is to grow into a conservation and education destination for the region. But animals in rehabilitation are not exhibits, and the CRCC's welcome will always be measured against their needs. That restraint is not a limitation of the facility; it is the facility working as designed.



LIVING ON-SITE

The CRCC provides on-site housing for its professional staff and visiting executives, with a dedicated communal dining area where meals and ideas are shared. Round-the-clock presence is not a perk of the arrangement; it is the arrangement. Animals recovering from the trade need care that does not go home at five.

PART OF THE LOCAL ECONOMY

A facility that never closes is also a workplace and a customer. Somalilanders staff the CRCC alongside its international veterinary team, local staff train through the Centre's own education programs, and the daily business of running the campus, from construction and maintenance to provisioning the food supply for well over a hundred cheetahs, flows through the surrounding economy. The Centre's presence gives the region a working stake in the animals' survival, the same principle that anchors CCF's model in Namibia.

A 30-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

The CRCC is built on a 30-year collaboration agreement between CCF and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, covering the Centre's establishment and management. Over that span, CCF's role will deliberately recede, transitioning toward sustained operation under the Somaliland government's own stewardship. That is the design: not a foreign facility on Somaliland soil, but a national capability with a long runway of support.

Within CCF's wider mission, the CRCC anchors the trajectory of every confiscated cub: rescue, rehabilitation, and, where possible, a path toward release.

REPORTING WILDLIFE CRIME

Suspected wildlife trafficking in Somaliland should be reported to Chris Wade at slmanager@cheetah.org.



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RESEARCH

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Dr. Laurie Marker, Founder and Executive Director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund, is a conservation biologist and research scientist recognized worldwide as a leading authority on the cheetah. Her research, conservation models, and cooperative partnerships halted the collapse of Namibia's wild cheetah population, the world's largest, and built CCF into a premier institution for research, conservation, and education, headquartered on a reserve and Model Farm of more than 58,000 hectares (over 143,000 acres) near Otjiwarongo, Namibia. She also leads CCF's fight against the illegal wildlife trade from Somaliland, and her work now spans the cheetah's range from Southern Africa to the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and India.

Dr. Laurie Marker

A CHEETAH NAMED KHAYAM

Dr. Marker grew up with animals: riding horses from the age of four, working as a veterinary technician, raising her own dairy goat herd and judging goats competitively. Her first university studies were in agriculture, enology, and viticulture at Napa College and the University of California at Davis, and she helped pioneer the Oregon wine industry before her life turned toward the cheetah.

In 1974 she began working with cheetahs at Oregon's Wildlife Safari, where over fourteen years she built one of the most successful captive cheetah breeding programs in the world. A research question changed everything: could a captive-born cheetah be taught to hunt? She raised a cub named Khayam by hand, and in 1977 took her to Namibia to find out. Khayam learned to hunt. But what Dr. Marker learned in Namibia mattered more: livestock farmers were killing thousands of cheetahs each year as perceived threats to their herds and livelihoods. A species already imperiled by habitat loss and a severe lack of genetic diversity was being driven toward extinction at an accelerated pace on the very farmland where most of its population lived.

She returned to the United States and built the International Cheetah Studbook, the registry of all cheetahs in captivity, and collaborated in the groundbreaking research that revealed the depth of the species' genetic uniformity. From 1988 to 1991 she directed the New Opportunities in Animal Health Sciences (NOAHS) Center at the Smithsonian's National Zoo, and between 1977 and 1990 she traveled repeatedly to Namibia and other range countries, gathering data and searching for an organization willing to take the lead on saving the species.

FOUNDING CCF

No such organization stepped forward. So in 1990, Dr. Marker founded the Cheetah Conservation Fund, sold her worldly belongings, and moved to Namibia to dedicate her life to the survival of the cheetah in the wild.

Her in-situ research in Namibia was the first of its kind into cheetah ecology, biology, demographics, and genetics, and the first predator research conducted outside protected areas, with the very farmers who were living with and killing cheetahs. From a borrowed farmhouse outside Otjiwarongo, she drove door to door in an old Land Rover, surveying rural farmers about cheetahs and their impact on livestock farming. Those early conversations became the foundation of the non-lethal predator control methods CCF employs to this day.

THE MODEL PROVEN

In 1994, Dr. Marker introduced livestock guarding dogs to Namibia, placing Kangal and Anatolian shepherd dogs with rural farmers in what became one of conservation's most celebrated programs, with CCF research showing an 80 to

100 percent decrease in livestock losses and a corresponding collapse in farmers' need to kill predators. That same year she established CCF's Field Research and Education Centre, the working livestock farm, private game reserve, and model farm within the Waterberg Conservancy and Greater Waterberg Landscape that remains CCF's headquarters. Her strategies for balancing the needs of people and wildlife sharing land halted the freefall of Namibia's cheetah population that the 1980s had set in motion, and have since informed human-wildlife conflict mitigation for large carnivores in regions around the world. She has helped develop conservation programs across the cheetah's range and trained several hundred conservation scientists from most of the countries where cheetahs survive.

THE WIDENING RANGE

Since 2018, Dr. Marker has directed CCF's campaign against the illegal wildlife pet trade from Somaliland, creating the Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre (CRCC) on 800 hectares (nearly 2,000 acres) at Geed-Deeble for cheetahs confiscated by the Somaliland government, and developing strategies in Somaliland and Ethiopia to address the root causes of the trade in the Horn of Africa. In 2022, she facilitated the introduction of eight cheetahs gifted by Namibia to India under Project Cheetah, training the Indian team and helping return the species to a country where it had been extinct since 1952.

In 2021, Dr. Marker became a founding Trustee of the Arabian Leopard Fund, established by Saudi Arabia's Royal Commission for AlUla to save the critically endangered Arabian leopard, one of the rarest cats on Earth, and to work toward the return of wild leopard and cheetah populations to the Arabian Peninsula. The Fund's strategy, pairing captive breeding with reintroduction to the wild, is the arc of Dr. Marker's own career: she built one of the world's most successful captive cheetah breeding programs and then spent decades proving that the road runs back to the wild. Her trusteeship also closes a larger circle. The Peninsula at the demand end of the cheetah trade she fights in the Horn of Africa is investing in bringing its big cats home, and the same Royal Commission's name stands on the Education

and Training Complex at CCF's centre in Somaliland: two organizations working both ends of the same problem, and both sides of the same sea.

SCIENTIST AND SCHOLAR

Dr. Marker earned her DPhil in Zoology from the University of Oxford's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), and in 2013 was named an A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University. She holds adjunct professorships at Purdue University and the University of Nebraska Omaha. She has published more than 150 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals, along with book chapters and books including, as lead editor, *Cheetahs: Biology and Conservation*, the comprehensive scientific reference on the species.

RECOGNITION

Dr. Marker's honors include the Explorers Club President's Award for Conservation (2020), the Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation (2015), the E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Technology Pioneer Award (2015), the Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal (2015), the Explorers Club Lowell Thomas Award (2010), the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement (2010), the Tech Museum Intel Environmental Award (2008), and the San Diego Zoo Lifetime Achievement Conservation Award (2008). TIME Magazine named her a Hero for the Planet, and her work has been featured in Smithsonian, National Geographic, Discover, and The New York Times, and on programs including The Tonight Show, Good Morning America, The Charlie Rose Show, and the Today Show.

AFFILIATION

Dr. Marker chairs the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia (LCMAN), a position she has held since 1997, and serves as Vice Chair of the Namibia Carnivore Forum. She is a core member of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group, a member of Panthera's Cat Advisory Council, and a member of the Scientific Board of the Mountain Lion Foundation.



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Situated at CCF's Field Research and Education Centre in Namibia, the Biomass Technology Demonstration Centre (BTDC) turns a conservation problem into an energy resource. Decades of bush encroachment have thickened native thornbush across central Namibia's farmland, closing the open landscape cheetahs need to hunt and squeezing out grazing for livestock and wildlife alike. That same bush is fuel: the region carries up to seven tons of harvestable thornbush per acre. The BTDC exists to prove, at working scale, that harvesting it responsibly can restore habitat, create jobs, generate clean energy for underserved rural areas, ease human-wildlife conflict, and improve farmland, all at once.

Biomass Technology Demonstration Centre

FROM PROBLEM TO PRODUCT

CCF has led responsible thornbush harvesting since 2001, when it launched the CCF Bush project and its flagship product, BUSHBLOK®, the eco-friendly, low-emission, high-heat fuel log made from harvested bush. BUSHBLOK® is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC® C004580), the highest standard in forestry management, guaranteeing responsible land management with environmental, social, and economic benefits together. The BTDC on CCF's main campus is the production site for BUSHBLOK®, with CCF's original factory in Otjiwarongo continuing service as the depot.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The BTDC researches and demonstrates the full spectrum of biomass technologies with the potential to sustain commercial ventures, working with academics, researchers, and engineers to implement, assess, and validate each one against the biomass actually available in the region. Proven production lines include briquette logs, charcoal hex logs, lump charcoal, and pyrolysis-based electrical generation, and the Centre continues to investigate promising directions including wood pellet production, alternative chipping power trains, Stirling engines, and the integration of biomass power with solar generation, energy storage, and micro-grids that could bring electricity to rural communities the national grid does not reach.

The demonstration is honest because it is measured. CCF's ecologists monitor harvested areas continuously to gauge habitat recovery, studying the effects of bush removal on soil composition and wildlife density, while the BTDC team assesses machinery, harvesting methods, and transport logistics, because a commercial biomass operation lives or dies on consistent deliveries of raw wood matched to equipment and season.

THE POINT OF A DEMONSTRATION CENTRE

The BTDC was built to test biomass technologies at real scale, and testing means finding out what works and what does not. Steam Bio Africa, an international research program funded by the European Union (grant agreement No 101036401) and uniting fifteen partner organizations, four Namibian and eleven international, established a plant at the BTDC to investigate torrefaction, a process using superheated steam to convert harvested thornbush into a higher-grade fuel, complete with a control room, woodchip management facility, chip processing infrastructure, and on-site staff housing.

The research is complete, and its findings add to what CCF and Namibia's biomass industry know about converting thornbush into energy. The structures the program built remain at the BTDC, in place and ready for future research projects, part of the growing capacity that makes CCF's demonstration ground valuable to the next technology worth testing.



A TEACHING FACILITY

The BTDC trains the workforce the industry will need. Workers learn equipment operation, safety, and employment regulations; field training covers harvest planning and FSC®-compliant methods; and local businesses and entrepreneurs receive education in biomass economics, distribution, and access to funding. The Centre is open to academic institutions for student education and research.

MEASURE THE RESOURCE

Sustainable harvest at industrial scale requires knowing what the landscape actually holds. CCF hosts biomass quantification research using remote sensing and laser scanning to improve on Namibia's existing methodology for measuring standing bush, sharpening the numbers on which responsible national harvest planning depends.

THE OUTLOOK

The biomass potential of central Namibia is enormous: millions of acres of invasive-thickened bush in a region with

high unemployment and limited access to electricity. CCF's research supports harvesting that resource sustainably and responsibly, and CCF convenes the international donors, grant organizations, entrepreneurs, and investors whose capital can turn demonstrations into industry. The goal is a new economic force for the region, built on restoring the cheetah's landscape: employment, tax revenue, rural energy, and open savannah, from the same harvest.



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Before harvest: CCF's habitat restoration efforts focus on clearing thickened thornbush from cheetah habitat. Thornbush is a native plant, but with the decline of large grazers it grows unchecked, clogging the landscape.



After harvest: The cheetah needs open landscape like this to hunt successfully. CCF research tracks the effects of thornbush removal on soil composition and wildlife density.



Cheetah Conservation Fund
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CCF is an international non-profit incorporated association dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems.

RESEARCH

CONSERVATION

EDUCATION



“Farmers hold the cheetah’s future in their hands. Together we must find viable predator-friendly farming solutions.” Dr. Laurie Marker, CCF Founder and Executive Director - CCF

Livestock Guarding Dog Program

THE DOG THAT SAVES CHEETAHS WITHOUT EVER MEETING ONE

Since 1994, CCF has placed livestock guarding dogs with Namibian farmers, and the idea behind the program has never changed: a farmer whose herd is protected has no reason to harm a cheetah. The dog bonds with the goats and sheep, its presence and thunderous bark turn predators away before any attack begins, and the cheetah moves on to hunt wild prey. The dog and the cheetah almost never meet. That is the point, and it has made the guarding dog one of the most celebrated tools in modern conservation.

AN ANCIENT SOLUTION TO A MODERN PROBLEM

CCF did not invent the livestock guarding dog; it recognized one. Anatolian shepherds and Kangal dogs have guarded flocks on Turkey’s Anatolian Plateau for some 6,000 years, in semi-arid rangeland strikingly similar to Namibia’s farmland. Short-coated for hot, dry climates, large and imposing, able to work unsupervised across vast open country, they were shaped by exactly the problem Namibian farmers faced: valuable herds, wide open spaces, and capable predators.

The way they work matters as much as what they are. Guarding dogs are not herding dogs; they never chase or move the stock, because that kind of movement is exactly what triggers a predator to attack. Instead, a guardian places itself between the flock and the threat and barks, loudly. Usually the sheer presence of an intimidating dog is enough to send the predator elsewhere; only if it persists will the dog attack. Raised with the herd from puppyhood, the dogs are attentive, trustworthy, and protective toward the animals they consider family, and a solution proven over millennia against the wolves of Anatolia works against the cheetahs, jackals, and leopards of Namibia.

1994: TEN DOGS AND AN IDEA

In 1993, CCF invited Ray Coppinger, Director of the Livestock Guard Dog Association in Amherst, Massachusetts and founder of Hampshire College’s pioneering guarding dog program, to Namibia to design a pilot project. Coppinger’s research supplied the technical framework, above all the rule the program still follows: a puppy must be placed with its herd before 15 weeks of age, so that it grows up believing the goats are its family.

The first four dogs, donated through the Hampshire College program, were established on a single farm in CCF’s research area in January 1994, with one of Coppinger’s students monitoring the pilot for five months as her honors thesis. Six more dogs arrived that June, along with a second student to manage placements, and by the end of 1994 sixteen dogs were working on sixteen Namibian farms. A pilot had become a program in a single year.

BOOTS, MOTHER OF THE PROGRAM

Among the founding dogs was Boots, one of the original breeding females. In August 1994, CCF’s first Namibian-born litter, eleven Anatolian puppies, was born at CCF’s base, and every one was placed on a farm by the end of September. Boots would produce four litters and 47 puppies for the program before her long

life ended in 2004 at the age of fifteen. The working dogs guarding Namibian herds today descend from that founding line: the program did not just import a solution, it rooted one.

LEARNING THE HARD LESSONS

The early years taught the program its most important lesson: the dogs were not the hard part. Farmers unfamiliar with canine development sometimes misread a puppy's rough playing stages or the slow rhythm of bonding, and returned dogs that were developing exactly as they should. CCF answered by training the humans: corrective training for the dogs that needed it, and mandatory Puppy Information Days that prepare every farmer for what raising a guardian actually looks like. The candor is the method; a program that studies its failures is a program that keeps working.

THE PROOF

The program's results reached the scientific literature in 2005, when CCF published its first major peer-reviewed findings, including "Perceived Effectiveness of Livestock-Guarding Dogs Placed on Namibian Farms" in *Rangeland Ecology & Management*. Measuring farmer satisfaction and livestock mortality across placed farms, the research anchored the finding that has defined the program since: farms with a working guarding dog experience an 80 to 100 percent reduction in conflict. The dog pays for itself in saved livestock, and the cheetah stops being an enemy worth shooting.

HOW A PLACEMENT WORKS

CCF breeds its dogs at its Centre in Namibia and places each puppy with its herd before 15 weeks of age, vaccinated and sterilized before it goes. The dogs are provided at minimal cost, but farmer co-investment has been deliberate since the beginning: the owner provides proper nutrition and daily care, because a guarding dog's success is directly tied to its farmer's commitment. CCF holds up its side for the dog's whole working life, monitoring every placement monthly for the first six months, again at twelve months, and annually thereafter, scoring each dog's effectiveness against established guarding-behavior methodologies. The Farmer Carnivore Help Hotline provides ongoing advice, and CCF covers medical costs for communal farmers so that a dog's health never depends on its owner's income.

THE GOATS THAT RAISE THE DOGS

Every guarding dog owes its education to a goat. Puppies must grow up amongst the herd to form the bond that makes

them guardians, so CCF keeps its own teaching flock at the Centre: dairy goats, whose milk supplies the Dancing Goat Creamery; Boer goats, the sturdy South African meat breed; and Damara sheep, Namibia's indigenous fat-tailed breed. The same animals do triple duty. They raise the puppies, they serve as the working livestock in Future Farmers of Africa training courses, and they live their days guarded by the very dogs they brought up. A visitor watching the kraal at CCF is watching the whole program in one scene: the flock teaching its next protector.

A MODEL THE WORLD BORROWED

What began with four dogs on one Namibian farm has inspired guarding dog programs in South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, and regions far beyond, wherever herders and large predators share land. The program's numbers live on CCF by the Numbers and grow every year; the idea they measure has been the same since 1994. Protect the herd, and the predator gets to live.

CCF'S OTHER WORKING DOGS

Guarding is not the only job CCF's dogs do. The scat detection dog team works on the research side, sniffing out cheetah scat, "black gold" to the scientists, across landscapes where the cats themselves are almost never seen. The DNA in those samples identifies individual cheetahs without a single animal being captured or handled. The detection team operates in Namibia and Angola.



LEARN MORE

For current population estimates and status listings, see CCF by the Numbers at:
<https://bit.ly/CCFFactSheets>



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Cheetah Facts for



How big are cheetahs?

Cheetahs are the smallest of the “big cats,” a group that includes lions, tigers, leopards, jaguars, and cougars. Adult cheetahs weigh up to 125 pounds and can measure up to 60 inches long, and their tails add up to 32 inches more. That is a total of up to 7.5 feet of cheetah!

Built for speed

Cheetahs have long legs and very slender bodies. Just like race cars, they have light body frames and a streamlined shape that makes them highly aerodynamic (air passes around them efficiently, reducing drag). Cheetahs have large nostrils that let them take in lots of oxygen with every breath, and a large, powerful heart and lungs that work together to move that oxygen through their bodies very efficiently. Because of their unique anatomy, cheetahs can reach speeds of up to 70 mph (112 kph), and they can go from standing still to 60 mph in about three seconds. That is quicker than almost any sports car!



“Cleat” feet and “rudder” tails

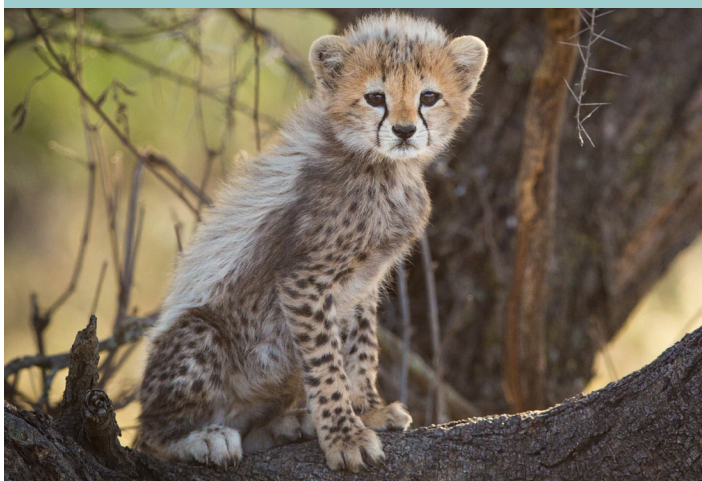
A cheetah's foot pads are hard and textured like tire treads, giving it extra traction in fast, sharp turns. Its claws are short, blunt, and semi-retractable (they do not pull all the way in like other cats' claws), closer to a dog's than to those of other cats. They work like the cleats of a track shoe, gripping the ground when the cheetah runs. The cheetah's spine is extremely flexible, and its long, muscular tail works like the rudder on a boat: as its prey weaves to escape, the cheetah swings its tail back and forth to make sudden, sharp turns at full speed.

A big cat that cannot ROAR!

Lions roar. Tigers roar. Cheetahs... chirp! A cheetah's call sounds like a little bird, and cheetahs also bark, bubble, growl, and hiss. But here is the coolest part: the cheetah is the only big cat that can purr while breathing in AND breathing out, just like your cat at home, only bigger.

Spots, stripes and grey fluff

The cheetah's undercoat ranges from light tan to deep gold, marked with solid black spots. The spots on a leopard's or jaguar's coat are open in the center, like a ring donut; comparing spots is the quickest way to tell the cheetah apart



from other spotted cats. And not only does the cheetah's fur have spots, so does its skin! The black fur actually grows out of the black spots on the skin.

Distinctive black stripes called "tear marks" run from the cheetah's eyes to its mouth. They work like the black stripes athletes paint under their eyes, cutting the sun's glare so the cheetah can focus on prey far across the bright savannah.

Cheetah tails end in a bushy tuft circled by five or six dark rings. These markings camouflage a hunting cheetah, and the tail is also thought to be a signaling device, a flag that helps young cubs follow their mother through tall grass. The tip of the tail varies from white to black between individuals.

More about cheetah cubs

Cheetah cubs are born with fluffy gray backs. Known as a mantle, this cute mohawk-like hairstyle runs from their neck to the base of their tail, and it makes a cheetah cub look like a honey badger, one of the most formidable little animals in Africa, which most predators will not risk attacking. The mantle also makes cubs hard to see when they hide in tall grass while their mother hunts.

At birth, cubs weigh just 8.5 to 15 ounces and are blind and helpless. After a day or so, their mother must leave to hunt, and this is the most vulnerable time in a cheetah's life. The cubs live hidden in a secluded nest until they are six to eight weeks old, and their mother moves them from nest to nest to avoid detection. She will raise them entirely on her own for the next year and a half.

At about six weeks, the cubs leave the den and begin following their mother on her daily travels. School has begun! Between four and six months, cubs are at their most active and playful, using their sharp young claws to grip the tall "playtrees" they climb with their brothers

and sisters. Learning to hunt is the most important skill of all, and by one year old, cubs join their mother's hunts. At about 18 to 22 months, mother and cubs finally separate, though the siblings stick together until they are about two years old.

Cheetahs and their neighbors

Most cheetahs do not live in national parks. They live on farmland, right next to people, sheep, goats, and cattle. Cheetahs hunt wild animals like gazelles, hares, and small antelope, but sometimes a cheetah will hunt a farm animal instead, and that worries the farmers who take care of them.

A cheetah's best friend is... a dog?

It's true! The Cheetah Conservation Fund gives farmers special guard dogs that grow up with the goats and sheep and protect them like family. When a cheetah comes near, the dog's thunderous bark says "not here!", and the cheetah runs off to hunt wild animals instead. The funny part? The dog and the cheetah never even have to meet. When the herd is safe, farmers do not need to harm cheetahs, so the dog that guards the goats is secretly guarding the cheetah too. Everyone wins: the farmer, the flock, and the fastest animal on land.

Be a cheetah friend

You do not have to live in Africa to help cheetahs. Learn everything you can, and share your favorite cheetah fact with a friend today. Celebrate International Cheetah Day every year on December 4th. And ask a grown-up to help you explore cheetah.org, where you can meet the real cheetahs of the Cheetah Conservation Fund.



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Every December 4th, the world comes together to celebrate the fastest animal on land. International Cheetah Day is a day to learn about the cheetah, share its story, and join the effort to keep it running wild.
internationalcheetahday.org

Celebrate the Cheetah

THE CHEETAH WHO STARTED IT ALL

International Cheetah Day begins with one cheetah. In 1977, Dr. Laurie Marker brought Khayam, a cheetah she had raised from a cub at Oregon's Wildlife Safari, to Namibia for the first research project of its kind: could a captive-born cheetah be taught to hunt? Khayam could, and did. But on that trip Dr. Marker witnessed something else: farmers were removing wild cheetahs from the landscape in enormous numbers as perceived threats to their livestock. Because of Khayam, she dedicated her life to becoming the cheetah's champion, founding the Cheetah Conservation Fund in 1990 and moving to Namibia to solve the conflict at its source.

In 2010, Dr. Marker designated December 4th, Khayam's birthday, as International Cheetah Day, in remembrance of the cheetah who showed her the path.

A DAY THE WHOLE WORLD CELEBRATES

At CCF's Centre in Namibia, International Cheetah Day draws school groups, sports clubs, and cultural performers from across the country, including traditional perspectives on what it means to live alongside cheetahs. In Somaliland, the day has become a national occasion: the Education and Training Complex at CCF's Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre was officially opened by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change on International Cheetah Day itself. In classrooms around the world, teachers bring the cheetah to their students with CCF's International Cheetah Day Conservation Passport, and supporters everywhere carry the celebration across social media with #SaveTheCheetah.

NAMIBIANS, THIS IS YOUR DAY TO CELEBRATE WITH CCF!

If you are in Namibia, the best place in the world to spend December 4th is at CCF's Centre near Otjiwarongo, celebrating the cat your country is famous for. The day is a true festival: cultural groups perform and share traditional perspectives on living alongside cheetahs, educational stalls run interactive games with prizes to win, and a volleyball tournament keeps the energy high from morning to afternoon, with teams and visitors arriving from across the country.



Schools, sports clubs, families, and first-time visitors are all welcome, and every year the celebration grows.

And of course, the guests of honor are here. Meet CCF's resident cheetahs, watch a cheetah feeding, explore the museum, and see the working farm, the guarding dogs, and the laboratory where cheetah science happens every day. Entry to the celebration is a chance to see everything CCF does, on the one day of the year built for exactly that. Bring your family, bring your team, and celebrate Namibia's cheetah with the people working to keep it running wild.

HOW TO CELEBRATE

Share your favorite cheetah fact with someone who has never heard it. Bring the cheetah into your classroom, your workplace, or your community with a celebration of your own, and tell CCF about it. Follow and share @ccfcheetah on December 4th, and explore internationalcheetahday.org for materials, events, and ways to get involved, every year, on the cheetah's day.

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CHEETAH FACTS, THE QUICK WAY



FAST - Top speed up to 70 mph (112 kph). From standing still to 60 mph in about 3 seconds. A single stride covers 22 to 26 feet, and twice in every stride, no feet touch the ground at all.

THE HUNT - Cheetahs hunt in the cooler hours, stalking to within 30 to 90 feet before the chase. Most chases last around 20 seconds, and about half succeed.

THE BODY - Adults weigh 75 to 125 pounds, measure 40 to 60 inches with 24 to 32 inches more of tail, and stand 28 to 36 inches at the shoulder. The flexible spine, oversized heart and lungs, wide nostrils, and rudder tail are all speed equipment.

THE VOICE - Cheetahs cannot roar. They chirp like birds, bark, growl, hiss, and purr, and they are the only big cat that purrs continuously, breathing in and out.

THE SPOTS - Solid black spots (a leopard's are open rings), spotted skin beneath the spotted fur, and black tear marks that cut the sun's glare like an athlete's eye black.

THE CUBS - Born with a silver mantle of long fur that disguises them as honey badgers, one of the few animals predators refuse to bother. Cubs learn to hunt at their mother's side and climb "play trees" with their siblings.

THE BROTHERS - Male cheetahs from the same litter often stay together for life, forming coalitions that hunt and defend territory better than any male alone. Home ranges are enormous: roughly 1,500 to 2,300 km² (580 to 890 mi²) in Namibian research.

THE SURVIVOR - The cheetah is one of the oldest cats on Earth, and one of the luckiest: around 20,000 years ago the Ice Age wiped out most large mammals, and the species squeezed through a genetic bottleneck it still carries today.

THE GENTLE ONE - Built for speed, not for fighting. A cheetah's answer to trouble is to run, and cheetahs are not a danger to people.

THE NEIGHBOR - Most cheetahs live outside protected parks, on the farmlands and rangelands they share with people, which is why cheetah conservation is really about people and cheetahs thriving together.

THE THREATS - Declining prey, shrinking habitat, poaching, and the illegal wildlife trade press the cheetah across its range in Africa, with a small, critically endangered population surviving in Iran. Captivity typically live for 8-12 years, while some of CCF's resident orphan cheetahs in Namibia reach up to 18 years. Cub mortality is high, with around 23 percent of captive cubs dying within a month and about 90 percent in Tanzania's Serengeti National Park not surviving beyond 3 months due to predation. In Namibia, approximately 50 percent of a litter achieves independence.

ABOUT CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND

The Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems, founded in 1990 by Dr. Laurie Marker and built on three pillars: research, conservation, and education. CCF works from two field centres on two sides of the cheetah's world. In Namibia, a global stronghold for the wild cheetah, CCF's Field Research and Education Centre near Otjiwarongo is a working conservation campus, open to the public 364 days a year, where a genetics laboratory, veterinary clinic, model farm, and education programs operate side by side. In Somaliland, at the crossroads of the illegal wildlife trade, CCF's Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Centre at Geed-Deeble is the first facility of its kind in the Horn of Africa, giving cheetahs confiscated from the pet trade a permanent home in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change. Learn more at cheetah.org.



International
Cheetah Day

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