

ISSUE N°
20
2020

CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



Photo by Barth Balli

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Kidding Season

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30 YEARS **Cheetah**
CONSERVATION FUND



DONATE

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

VISIT

CCF's Research and Education Centre
Otjiwarongo, Namibia
open 364 days per year
www.cheetahecolodge.com

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

Keep up with the cheetahs on social media!



@CCFCheetah

VOLUNTEER

Contact us to learn more about volunteering in the United States to help save the cheetah across its range in Africa.
volunteer@cheetah.org

KEY DATES

CCF'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

ONLINE

CHEETAH 2020 - FOCUS ON THE FUTURE
OCTOBER 3

SCHEDULE

VIRTUAL ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION (FREE)

9:00 AM TO 6:30 PM (EST)
(EXCLUDES LIVE & VIP EVENTS)

LIVE STREAMING EVENT (\$100)

STARTS AT 6:30 PM TO 9:00 PM (EST)

VIP EXPERIENCE (\$250)

9:00 AM TO 9:00 PM (EST)
(INCLUDES ALL PORTIONS OF THE LIVE STREAMING EVENT PLUS MORE)

TICKETS AVAILABLE NOW

www.cheetah.org/events/cheetah-2020-focus-on-the-future/

EVENT SPONSORS



Contact jj@cheetah.org to become an event sponsor for this or future events.

OTHER EVENTS

ONLINE

SAVE THE CHEETAH VIRTUAL 5K RACE
HOSTED BY INDIANA CHAPTER
DECEMBER 4

FOR MORE INFO AND TO SEE THE UPDATED SCHEDULE.

WWW.CHEETAH.ORG/EVENTS/



NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



In Namibia, September 1st is the first day of spring! We have been told that our Namibian borders will be opened to international travel, however, the 1st flights into the country will not be until the middle of the month. After being in isolation for the past five months, we do have some trepidation about entering this new phase. Of course we welcome visitors, but we are also concerned about the health of our entire staff. The tourism industry in our country has a long road to recovery. We hope people will come and come visit our staff and our resident cheetahs at CCF.

Our work with carnivore conflict has continued during these Covid months. A few days ago we had a large, very beautiful male cheetah come to the clinic after being trapped by a local farmer. This isn't the first time we've been called to assist on this particular farmer, and we have been working to help increase this farmer's awareness of the importance of predators to the ecosystem. We are grateful to him for the opportunity to intervene, and that the cheetahs have been given a second chance at survival. However, this farmer continues to fight nature and catch cheetahs, because of his fear of them eating his valuable livestock. We did a scat analysis on what the cheetah's diet has been, finding only steenbok and duiker hair in his scat. Like always, we will continue to use every opportunity at every community interaction to increase our educational outreach.

I am looking forward to our upcoming Virtual Celebration Benefit, Cheetah 2020 - Focus on the Future, 30-Year Celebration to Benefit Cheetah Conservation Fund. I hope you will save the date on October 3rd where we will have an all day long celebration of CCF's anniversary with free programming, a virtual gala with silent and live auctions and a special awards ceremony, where you can join us in our continued work to help saving the cheetah.

I hope you enjoy the stories in our Cheetah Strides newsletter. Thank you again for your continued support.

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

Dr. Laurie Marker
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

in the wild.



ONE HEALTH INITIATIVE CONTINUES WITH NEW RABIES VACCINATIONS

Our work as part of the One Health Initiative, a worldwide collaboration with veterinarians, and other scientific-health and environmentally related collaborator, is continuing with extra precautions due to COVID-19. Last year CCF's vet team delivered more than 1,000 rabies vaccines during three trips into rural communities. Our most recent trip at the beginning of August allowed us to vaccinate the 143 dogs and cats that had not been seen during our previous visits. We have several more trips planned this year to follow up on the work from last year in rabies vaccinations.

Rabies is a zoonotic disease, transmitted by dog bites (pet dogs, street dogs and jackals), and it can be passed on to other animals or to people. Rabies is a problem affecting Namibian wildlife, and one of the best ways to minimize its contraction in wildlife is to encourage vaccinations of domestic animals, along with promoting awareness.

In all of our trips our vet team took the opportunity to conduct some health assessments on livestock herds and treated the livestock that needed veterinary attention. During 2019 the vet team conducted 1650 health checks. In August, with increased social distancing precautions, we were able to visit 50 homesteads and delivered veterinary care to animals in need.

In the past, the state veterinary offices provided rabies vaccinations to communal communities, however their capacity and lack of funding have brought the program to an end. CCF has stepped in, to supplement and assist our partners in government to continue providing these vital services. CCF's next One Health Initiative trip is scheduled for later in September.

Photos: This page: Intern, Eveline Ikondja, Tim Hofmann and Dr. Paul Set during rabies vaccinations.

Opposite page: top: Drs. Sara Gottlieb and Paul Set. bottom: left: Dr. Anna Ciezarek. right: Dr. Asma Bile

NEW VETERINARIANS AT CCF



During June, July and August CCF has some new team members on our veterinary team. We are happy to welcome Drs. Sara Gottlieb and Paul Set, in Namibia, and Anna Ciezarek, Laura Ryan, and Asma Bile in Somaliland, as they join CCF's 30-year lineup of veterinary professionals.

Drs. Set and Gottlieb are based at our Centre in Namibia where they care for all the animals on our Model Farm including CCF's Livestock Guarding Dogs, and 32 resident cheetahs. Both vets are from Namibia and they are recent graduates from the University of Namibia (UNAM).

Drs. Ciezarek, Ryan and Bile are working at our Cheetah Safe House in Somaliland where they care for 48 cubs confiscated from the illegal pet trade. Drs. Ciezarek and Ryan joined us from the UK, each taking on a three to four month service. Dr. Bile is from Somaliland and serves with CCF on a part-time basis, mainly as a part of the confiscation team.

At both of CCF's frontline centers our veterinary and animal care staff collaborate on global research projects, store biological samples from many species and perform cutting edge genetics testing using scat, blood and hair samples.





GIRAFFES AND ECOLOGICAL STUDIES

CCF continues its long-term giraffe study that began in 2003 with visual identification, annual waterhole counts and camera traps. The project is coming along under the supervision of our in-house giraffe expert, Research and Education Technician Elizabeth Pius. She has spent the past three years compiling the past 15 years of giraffe data for her honors thesis at the Namibian University of Science and Technology (NUST).

CCF's landscape studies like the one focused on giraffes, help to determine the ecological carrying capacity of our reserve. The research also helps to inform local farm managers and research collaborators from around the world. The data collected on wildlife species like giraffes helps to better understand not only population distribution but behavioral studies on the species social structures.

As a result of our research we have started to lower the game fences newly acquired land parcels that have recently been added to our reserve. Game fences can interfere with migration routes and isolate populations of species from each other interfering with breeding pools and subsequently limiting the genetic diversity of wildlife. Research projects like the one being worked on by Elizabeth, have been key to finding the solutions that will lessen the ecological impact of game fencing.

Over the years we've implemented some solutions like the usage of swing gates at strategic movement points to allow smaller species like warthogs to get through game fenced farms. We monitored the swing gates with camera traps and recorded the species that use them. Giraffes and other larger animals are too big to use swing gates so in order to promote healthier populations the fences are currently being taken down in key sections to allow for movement through CCF's larger private wildlife reserve

NAMIBIAN INTERNS *INVESTING IN THE FUTURE*

CCF is an advocate for hosting interns from Namibia and around the world. Since the inception of our internship program we've hosted over 200 Namibian students for six months programs, and nearly 500 International students. While in our internship program, students have the opportunity to develop skills necessary to prepare them for their future careers.

In order to allow more Namibian interns to have greater participation in our internship opportunities, CCF's international student internship fees are usually used to offset their cost. Due to COVID restrictions, international interns are unable to travel which means that we can no longer rely on our beneficial cost offsetting system. However, limited international participation also means we were able to take on more Namibian student interns this year than ever before.

There are 16 Namibian interns that need funding for the year and thankfully two donors in the US have stepped forward with support. The interns are working in all departments across our campus and represent the Namibian University of Science and Technology (NUST), University of Namibia (UNAM). We would like more support for our Namibian interns. If you are interested in sponsoring a Namibian intern, please let us know!

INSPIRATIONAL INTERN



Past intern Lucia Mhuulu completed her internship at CCF in the laboratory then pursued her MSc at the University of Namibia (UNAM). Her project focused on the genetic identification of scat samples on CCF property. After completing her Master's, Lucia accepted a position at the CCF Laboratory as Laboratory/Research Technician and later was promoted to Senior Laboratory Technician. After more than four years of working in the CCF genetics lab, Lucia accepted a position at UNAM medical school, where she is now responsible for operating their existing genetic analyzer.

Photos: *Opposite page:* Giraffes on CCF's Reserve stand near a wildlife observation blind. *This page:* In 2016 while serving as CCF's Senior Laboratory Technician, Lucia Mhuulu (on the left) supervises Intern from Kristine Tichman an intern from Canada.



MONTHLY AND ANNUAL GAME COUNTS

In August, CCF's ecology team did our seasonal game counts where we surveyed all of CCF farms. The survey areas are broken down into linear driveable paths known as transects and counts are performed in the morning and in the afternoon. Between August 10 and August 14th, ten transects were done across CCF property for a total of 383 km driven. Shortly following between August 25th and August 27th, three transects were done for three consecutive days in our Big Field count. These two counts are what we do on a monthly basis.

The annual winter new moon waterhole count entails surveying all of CCFs water points for 12 hours, and this year with the good rain we had, there were a lot more water points that still had water in them than in previous years. We had 32 waterholes in total between natural dams, and water troughs. For the past 15 years, we have been very fortunate to have help from international interns and Earth Expeditions (a Miami University study abroad course that counts for credit toward a graduate degree) to perform our annual waterhole count. Due to international travel restrictions we couldn't welcome our friends from international universities to assist us.





In order to get an accurate count we need a minimum of two observers per point. With limited people at our Centre and to maintain social distancing, we coordinated for all departments to help. On August 19th from 7am to 7pm CCF's ecology team led the efforts that included: most of our tourism staff, all of our genetics staff, some of our farm workers, all of our current Namibian interns, and some of the animal care staff.

The count took a lot of coordination and preparation. Most of CCF staff and Namibian interns were out in the bush, so we had to ensure that our essential operations were not going to suffer for the day. We still needed to take care of animals and assist with any local tourists that visited that day. Due to travel restrictions CCF's Centre has been relatively quiet, this is usually our busiest season.

Post count, the ecology team is now entering all the data into our database. This will allow them to analyze all the waterhole count data it to get density estimates of all our main game species. The finished results will contribute towards CCF's long-term wildlife monitoring program. The ongoing research provides an assessment for the long-term habitat viability of the Namibian ecosystem to ensure the survival of cheetahs.



Photos: **Opposite page:** top: CCF staff count all the species that visit the waterhole. bottom: left: Oryx right: leopard

This page: left: Carolina Torres and Eli Walker in an observation blind. right: Observation blind view from the outside. bottom: Rosy-faced lovebird



ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE RESEARCHING CONFISCATED CHEETAH ORIGINS

CCF continues to investigate the origins of confiscated cheetahs that we receive from the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT). With support in part from a SeaWorld Conservation Fund Grant we have been able to collect, process and analyze 67 different blood and tissue samples from cheetah cubs rescued from the IWT - 53 samples from Somaliland were and 14 of those were from the UAE.

CCF holds permits with CITES for the transport and study of genetic material across international borders. Dr. Laurie Marker was able to bring this batch of samples back into the country in one of the last incoming flights before Namibia's borders were closed to international travel. Once the blood, tissue, and hair samples are handed off to the genetics team the samples are processed to extract DNA for further analysis. The team focused on two relevant DNA segments for sequencing.

The information that we gain from DNA analysis is used to identify the basic region/subspecies and helps determine the point of origin on each of the confiscated cheetahs. We are better able to then identify hotspots where IWT is happening most frequently so that corrective efforts can be implemented. The information is also valuable if rescued cheetahs are to be released or are ever enrolled in a captive breeding program within the UAE.

Photos: This page: CCF's laboratory is used for genetic analysis on genetic samples from cheetahs across the species range.

Opposite page: left: Confiscated cubs at CCF's Cheetah Safe House, right: Emergency field medical treatment being delivered at the site of confiscation.

CHEETAH SAFE HOUSE SURGE

July and August of this year were busy months for cheetah cub confiscations in Somaliland.

Our team rescued 16 cubs and all of them are now living at CCF's Safe House in Hargeisa. All of the confiscated cubs were intended to be sold into the illegal pet trade, however some new twists into the IWT scenario is coming forward and revolves around farmer carnivore conflict. With these additional confiscations, our total cheetah count in Somaliland is now 48.

The ages of the individuals in each of the seizures varied from the youngest group being 2.5 weeks and the oldest being 8 months. Thankfully, most of the cubs confiscated in July and August were not seriously ill upon arrival, though most of them were malnourished and incredibly thin.

Earlier in the spring, as the COVID-19 pandemic placed additional pressure on our operations in the region, we received two young cubs that were intercepted by the Somaliland military. Both of the cubs in that confiscation were in very poor health, with diarrhea and coccidiosis due to the internal and external parasites covering their bodies. Both were severely malnourished and dehydrated. Sadly, one of them died upon arrival at our Safe House.

We have been very fortunate to have help in our efforts. As always, the Somaliland Ministry of Environment and Rural Development (MoERD) has been an essential partner. Working with the Selal Regional Administration and Somaliland Police Forces we've also had incredible support from Torrid Analytics in our most recent confiscations.



SUPPORT FOR CCF GENETICS LAB AND CLINICS

Recently, CCF has had incredible support from international donors including a Capital Donor in the US that gave the funds to allow CCF to purchase many critical items for our genetics lab and both of our veterinary clinics. In Namibia, we will be able to buy a thermomixer, PCR machine, centrifuge, genetic analyzer and some computers. In Somaliland, we acquired a blood analyzer, and equipment and back-up generators.



Biomass Development and New Construction at Camp Lightfoot

CCF's Centre in Namibia is doing some updates on our education and Bushblok facilities. At Camp Lightfoot, the overnight lodging created to house farmers and local and international school groups, we received some new picnic tables, seating and a power upgrade. We updated our commissary and added a kitchen to better support the students and teachers that visit for environmental education programming.

At our biomass energy production facilities, we are preparing to add fuel generators that use wood chips - the native overgrown thorn bush that we harvest during our habitat restoration efforts. We heat and compress the wood chips to make Bushblok - our low-emissions high-energy fuel logs. The site will soon house four new biomass gensets that will help CCF further reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

CCF's Biomass Technology Centre (BTC) serves as a model for green energy solutions in Namibia as we work with industry leaders and governmental partners to bolster the biomass potential for the country. To accommodate further research and education efforts, we have also constructed a new classroom within the BTC. The first group we will host at our new classroom will be students from University of Namibia (UNAM) under the professorship of Dr. Ezequiel Fabiano, CCF's former Quantitative Ecologist and Geneticist who now teaches full time at UNAM.

Photos: This page: CCF's Camp Lightfoot bunk rooms.

Opposite page: Newborn goats born in August with CCF staff and interns who assisted in their birth.

KIDDING SEASON COMES TO A CLOSE

We have spent the past four weeks helping CCF's goats to give birth! The month started off slow with one cute kid born to Onyx. The following day we welcomed two more cute little ones from mother goat Erin. We now have 44 new goat kids total! CCF's Livestock Guarding Dog and Smallstock Manager, Calum O'Flaherty knew which goats would be giving birth roughly 12 hours in advance as the muscles on either side of goats' tails will begin to relax in preparation for birth.

Most of the goats give birth during the day, only two goats gave birth during the night, and they didn't typically give birth at the same time. We did have one day where four goats gave birth within two hours, one after the other. Just as we finished cleaning, dipping and weighing the kids of the previous goat, we were welcoming the next group into the world.

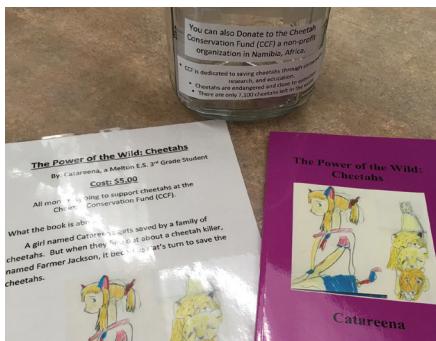
Some of the goats (31) will be kept at CCF's Model Farm and the rest will be sold to local farmers who are very eager to add a CCF goat to their herds. When the new 29 female kids grow up they will join our herd at the Model Farm where they will contribute milk for our Dancing Goat Creamery. The two bucks we will be keeping from our August kids, will become new breeding males.



Kids CORNER



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



Catareena, is 9 years old loves cheetahs. She wrote a fictional book about herself and cheetahs, and she sold it at her school's book fair. She raised over \$83 to be donated to CCF Her parents rounded up and just made a donation of \$100 in Catareena's name.



Ten year-old Amelia and 8 year-old Allie love cheetahs and started a fundraiser for CCF as their summer project by selling sanitizer and artwork to friends, family and neighbors. So far, they have raised \$250. They hope to help CCF to save another cheetah and change the world!



Rushil is 6 years old and very fascinated about cheetahs. Ever since he was 4 he has loved cheetahs he was very upset when he found out that they are endangered. His dream is to protect them so CCF sent him an activity book to help his cheetah education.

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



MRI FOR RESIDENT CHEETAH SMARTMAN

Mediclinic Windhoek performed their first cheetah MRI. One of our long-time residents, Ndunge (also known as Smartman) has had ongoing neurological problems since April. We have done x-rays without finding any cause. After Dr. Ulf Tubbesing assessed Smartman at CCF Centre, we decided to take him to Windhoek for an MRI. The process took a little over an hour and was conducted by the medical technician and our longtime supporter Sybille Hainer, who also helped financially support the procedure.

CHEETAH STRIDES CHALLENGE

Art for Art - Send CCF Your 30th Anniversary Drawings!

CCF is celebrating 30 years of saving the cheetah in the wild and we want to see your artwork. Draw, paint, or sculpt an artwork about cheetahs or about CCF's research, conservation and education programs.

Email info@cheetah.org with an image of your artwork for a chance to win a foldable cheetah papercraft. Create your own two foot tall 3-D masterpiece to display in your home while we display your artwork in ours!

How is it made? Watch Cheetah Conservation Canada's instructional video on YouTube

https://youtu.be/S6qNCy_EUIY





PO Box 2496
Alexandria, VA, 22301

BECOME A CCF SPONSOR

CCF's Resident Cheetahs and Livestock Guarding Dog Program need your support. For more information visit www.cheetah.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/sponsor/