Dear Team CCF,

I hope you are all well and safe in Namibia, and that things are starting to pick up, given the global situation currently.

Please kindly allow me to contact you to apply for a volunteer position with CCF for 2 weeks in the coming year 2022, I am open to your suggestions about the availability for the same.

Ideally if I can come around June next year would be the best. I am also open to your suggestions in case there are other availabilities. I have been dreaming of this opportunity for years now, I have followed your work and Dr. Lauri Marker for some years, and this has inspired me to contribute my share of efforts towards cheetah conservation.

Coming from a small town in India just next to Dudhwa National Park and then moving to a boarding school in the Himalayas, I grew up listening to stories about leopards, tiger, and elephants. I became fascinated by Ruskin Bond's books about Indian wildlife especially big cats.

And my first introduction to African wildlife came when I was 5 years old and suffering from chickenpox, my mom knew my love for animals and got me several video tapes to keep me distracted from the constant itch! I still remember vividly the scenes of savanna grasslands, and giraffes, wildebeests, antelopes and zebras running across them, the big cats roaming almost carefree, the elephants gently cruising and the rhinos skittishly shying away. This was the first time I ever saw a cheetah and I was simply amazed by them. And it was at that moment, I decided that no matter what coarse my career or life would take, I must always be connected to the wildlife.

Volunteering and working with several NGOs (WWF, Jane Goodall Institute, Animal Welfare Foundation, Haemagique) in India and in France, (where I currently live) has given me the opportunity to keep that promise that I made with myself as a child, But my dream to come to Africa only came true in the year 2019, when I had the opportunity to volunteer with Wildlife Act to help them monitor key species! Having experience the wildlife firsthand completely changed my perception, and made me ever more determined to continue working/volunteering in this field.

It was an unbelievable experience for me, especially when I saw the only female cheetah in the reserve, I understood the reality of the situation and the plights of the cheetahs. I instantly fell for them and decided that no matter what happens I simply have to be a part of their welfare and protection, so here I am hoping to volunteer with one of the most proactive and inspiring institutions in cheetah conservation CCF.

The work that you all do, moved me so much that I did not need more than an instant to decide to commit to this volunteer-ship. I would be so so grateful to be a part such an important project and be able to learn from a team that is so passionate and dedicated towards the protection of cheetahs.

With warmest of regards

Ishita MISHRA