

ISSUE N°  
**22**  
2<sup>nd</sup> 2021

# CHEETAH STRIDES

The Newsletter of the Cheetah Conservation Fund



Photo by Barth Balli

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Research

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**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

2021 EVENTS - LET'S KEEP THE WILD, WILD.

### ONLINE

### SAVE THE DATE ONLINE AUCTION

OCT. 4 - 31 2021

### BIG CAT. BIG PARTY.

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL EVENT

OCT. 10, 2021

### PALM SPRINGS CHEETAH SUNDOWNER

OCT. 16, 2021

### D.C. GALA

20<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL EVENT

OCT. 25, 2021

### COAST TO COAST CHEETAH PARTY

**LET'S KEEP THE WILD, WILD.**

OCT. 30, 2021

WITH A SPECIAL VIP EVENT

FEATURING

DR. LAURIE MARKER

### EVENT SPONSORS

**WILDLIFE PROTECTION SOLUTIONS**

**B2 GOLD**

**BROWN & BROWN INSURANCE**

Contact donations@cheetah.org to become  
an event sponsor for these or future events.

## OTHER EVENTS

### ONLINE

### INTERNATIONAL CHEETAH DAY

Celebrate the cheetah from  
wherever you are!

Dec. 4, 2021

### SAVE THE CHEETAH

1M 5K 10K 13.1 26.2

Nov. 1 - Dec. 31, 2021



## NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



The first week of September, I am representing CCF at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) World Conservation Congress alongside our European affiliates from France, Italy, and Germany. The Congress is meeting to set and drive the agenda for “nature-based recovery” defined by IUCN as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits.” In other words, as it applies to CCF - helping people, helps cheetahs.

CCF’s programs promote human well-being, and wildlife has benefited. Our research continues to show that by improving the lives and livelihoods of the people that live alongside the cheetah we can mitigate the main threats to the species - human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and illegal wildlife trade. For more than 30 years, we’ve been working to help Namibian livestock farmers, both communal and commercial from livestock depredation. Now we are working to gather important data from pastoralists in the Horn of Africa. Once we know more about the needs of these unique communities, we can modify CCF’s programs to fit.

In Namibia, the perception of the cheetah as a threat (to be eliminated on sight) has changed. Human-wildlife conflict is in decline in many areas where we have conducted environmental education outreach through our Future Farmers of Africa and Future Conservationists of Africa programs. In Somaliland, we hope to make a difference in stopping the illegal trade in cheetahs by developing region specific extensions to these popular programs. Please read my statement at the IUCN World Congress on our website [www.cheetah.org](http://www.cheetah.org).

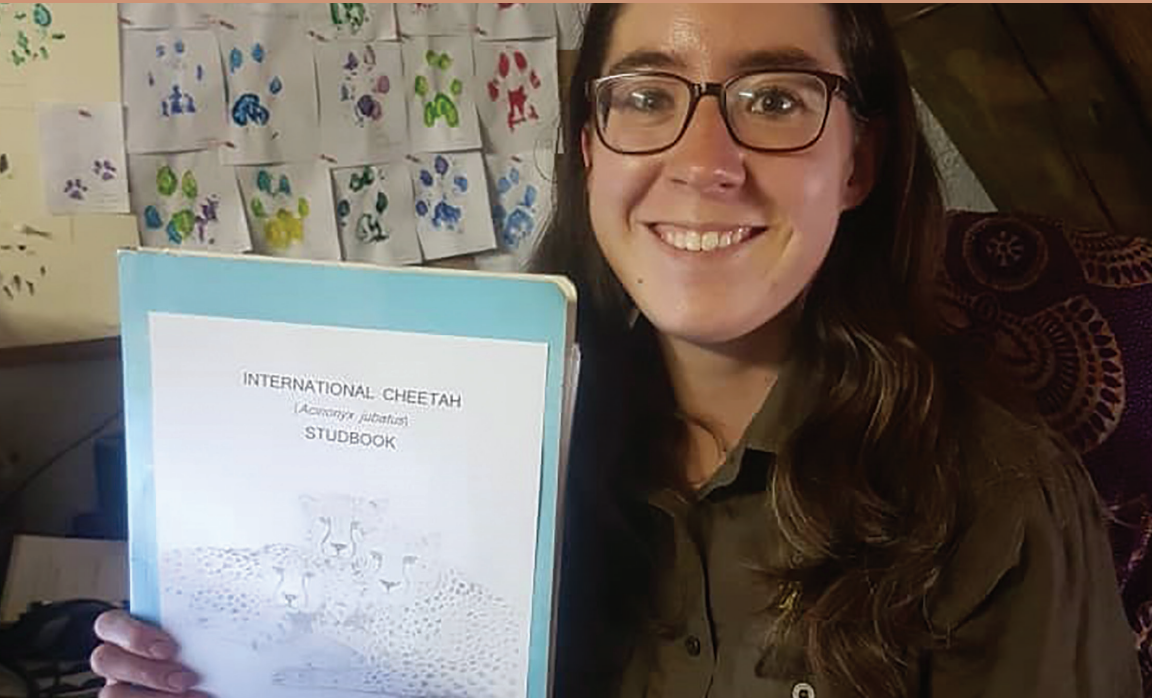
I am looking forward to meeting CCF’s supporters like YOU at our upcoming online events. We’ll be hosting events similar to the ones we had last year, and I hope you will join us. We’ve learned a lot from our online events in the spring and we have some interesting additions and improvements to share.

Dr. Laurie Marker  
Founder & Executive Director

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

**in the wild.**





## **DATA COLLECTION FOR CHEETAHS MANAGING DATA FOR THE CAPTIVE POPULATION**

The International Cheetah Studbook is a voluntary register of all cheetahs in the world held in both zoological and private facilities. Dr. Marker is the International Studbook Keeper and set up the 1st Studbook in 1988 and has published annual updates ever since. The studbook contains important information about captive cheetahs and assists zoos in implementing Species Survival and Endangered Species Programs (SSP and EEP) through the World Zoo Association (WAZA). These programs help zoos to responsibly manage the breeding of a select species or subspecies, most SSP/EEPs focus on threatened, endangered and critically endangered species. Responsible breeding programs that use the criteria have helped bring species back from the brink of extinction.

The studbook originally included wild-caught and captive-born individuals alive in 1980 and after and over the years have included all historic animals. Each registered animal has a studbook number. Bi-annual questionnaires are sent to all facilities holding cheetahs and information is checked through the support of the Species360 Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS).

At the end of 2020, Dr. Marker and Becky Johnson, CCF's Assistant Studbook Keeper, began moving the studbook to Species360 Zoological Information Management System (ZIMS), the online database with millions of records on more than 22,000 species and ten million individual animals. The transfer over to the global system will make keeping data up to date much easier, as zoological institutions that participate in ZIMS can



add their animals directly into the system, rather than sending their data to CCF's bi-annually.

With the transfer to ZIMS there is more historical data that will be added and edited. As a result, the 2020 studbook will be delayed as we learn and navigate the new system and ensure accuracy.

## **MANAGING DATA FOR THE WILD POPULATION**

In our Genome Resource Bank (GRB) CCF banks sperm, serum, plasma, white and red blood cells, hair, and skin samples on all cheetahs that CCF has handled either in the field or in our veterinary clinic, or necropsy samples of dead cheetahs. CCF also has an increasingly extensive scat sample collection from wild cheetahs in Namibia and cheetah range countries. Since 1991, blood and tissue samples have been obtained from over 1,000 individual cheetahs. These samples are used for understanding the overall health of wild and orphaned cheetahs and on-going genetic research, with backups stored at CCF in Namibia and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute (SCBI) in the USA. CCF holds the world's largest wild cheetah database of biological material.

Researchers from around the world have access to the data collected from these samples. So far in 2021, CCF's researchers in Namibia were able to collect material from a total of 11 cheetahs.

CCF's researchers also collect samples from cheetahs in the Horn of Africa (mostly cubs rescued from the illegal wildlife trade). CCF currently has 1,018 samples from 178 cheetahs from the Horn of Africa. The data obtained from the illegal trade subjects is highly sensitive and is not currently available for public use.

## **MERGING THE DATA FOR CAPTIVE AND WILD**

The One Plan Approach refers to a plan of species conservation that considers all individuals of the species both in the wild and in captivity. Information collected on individuals encountered in the wild by field biologists, wildlife managers and conservationists is used alongside individual records kept by accredited zoological associations. Partnerships between the global zoo community and frontline conservation scientists and NGOs are critical to the success of species conservation.

The One Plan Approach was created by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG)). By participating in the One Plan Approach, CCF is leveraging its considerable catalog of information, on both wild and captive individuals, to ensure the long-term survival of the cheetah.

**Photo:** *Becky Johnston shows the front cover of the International Cheetah Studbook. For the most recent Cheetah Studbook and a complete listing of published papers visit: [www.cheetah.org/resource-library/](http://www.cheetah.org/resource-library/)*

## RESEARCH PAPERS PUBLISHED

CCF's resource library has grown over the past year with many interesting papers being published by scientific peer-reviewed journals. Two more papers are pending publication and an six papers have been submitted, two of which are in revision. Below is a list of the most recent published papers.

### **ECOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

April 2021 - Published in **Namibian Journal of Environment**, *Detection success of cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) scat by dog-human and human-only teams in a semi-arid savanna*, Hofmann, T., Marker, L. and Hondong, H.

April 2021 - Published in **African Journal of Ecology** - *Spatiotemporal sharing and partitioning of scent-marking sites by cheetahs and leopards in north-central Namibia*, Verschueren, S., Briers-Louw, W.D., Cristescu, B., Fabiano, E., Nghikembua, M., Torres-Uribe, C., Walker, E.H., and Marker, L.

May 2021 - Published in **Ostrich Journal of African Ornithology** - *Double-brooding in Southern Yellow-billed Hornbills *Tockus leucomelas**, Stanback, M., Millican, D., Versfeld, W., Nghikembua, M., Marker, L. and Mendelsohn, J.

September 2021 - Published in **Rangeland Ecology and Management** - *Local-Scale Variation in Land Use Practice Supports a Diverse Carnivore Guild on Namibian Multiple-Use Rangeland*, by Verschueren S., Briers-Louw W. D., Monterroso P., Marker L. L.



### **EDUCATION RESEARCH**

June 2021 - Published in **Human Dimensions of Wildlife** - *Impacts of human-dimensions of wildlife training on participants*, Siyaya, A., Hughes, C., White, W.R., Nitsche, C.M. and Marker, L.

## NEW STAFF AT CCF



In May, cheetah husbandry intern, Melanie Lippert, joined CCF Namibia from the United States. Melanie previously worked as a communications fellow for the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, D.C., and as a carnivore and bird intern keeper at the White Oak Conservation Center in Florida. She was further trained by our cheetah team and then headed to Hargeisa where she is now working as one of our cheetah keepers and educational assistant for CCF Somaliland. She now works daily caring for cheetahs and helping develop educational events, such as the 2021 Hargeisa International Book Fair and with CCF presentations at local schools.



In June, Tyler Kwaak returned to CCF Somaliland from the United States where he had been a keeper at New Jersey's Turtle Back Zoo for three years before volunteering. After going back to the USA, he trained as a veterinary technician. Tyler is working alongside CCF's veterinarians with aspirations to continue on to veterinary school when he returns to the USA. Tyler wrote his college thesis on illegal wildlife trade after doing his internship with CCF in 2019. He was inspired by his experience and loved being on the frontline, combating this huge conservation issue

**Photos: Opposite page:** Camera trap photo of a cheetah

**This page: top:** Melanie Lippert and CCF's Somaliland team at the Hargeisa Book Fair

**bottom:** Tyler Kwaak cares for a confiscated cheetah cub





## FARM CATCH AND RELEASE

CCF has built relationships with farmers across Namibia that have made the commitment to help us to save cheetahs in the wild. Some of them are so committed that they allow us to re-release trapped cheetahs back onto their land. At the end of August, a farmer with a long history of participating with CCF gave us permission to re-release a small family of cheetahs onto his farm where they were caught in June.

The cheetahs were caught on their farm in June and were transferred temporarily to CCF's Centre, where they were all anesthetized for an exam and veterinary workup. The three cats, a mother, and her two subadult cubs (a female and a male) were all fully examined including x-rays. At their pre-release exam the cheetahs were fitted with the GPS satellite collars so we can monitor them closely.

The farming family is actively involved with the community conservancy and has worked with CCF since Dr. Marker first came to Namibia. In addition, they participated two years ago in CCF's scat survey on their farm. The farm has several play trees and is a great habitat. The farm is managed with the goal of coexistence with the wildlife that utilizes the land, and the





farmers are very tolerant of predators - particularly the cheetah. Modern farming practices are used on the farm and the farmer focuses on good livestock management practices that are predator-friendly. They do not use lethal controls and they very rarely lose animals to predation.

In addition to livestock, the family manages a game farm. Having cheetahs on the farm is positive as it helps control the wildlife populations and helps naturally create a healthier, more robust ecosystem.

When the three cheetahs were first released, they headed out in different directions, but we confirmed they found each other quickly and spent the first night post-release together. We will continue to monitor their movement and behavior via satellite. The farm family is happy to have the cheetahs back on their farmland. They are proud that cheetahs are living on their lands and that they are part of cheetah conservation efforts. These farmers and many like them are working hard to coexist with predators.

Additionally, our ecology and scat dog team have been welcomed to use the farm as a home base when they are working in the region conducting surveys, running transects with the scat dogs, and setting up camera traps for further monitoring. See story on page 8.

## SUPPORT CCF'S SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS

Donate to help us continue our work saving the cheetah  
[www.cheetah.org/donate/](http://www.cheetah.org/donate/)

**Photos: Opposite page: top:** Mother cheetah peers from the transport crate, **bottom: left:** The cheetah family in their cage trap at the farm before being taken to CCF, **right:** Stijn and Dr. Marker at the cheetah veterinary exam

**This page:** The cheetahs run for the freedom of the savanna as they are released.



## SCAT DETECTION SURVEY

Under the direction of Dr. Bogdan Cristescu, CCF's Assistant Director for Ecological Research, CCF's scat detection dog team, headed up by Tim Hoffman, CCF's PhD. Candidate and scat dog Enya is doing the first large scale systematic cheetah presence survey on ~4,000 km<sup>2</sup> of livestock farmland landscape in the eastern part of the Omaheke District of Namibia. During the survey, scat samples will be gathered for analysis in CCF's genetics lab. The lab team will isolate genetic samples from the scat, further building the collection housed in our Genome Resource Bank. The survey will set the basis to evaluate and optimize cheetah survey protocols and will be used to inform future population studies. We will also gain important information from the scat of what the cheetahs are eating and that will help further our statistical analysis of scat samples.

So far, the scat dog team has surveyed 22 cells and detected cheetah presence in 14 of them. CCF's scat detection dog Enya walked 156 km to help find 128 carnivore scats, of which 47 were field identified as coming from cheetah. Most of those scats were found around the 20 marking trees (called playtrees) searched by the team but the four found on transects could potentially derive from non-territorial males or females, not defecating at playtrees and therefore are of great value to us.

CCF's ecology team is working in the same area on a large camera trap study. Currently, Stijn Verschueren, our PhD candidate, has deployed over 120 camera-traps in this large gridded area to collect cheetah and leopard occurrences. The data collected will assist us with conservation management

**Photos: This page:** Mike Kakove scans the horizon while working to locate scat samples with the scat detection dog team

**Opposite page:** Benny Munyandi working in cold storage with CCF's samples



planning and provide necessary information to help mitigate human-wildlife conflict. Temperature/relative humidity data loggers were deployed alongside the camera traps to understand the potential effect of global warming on activity patterns of cheetahs, their prey and their competitors.

While the team is out in the survey area, we will use the opportunity to make contact with farmers and help mediate any human-wildlife conflict situations. Often several days are spent

with an individual farming family and important mitigation solutions are discussed on site. It is a difficult job, but we benefit from CCF's good reputation within the community. We are often given positive feedback from people that implemented the changes we suggested on these visits. We hear reports all the time that human-wildlife conflict solutions are working to prevent predation on livestock. Mitigating livestock losses results in a higher tolerance toward predators from the farming community.

## CCF INTERNSHIP

Benny Munyandi joined CCF as a rotation intern at the end of 2019 and started a 12-month internship in February 2020. He is now pursuing his Honors degree with the CCF genetics laboratory. Benny is studying at Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). At CCF the focus of his graduate project is the analysis of cheetah scat collected by CCF's Scat Detection Team, under the direction of Dr. Anne Schmidt-Küntzel, CCF's Assistant Director of Animal Health and Genetics. His work to categorize the scat will help to build out the datasets that inform our on-going research projects.

Benny also worked on the "Wild Boys" project, which is a long-term project focusing on two wild cheetahs affectionately named after the former Presidents of Namibia - Sam and HIFI. The project began in 2013 when CCF staff began collecting and storing the scat of two cheetahs living near CCF's Research and Education Centre.





## Are a human and a wild animal pictured together?

#ThinkBeforeYouLike

People who love animals naturally want to be close to them, but human-wildlife contact is rarely ethical or safe outside of conservation work, medical treatment, or care of a rescued animal.



Trafficked cheetahs are typically taken from the wild as babies, still nursing and dependent on their mothers. Not only is the experience traumatizing, but because they don't learn behaviors like hunting, even if they're rescued, they won't be able to survive in the wild.



## Is a wild baby animal pictured alone?



#ThinkBeforeYouLike



## CCF FEATURED IN NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

An extensive reporting on cheetah trafficking through Somaliland and to countries on the Arabian Peninsula now appears in the Wildlife Watch\* section of the September 2021 print issue\*\* of National Geographic. The article, How trafficked cheetah cubs move from the wild and into your Instagram feed, authored by Rachael Bale, Executive Editor of the animals' desk, is accompanied by photographs taken at CCF's Centre in Somaliland by American photographer and Nat Geo Explorer Nichole Sobecki.

The article follows the efforts of Somaliland's Ministry of Environment and Rural Development (MoERD), as they work with CCF and other international partners to stop the flow of wildlife crime through their country. The subject of the story is the arrest, trial and conviction of Somaliland's most notorious cub trafficker Cabdiraxmaan Yusuf Mahdi, better known by his nickname Abdi Xayawaan (Abdi Animals).

Abdi Xayawaan and members of his criminal enterprise were caught in possession of 10 cheetah cubs following a separate trafficking bust on September 23. That day, six men were arrested in an undercover sting when they attempted to sell three cheetah cubs to a local Hargeisa resident. Police seized their mobile phones, and the data they obtained led them to Abdi Xayawaan. All 13 cubs were turned over to CCF where they are currently being cared for as part of the 58 cheetahs and one African leopard held at our series of Cheetah Safe Houses.

**Photos: This page:** National Geographic social media campaign graphics featuring photography by Nichole Sobecki and the cheetah cubs at CCF's Safe House in Somaliland.

**Opposite page:** Brian Badger delivering new LGD "Dionne" to CCF's Headquarters.

\*Wildlife Watch is Nat Geo's investigative reporting project focused on wildlife crime and exploitation. \*\*The article is also available online.

On October 17, 2020, seven defendants received a one-year jail sentence with a small fine, Cabdiraxmaan Yusuf Mahdi, a repeat offender who was arrested on three prior occasions, received a four-year term and a fine of three million Somaliland shillings, about \$5,000 USD.

News of the conviction and several other factors have had a chilling effect on cheetah trafficking in Somaliland, according to MoERD. There have been no confiscation or interception events involving cheetahs in the ten-month period following the convictions. This is significant progress but there is still a lot of work to do. Unfortunately, on the 5th of September, this hiatus came to an end, when four cubs were confiscated.



## NEW BREEDING DOGS FOR LGD PROGRAM

This year thanks to support from The Wilhelma Zoo Grant, two new Turkish Kangal Dogs will join us in Namibia to bolster CCF's Livestock Guarding Dog (LGD) breeding program. One of the dogs was named Dionne by generous supporters and the other one is available for naming rights by donation. More information will be announced soon.

In August, Dionne was brought to us with CCF's Assistant Director of Conservation and Outreach, Brian Badger. She is still a puppy and is getting accustomed to her surroundings and meeting her fellow LGDs and CCF's goat herd. The next dog will depart from Washington DC in mid-September.

Our previously donated breeding female (kindly donated by the Lisbon Zoo), Lisboa Bella, went into labor on 10th July, and gave birth to beautiful puppies. We now have eight very feisty new LGDs in training. Due to their very important new bloodlines, we will keep two female puppies for our ongoing breeding program to help provide more farmers with guarding dogs.





# Kids

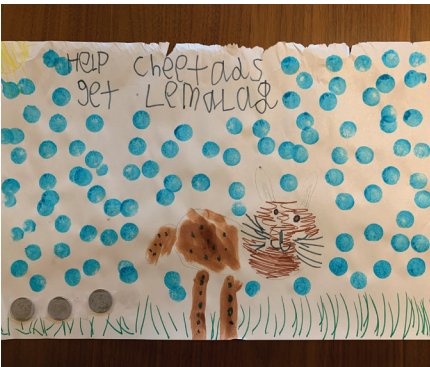
## CORNER



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



Alexa (10) and Olivia (9) both love cheetahs! They decided to help save the cheetah with a hot chocolate stand. The cheetah is their favorite animal. They sold hot chocolate and took donations raising \$105 to send to CCF. They even enlisted Alexa's little sister, Bianca to be their mascot.



Ava (6) is from North Carolina. Last year (2020), in kindergarten, her class learned a bit about different animals. Once Ava learned that cheetahs are endangered, she asked if she could set-up a lemonade stand to raise money to help the cheetahs. At the stand Ava raised \$40, which she sent to CCF.



Norah (7) loves all animals, but cheetahs are her favorite. So she decided she wanted to help them. She sold cookies and drawings to raise funds. Norah quickly passed her goal of \$100 and ended up raising \$140 to send to conservation. Now she is helping cheetahs all around the world!

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

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



## LIFE AT CCF

We have made some great improvements to the infrastructure at our Centres in Namibia and Somaliland including a new commissary, kidding barn and remodeling and expansion of some of our current facilities. Take a virtual tour of these projects by visiting <https://cheetah.org/virtual-tour/>

## CHEETAH STRIDES CHALLENGE

# Save The Date

Get ready for the upcoming

## Children's Juried Art Competition

Theme: Keep the Wild. Wild,

More information TBA

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

Submissions will begin on October 1, 2021

Awards announced on December 4th to celebrate International Cheetah Day.



## **BECOME A CCF SPONSOR**



PO Box 2496  
Alexandria, VA. 22301

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/](http://www.cheetah.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/sponsor/)