



CHEETAH NEWS -February

JWANENG RESEARCH CAMP

The monitoring of our first collared cheetah is going very well. We have managed to find her regularly and are gathering data successfully on her home range and habits. Her 5 cubs are doing very well and growing fast. We'll make sure to post some photos on the website very soon!

In November we had an exciting event at Jwaneng. It seems Ann Marie our field biologist is becoming very successful at catching cheetah, which can be notoriously difficult to catch, as they don't come to bait or call stations, as do lions, leopards and hyenas.

She set up the trap at a waterhole where tracks had been seen. The next day a female cheetah had been caught. Ranging around on the outside were her two companions. Another trap were set up beside the captured cheetah and the next morning the other two had been successfully captured. They were all placed in our holding enclosure until the following morning. The team arrived early the next day and went about anaesthetizing the group to take samples, measurements and radiocollar one of them. We were very excited to capture a collaboration of females. To begin with we thought the other two were probably the cubs of the female.

However, on closer examination all three were female and of similar age.

This is an exciting discovery, as same age adult females do not usually stay together, unlike male siblings which will stay together for life.

FARMER MEETINGS

Workshop

We attended the first ever workshop organized to discuss predator problems on farmlands. This was organized by Monica Schiess Meyer of the Khutse Leopard Project and the Dept of Wildlife and National Parks and attended by predator conservationists and members of the farming community. Despite beginning the workshop on very different sides of the fence, it was very successful. There were talks by each conservationist outlining the different behaviours of predators and alternative methods of control were discussed. By the end we were agreeing on many things and farmers had agreed to work with us on the issue.

COMMUNITY

We have been fortunate enough to receive a preliminary grant of \$2000 from the Global Environment Facility of UNDP, thanks to the assistance of Mr Isang Pilane. This will allow us to focus on our community program. We are going out regularly to affected communal farming areas to discuss with them their problems and assist

them with solutions. We are assisted by a local community development volunteer, Moscow Oboletse, an experienced guide/educator working at Mokolodi Nature Reserve. We hope to employ a full time local community officer when funds allow.

We have recently returned from a visit to the communal farming areas around Kanye, in the Southern district. Here the communities are experiencing high losses and cheetah are perceived to be their worst problem. Traditionally, young children went out with the livestock during the day and brought them back for kraaling at night. However, these days all children must go to school, so there are no more herders and losses have increased. We offered to return and make a presentation at the 'kgotla' (traditional village meeting place) on different methods of predator control that can be utilized. This was very well received and we hope to return very soon to these affected communities.



Visit to village elders at Gasita

EDUCATION

We hope soon to begin predator talks at Mokolodi education centre. We have completed our draft education

booklets and are looking for funding to print and distribute them.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

We were lucky enough to be included in Wildlife Conservation Network's newsletter as the 'project in the spotlight' We received over \$5000 of donations from their supporters, special thanks to Tony DeMatto for putting up the matching funds, to Stephen Gold and Lynn Befera for their generous donation of \$2000. Many thanks also to Frederick Welk, Ramona Ambrozic and Sharon Taylor. We were generously supported by the Wild Foundation collaborating with the Sierra Club for \$5000 to be used partly towards 8 camera traps. This is very exciting and will give us a great new dimension to our research. Allowing us to identify individual cheetah without sightings or trapping. We will regularly post any good photos on the website. We can also use these to begin a census of the cheetah in Jwaneng. As well as, using them on farmlands with problem cheetah to effectively identify the culprit. So thank you very much to them for their generous contribution. A further 2 camera traps are being funded by IdeaWild, who were one of our first supporters when the cheetah project was just a concept and they provided us with funds for our first radiocollars.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Help us to distribute the survey to

any farmers, landowners, game reserve managers you may know.

- Send us your cheetah sightings, past, present and future
- Raise awareness for predator conservation. Botswana still has a rich biodiversity and it is up to all of us to protect it!
- Make a donation, however large or small, everything makes a difference.

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