



## RAISING A LITTER OF WILD DOG PUPPIES - ALL GROWN

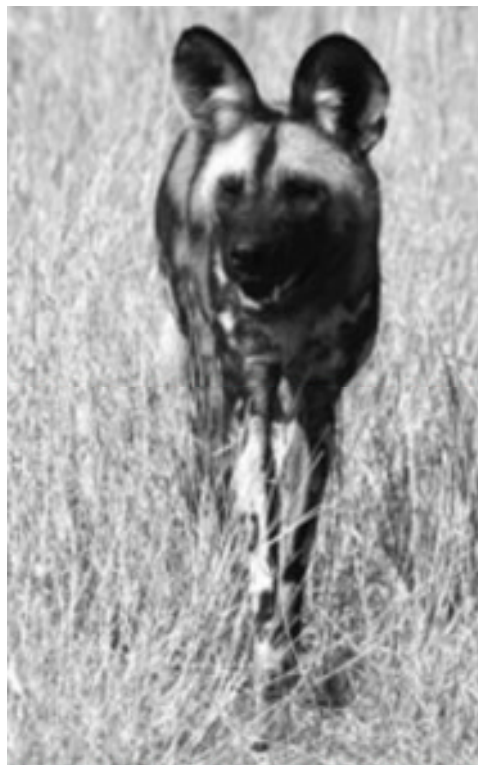
The 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2005 will be a date that sticks in our minds forever – the day our lives were taken over by a litter of the most adorable but smelliest three-week-old wild dog puppies. Now a year on, we have our lives back. Although the dogs are not quite independent, we feel a bit like parents at the “empty nest” stage of their lives, when their children have moved out of the house and life is not quite so frenetic. There is however a sense of achievement that we have got the puppies through the first year of their lives, no matter how traumatic it has been.

Out of habit, my first daily task is to check that there are five dogs, all behaving normally, with ten eyes open and twenty legs on the ground. One morning in early February only four dogs ran over to greet us - Mouse (Rufus) was missing. Eventually he came over, walking very slowly, as if in a lot of pain and with an abdomen that looked as if he had swallowed a soccer ball. At first I thought he had

just overeaten. A rainstorm the previous afternoon had caused all sorts of problems so it was quite late before they were fed their large chunk of meat. I recalled seeing Mouse running around with a big piece of fur and the others chasing him - the usual game they play after all the meat has been consumed. Once exhausted, the dogs normally lose interest and the fur is abandoned until it is picked up the next morning when the enclosure is cleaned.

We shut the other dogs in a separate enclosure and went in to examine Mouse more closely. The fact that he let us approach and stroke him without going into a complete frenzy told us that he was not feeling at all well. His bloated stomach was as hard as a rock and he was drinking a lot of water. I searched the enclosure but couldn't find the fur from the previous night's meal anywhere and concluded that he must have swallowed it. Thinking that this had caused a blockage we phoned the vet for advice and were told to bring him in immediately.

It turned out that Mouse had twisted his stomach and Dr Axel Hartmann performed the emergency surgery. During the operation the undigested food was removed from the stomach, together with the missing piece of fur, which he had swallowed whole. A



gastric torsion causes rapid necrosis of the stomach wall which, if not treated timeously, will result in certain death. The tissue in Mouse's stomach was already starting to turn a very unhealthy colour and although it looked as if we had made it with minutes to spare, it wasn't guaranteed that he would make it. Complications could still arise; only after ten days would we be absolutely sure that he was going to pull through.

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## HUMAN / WILDLIFE CONFLICT



Photo: Paul Martens

If someone was to pose the question “What is the greatest threat to wildlife?” most of us would probably answer: Man. And in that answer most of us would probably be fairly close to the truth. But if man is the greatest threat to wildlife, then what does the rural African consider as one of his greatest threats in trying to carve out a life for himself in deepest darkest Africa? Wildlife. So it's a conflict zone with each defending his own territory and occasionally making forays into the other's. Thus today the term “problem animal” is out and “human/wildlife conflict (HWC)” is in. Although many animals can be said to cause HWC the major ones are the large carnivores (lion, leopard, cheetah, hyaena, wild dog) and the elephant.

The government of Namibia represented by the Ministry of Environment has recognised this conflict as one of the key issues to successful conservation and sustainable development, and has courageously taken up the gauntlet in an attempt

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(Wild dogs - continued from page 1)



Wild dogs are highly social animals and separating individuals causes great anxiety to the isolated animal as well as the rest of the pack. The dogs' anguished calling for Mouse while he was at the vet was absolutely heartbreaking and this separation had to continue while he recovered from the surgery. To enable them to at least see each other during this time, we built a make-shift camp next to the dogs' enclosure. When he was released from the crate into his temporary home the family reunion caused tremendous excitement and raucous jubilation. Mouse was leaping around so much we were worried that his sutures would rupture.

Having had his last meal removed from his stomach, Mouse was absolutely ravenous by the time he was allowed to eat and was not pleased when the mince he was given disappeared in one mouthful. He had to be fed frequent small meals throughout the day, with the amount gradually increasing until his stomach could cope with his normal daily intake of food. Even with a feeding hatch the delivery of the food became tricky, as the chances of one of us losing a hand became greater with every meal. Giving pills however was no problem – his mouth was in the bowl so fast he didn't notice or care about the contents.

Ten days passed without any setbacks. Mouse made a full recovery and was allowed to return to his siblings. The overwhelming greeting and chasing



that ensued showed their delight in having him back.

Luckily the temporary enclosure wasn't dismantled because two weeks later we needed it again when Ricki broke her leg and had to be separated from the other dogs. Dr Mark Jago set the leg in a plaster cast and on recovering from the anaesthetic Ricki was released into the camp, where she would spend the next five weeks. Her family welcomed her back with the usual enthusiasm and throughout her confinement they treated her as part of the pack. They included her in their greeting when they woke up in the morning, licked her face through the fence and lay next to her during the day.



The fracture healed well; the cast was removed and we looked forward to the happy reunion. This however, didn't go as expected. Instead of the usual excited twittering, Ruby attacked Ricki and started biting her face when the gate between the two enclosures was opened. The rest joined in and a fight broke out. Armed with only a broom and a water bottle for protection Dave and I tried to intervene, although we soon realised, when the dogs started to surround us, that this was futile.

My immediate reaction, especially when I saw the blood, was to take Ricki out again but this would just delay the inevitable, as she had to rejoin the pack some time – separating her permanently was not an option. We decided to leave them to sort it out. They called a truce after a while with Ricki lying in one corner and the others together in another. Every time Ricki tried to approach them the snarling and snapping resumed. It was the first time that we witnessed any real aggression between the siblings or towards us and we didn't know how far they would go. We sat outside the enclosure for the rest of the day in case things really got out of hand, although I am not quite sure what we would

have done had some sort of action been required. Every now and then we would walk over and check if the issues had been resolved but if they spotted us they would run over and the fighting would start all over again.

There is a natural hierarchy within a pack of wild dogs with an alpha male and female at top spot. Raine and Rex have been the leaders of this sibling group almost from the beginning. Rufus being the runt of the litter seemed to accept the situation and didn't even try and contest it, which left Ruby and Ricki as the main contenders against Raine for the position of head female. There were certainly no outward signs of any antagonistic rivalry before the separation, but an underlying competitiveness had probably existed for some time. We can only assume that Ricki's five-week confinement changed the status quo and allowed Ruby to be the only competitor for the position of alpha female. Ricki's return upset the balance once again, causing the battle.

For all the blood, thankfully the wounds were only minor and healed within a week. Any signs of affection towards the dogs would set off the bickering, so apart from seeing them at feeding time we had to ignore them completely. It took nearly a month before the dog politics was sorted out and peace and the hierarchy were finally restored.

The puppies reaching adulthood meant that they required a more spacious enclosure. The record rainfall delayed construction but the day finally came when we could release them. The dogs' reaction to their new home was one of overwhelming excitement. They ran continuously for half an hour - chasing each other, leaping over the long grass, diving into the water; their constant twittering expressed their sheer delight. Panting heavily, it was only utter exhaustion that ended the frenzy. 🐾



Carla Conradie  
Photos: Dave Houghton

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMES TO AFRICAT

In 1992 there was the Rio Earth Summit, then in 2002 the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg. In September 2005 actor and environmentalist Robert Redford offered his 6000-acre ranch for a summit attended by mayors of many of the top US cities to seize on the sustainable agenda. In June the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development met in New York. Why all the interest in sustainable development?

Graham Watkins, the Director of the Charles Darwin Foundation, which co-ordinates conservation research in the Galapagos islands, is on record as saying: "Conservation of the Galapagos can only work if the biodiversity in the archipelago is owned in the hearts and minds of those that live there. If the local community does not benefit, it's not going to support conservation. It is still possible to meld conservation and sustainable development in the islands".

What is true in America and the west, is true in the Galapagos, and has also never been truer in Africa. For life as we know it to go on, it has to be

sustainable, and it has to be sustainable in the hands of the people. Here in Namibia with a landmass of 824,300 km<sup>2</sup>, and a population of a mere 1.9 million, one might think that there is room for all and that the concept of sustainability is not a problem. If only it was so and man could continue to behave on a whim, indulge in extravagance, and flaunt his superior mind to the four winds. But alas the reality is that Namibia is a harsh, dry nation where the land dies of dehydration, just as its inhabitants will if they do not take care to practice the art of sustainability and the science of conservation.

Overstocking of cattle and small stock on Namibian farms has resulted in bush encroachment which is reported to reduce potential grazing lands by as much as 3% a year. As grazing is reduced, so is a farmer's income potential. Solution: stock higher to keep the cash coming in. Result: environmental suicide. But there is good news, for the Namibian is a creative and resourceful creature. Just as the beasts which roam on the Namibian veld learn to change and adapt, so too is land-use evolving into a more varied, economically sound and

hopefully sustainable way, which heralds a chance of success for the future. Tourism has become the fastest growing business in Namibia.

The western world has affluence, a certain amount of time on its hands to take holidays and an education system which allows and inspires its people to travel and visit other parts of this world. Namibia has wide-open vistas, ranging from desert to savannah to woodland, inhabited by a myriad of flora and fauna, which with a keen eye will bring music to the soul. Visitors to Namibia are prepared to pay for their stay provided that they are given a quality experience for their money. Some visitors to Namibia are happy if they have the knowledge that at least a portion of the money left behind goes back into the conservation of the land which they had the privilege to experience. Sustainable? Of course, if managed properly. By the people? Absolutely no reason why not, if the people are given the opportunity.

The AfriCat/Okonjima relationship was established with sustainability as one of its goals. There will always be the need

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## SAYING GOODBYE TO THREE OF AFRICAT'S FAMED CHEETAHS



Chinga

Chinga was a six-month-old orphan cheetah cub when she came to Okonjima in 1989. She was one of the primary influences in establishing the AfriCat Foundation and, together with her companions, Caesar and Chui, became very well known to guests at Okonjima for many years.

Also amongst the first cheetah orphans to be taken into AfriCat's care, Tyke and Spike became a famous duo and

were two of the six cheetahs released into AfriCat's first large cheetah enclosure (sponsored by Richard and Diana Reynolds-Hale) over a decade ago.

In the last six months we have had to say a sad goodbye to three of these well-loved icons – Chinga, Chui and Tyke. Mature in age – seventeen, twelve and fourteen years respectively – all of them succumbed to kidney failure. Renal disease is often



Chui



Tyke

diagnosed in captive cheetahs, as well as domestic cats, especially in those of advanced years.

Chinga, Chui and Tyke are sorely missed. They will never be forgotten and will always have a special place in our hearts. 🐾

Carla Conradie

(Sustainable Development - continued from page 3)

to seek funds for new ideas and projects which the Foundation tries to tackle, but a portion of the day-to-day costs are covered, by and large, from the visitors who come to see the Foundation, witness its work and share in its dreams. Likewise, because the visitor comes to see AfriCat, so Okonjima can develop and expand the range of experiences it is able to offer. This relationship goes beyond symbiosis into the realm of synergism.

And what of the people? There is, of course, employment at Okonjima and AfriCat. But we can go much further than this. Future plans for AfriCat include developing the opportunities for locals and their families to farm both livestock and arable produce for their own use, but also to be marketed to the lodges, surrounding farms and in nearby towns. Farming techniques employed will naturally be environmentally friendly using minimum amounts of water and ensuring that wildlife, in particular predators, can live side by side with man's endeavours. An on-site clinic and school catering to the needs of the people will be established. There will be opportunities for locals to benefit directly from tourism, for example, by investing in and monitoring rhino – one of the “big five” that tourists are eager to see. All this and more will be built into a model



Okonjima Bush Camp

Photo: Paul Martens



Okonjima guests radio-track the AfriCat cheetahs in the TUSK Cheetah Rehabilitation Area.

Photo: Paul Martens

which, once running successfully, will be tried in other places.

Animal welfare of carnivores will always have a prime place at AfriCat, but the Foundation must grow and evolve as the needs of the environment and the people change. Environmental education of the youth, farmers and conservation officers requires renewed life breathed into it. Research needs to continue and expand into such areas as techniques of counting carnivores and other animals so that we can accurately establish population sizes and monitor their fluctuations. Field research, much of which is already under way, continually needs support which AfriCat hopes to be able to offer. Add all this together and AfriCat's mission of ensuring the long-term conservation of Namibia's large carnivores comes a little closer.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century firmly establishes itself as a new and dynamic era, sustainable development and the conservation of earth's limited but valuable resources will continue to become ever more urgent and essential parameters by which we as human beings must lead our lives. The AfriCat Foundation is ready to play its part. 🐾

## TWYXCROSS ZOO donates funds for veterinary equipment

A big thank you to Twycross Zoo of the East Midlands Zoological Society and its Conservation Welfare Trust. They have very generously donated £2000 for veterinary equipment for AfriCat. This has been used to purchase a dedicated animal pulse oximeter, a machine which measures both oxygen and carbon dioxide concentrations in animals during anaesthesia. The machine allows the depth of anaesthesia to be closely monitored during a surgical procedure, thus making it safer for the animal. This particular model has two sensor probes (lingual and transfluctance) which can be attached to many places on an animal including the ear, tail or tongue.

The rest of the money was used to purchase an autoclave to sterilise surgical instruments prior to surgery, together with some essential instruments required for the surgery itself.



AfriCat carries out a number of anaesthetics throughout the year on a variety of wild animals, in particular cheetah, leopard, lion and wild dogs. The reasons for these are varied and include everything from moving an animal to routine sampling and treatment of sick and injured animals. We were able to repair a fractured cheetah leg a few months ago by inserting a stainless steel pin into the bone.

The welfare of the animals under AfriCat's care is very important to the Foundation, and we are hoping to build a new clinic in the near future with improved facilities allowing an even greater range of procedures to be carried out. Donations such as that from Twycross Zoo go a long way towards allowing the Foundation to give the best possible care to the animals we treat.

Many, many thanks. 🐾



# CHEETAH REHABILITATION

## GREEK GODS

Athena, Artemis, Zeus and Apollo were radio-collared and released into the ten-thousand-acre TUSK Cheetah Rehabilitation Area in October last year. The four siblings were orphaned at the age of six months and came to AfriCat in February 2001. Tracked and monitored every day they initially showed little interest in hunting for themselves, catching the occasional scrub hare and the odd steenbok that happened to be passing by. Not being sufficient to sustain four adult cheetahs, supplementary food had to be supplied fairly frequently during the first three weeks. Once they had caught their first kudu however, they were on a roll. The Greek Gods stayed together, their hunting skills improving and their successes increasing significantly over the next month.

Orphaned at an early age, these cats have missed out on all that they should have learnt from their mother while growing up – not only hunting skills and techniques but the essential “life-skills” needed to survive in the wild. These cheetahs can now only learn these “life-skills” by way of experience; lessons often being hard and unfortunately, sometimes fatal. Knowing which other predators to avoid and when to back off and relinquish hard-earned prey are just two of the lessons they have had to learn so far during their rehabilitation. It was during one of these situations that Zeus, confronting a leopard in an attempt to guard the siblings’ recently-caught impala, was seriously injured. The leopard bite caused severe damage to the spine. After various treatments and medications the paralysis to his hindlegs was found to be permanent and sadly we had him put down. Apollo seemed to be the only one to miss Zeus, calling for him for about three days, but the siblings continued to hunt successfully as before.



*Injury to Athena's paw.*

that the bandage could be removed. The wound was healing well until she pulled out all the stitches and had to return to the vet. Second time round the bandage was kept on for a week, which seemed to do the trick and



*Athena reunited with Artemis and Apollo after recovering from her injured paw.*

Just over two weeks later Athena had to be darted and taken to the vet. She had injured her front left paw quite badly, the wound requiring stitches. Confined to a small camp to recuperate she was darted again three days later so

Athena was reunited with her siblings in the rehabilitation area in the middle of January. A couple of hours later she ventured off on her own and has been hunting solo ever since, coping well. Artemis and Apollo make a good team and are regularly successful hunters, although Artemis seems to initiate the chase before Apollo joins in.

## MO

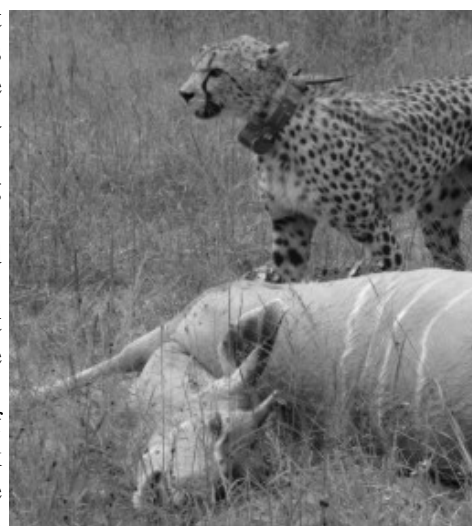
Since being on his own, Mo has learnt a number of “life skill” lessons – avoiding injuries from the horns, tusks or hooves of prey animals and knowing which other predators to avoid. But in spite of the injuries he has sustained from a warthog tusk, a young zebra's hooves and a bite from a leopard, he recuperates quickly and continues to be a champion hunter.



*Mo consuming his young giraffe kill.*

## DEWEY

At the end of last year Dewey was taken out of the rehabilitation area and spent six weeks in captivity being treated for gastritis. Once he had regained his condition and put on some weight, he was back to his normal cheeky self and released back under close supervision. The symptoms of his illness did not reoccur and he was back to catching his own food and taking care of himself. He was doing so well that when his radio-collar gave a mortality signal we thought that the collar was faulty. Sadly, this wasn't the case; Dewey had been killed in a fight with a leopard. 🐾



*Dewey with a kudu kill after spending six weeks in captivity.*

Carla Conradie  
Photos: Dave Houghton

# ANNUAL HEALTH EXAMINATIONS

At the beginning of April AfriCat welcomed the return of Professor Henk Bertschinger, Drs Gerhard and Sonja Steenkamp and Dr Gary Bauer for this year's cheetah health examinations. Joining us for the first time were Dr Susanne Schulze from Leibniz-Institut für Zoo- und Wildtierforschung (IZW) in Berlin and Professor Frik Stegmann from the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort, University of Pretoria.



*Drs Gerhard and Sonja Steenkamp examine and record the dental procedures that each cheetah requires. Looking on are vet student, Carl-Heinz Moeller (left) and Professor Frik Stegmann.*

The cheetahs were then examined by the veterinary dentist Dr Gerhard Steenkamp assisted by Dr Sonja Steenkamp. X-rays were taken and dental procedures required were noted for when the doctors returned to AfriCat to carry these out at a later date. While the dentists were busy, Professor Stegmann monitored the effect of the anaesthetic on the cheetahs' blood pressure.



*Dr Mark Jago assisted by Brenda de Witt, administering an intravenous drip.*

Dr Mark Jago, AfriCat's vet, carried out the general examinations, monitored the anaesthesia to ensure that the cheetahs didn't wake up in the middle of the proceedings and administered the required vaccinations.

Dr Susanne Schulze performed ultrasound examinations on the female cheetahs as part of her research on reproduction in the wild cheetah population in Namibia.

Each cheetah was then weighed and dipped before they were returned to their enclosures or put in a crate to recover from the anaesthetic.



*Colin Beveridge (left) and Alan and Sue Hufton dip a cheetah while Pat de Witt holds the drip.*



*Dr Gary Bauer examines Willows' eyes while Pat de Witt monitors the cat's heart-rate.*

Thirty-eight cheetahs were anaesthetised over the three-day period, each undergoing a series of examinations.

Dr Gary Bauer, a veterinary ophthalmologist, checked the cats' eyes for cataracts, thorns and other abnormalities. Then they were moved on to Professor Henk Bertschinger, a reproduction specialist. Here blood samples were taken and the contraceptive implants administered.



*Professor Henk Bertschinger checks the effectiveness of the contraceptive implants by examining sperm from the male cheetahs.*

We would to take this opportunity to thank all the vets for giving up their valuable time to help AfriCat, as well as the following people who assisted during the event:

*Renate Bertschinger  
Colin Beveridge  
Dr Laura Brandt  
Brenda de Witt  
Pat de Witt  
Robert & Penny Greenwood  
Alan & Sue Hufton  
Carl-Heinz Moeller  
Dr Christa Schmidt  
Dr Sonja Steenkamp*

*Carla Conradie  
Photos: Dave Houghton*

*(Human/Wildlife conflict - continued from page 1)*

to try to moderate between the two warring factions. A Human/Wildlife Conflict Management in Namibia workshop was held in Windhoek last year. Dr Mark Jago attended in his capacity as AfriCat's new Executive Director and as the Chairman of the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia (LCMAN) and was very impressed with the excellent manner in which the Ministry has begun to tackle this difficult issue.

In an opening address the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Dr Malan Lindeque, defined the problem by dividing it into three categories. Whilst recognising the first, wildlife on commercial farms, as a very important one worthy of its own meeting, he identified the other two, wildlife on communal conservancies and wildlife on other State land, as being areas "where wildlife-related conflicts have more immediate and serious implications concerning land use and the livelihoods and welfare of vulnerable people". He went on to say, "There are considerable problems with wildlife in conservancies, basically in my view because the costs and benefits from wildlife are not equally distributed within the larger human community that constitute an individual conservancy. It appears that in most cases, the benefits from wildlife cannot be easily used to offset the often dramatic costs suffered by individual households in a way and time that truly meets the needs of the affected household".

The need for accurate information on HWC situations is essential, for only by building up a substantial database can decision-makers make well-informed recommendations for solving problems. The need to consider decentralisation of governance to a local level in order to deal with local problems in a timely and appropriate fashion was also highlighted.

One novel and potentially exciting new approach to dealing with HWC situations is that of self-insurance. It has been recognised for some time now that compensation in itself is unsustainable, requiring considerable amounts of money from outside sources on a continual basis. However if a pool of money can be established by a community at the conservancy level from the utilisation of game on a sustainable basis, this could then be managed by the conservancy to pay out to

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## THERMOREGULATION RESEARCH PROJECT

Since October last year Brenda de Witt from the School of Physiology at the University of the Witwatersrand has been conducting research at AfriCat on thermoregulation in free-living cheetah for her master's degree.

The purpose of the study is to look at the effect of environmental temperatures on cheetahs and how these temperatures influence the cheetah's activity and behaviour and to determine whether the duration of a cheetah's sprint is thermally limited.

Temperature and activity data-loggers (to record body temperature and movement) were implanted into the six cheetahs in the study group. During the study period a weather station continuously recorded on-site microclimate measurements, such as temperature, wind speed and radiation to indicate the heat load experienced by the cheetahs.

The six cheetahs in the study group were radio-collared so that they could be easily found in the ten-thousand-acre TUSK cheetah rehabilitation area. Over six months Brenda regularly tracked the cheetahs in order to monitor their health and wellbeing and observe and record their behaviour. Three months of the study period however happened to coincide with one of Namibia's record years in terms of rainfall, with 784 mm falling between New Year and the end of March. Frequent downpours, impassable swollen rivers, flooded roads and acres and acres of mud often hampered Brenda's observations.



*Dr Leith Meyer assisted by Brenda de Witt, performing the surgery to remove the temperature data-logger from one of the cheetahs in the study group.*

*Photo: Dave Houghton*

The data-loggers were removed from the cheetahs at the end of May and the data has been downloaded using specialised computer software. Brenda is currently analysing and correlating this information to the microclimate and behavioural records. Her findings and conclusions will be printed in future editions of this newsletter. 🐾

*Carla Conradie*

# RADIO-TRACKING WILD DOGS IN BUSHMANLAND

When Robin Lines of the Wild Dog Project approached AfriCat for help in locating a pack of wild dogs in Bushmanland which he had radio-collared six months previously, we knew that we had to help.

The wild dog is one of Namibia's large carnivores, the one with the smallest population, estimated at no more than six hundred individuals (Namibian Large Carnivore Atlas - July 2004).



*Dave Houghton (AfriCat), Sonja Metzger, Robin Lines (Wild Dog Project), Leslie and Erastus (Nyae Nyae Conservancy). The AfriCat Maule (donated by TUSK Trust) was used to radio-track the wild dogs in Bushmanland.*

*Photo: Mark Jago*

The aircraft which AfriCat uses for radio-tracking was donated by the Tusk Trust, the same organisation which is partly supporting the Wild Dog Project. Thus the opportunity to begin some collaboration to work with the conservation of one of Africa's finest hunters was too good to be missed.

Dave Houghton and Mark Jago flew to Tsumkwe early one cool June morning, to be met by Robin Lines, Sonja Metzger and two members of the local Nyae Nyae

Conservancy, Leslie and Erastus. After flying for a couple of hours, Dave located the dogs some way from where they had last been seen by Robin before the rainy season. The rains had been so good this year that getting into the area on the ground had been impossible until very recently.

After landing, the whole team drove to find the dogs deep in the heart of Bushmanland. It was only fading light which had to bring to an end a fantastic hour following and observing these remarkable creatures.



*After locating the wild dogs from the air, six individuals from a pack of fourteen were observed from a vehicle.*

*Photo: Dave Houghton*

The Wild Dog Project is carrying out research into various aspects of wild dog demography and behaviour. The work in Bushmanland is made even more fascinating and rewarding because it is based in the Nyae Nyae conservancy, home to some of the few remaining San, a highly spiritual people who carve out a life for themselves in a harsh and arid environment.

It is AfriCat's hope to be able to continue to work with the Wild Dog Project and the people of the Nyae Nyae conservancy. 🐾

## DONATION TOWARDS VETERINARY COSTS

With over a hundred large carnivores in our care, plus the cheetahs and leopards that come to AfriCat through our rescue and release programme, the cost of treating injuries and illnesses constitutes a substantial portion of our annual budget. We insist that our cats receive the best veterinary care and therefore have to find the funds to cover this expense. Mr Jim Maltman's generous contribution towards anaesthetic, medical supplies, medication and surgery is therefore greatly appreciated.

This Scottish gentleman is a frequent visitor to Okonjima and AfriCat. He has experienced some of AfriCat's work first hand, having accompanied Dave to rescue a leopard that had been caught in a trap. He also had the chance to relive his days as a navigator during the war when he joined Dave in the AfriCat Maule to radio-track the cheetahs and leopards in the Tusk Cheetah Rehabilitation Area from the air.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Jim Maltman for his generous support in helping us look after the health of our cats. 🐾

## NEW SCIENTIFIC BOARD OF ADVISORS FOR AFRICAT'S RESEARCH

AfriCat's unique situation is remarkable in the wide variety of opportunities it can afford scientists from all over the world to carry out research on the animals living at the Foundation. However, although there is a huge amount still to learn about the animals both in captivity and in the wild the Foundation needs to be highly responsible as to the nature of the research it undertakes. To this end we have

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(Scientific board - continued from page 8)

decided to create a scientific board of advisors which will help guide the research carried out directly and indirectly by the foundation.

We are very grateful to Professor Henk Bertschinger of Onderstepoort Veterinary Faculty in South Africa, who has agreed to head up our board. Other advisors on the board are Dr Gerhard Steenkamp, Dr Gary Bauer, Dr Sonja Steenkamp, Carla Conradie, Dr Laura Brandt and Dr Mark Jago. This board may change with time as the need arises.

At the first meeting it was unanimously agreed that we would concentrate on research which is aimed at the conservation of large carnivores in their natural wild state. Although much of the initial work will be carried out at AfriCat's own facility, it is the Foundation's intention to collaborate with other relevant research being conducted in other parts of the country as well.

Brenda de Witt from the Physiology department of the University of the Witwatersrand has concluded the field component of her thermoregulation study and is now at the writing up stage; we eagerly await her results. We are currently assisting Namibia's wild dog project, and later in the year a nutritional study will begin in collaboration with a German institute. Dr Mike Peirce from the UK will be looking at a variety of carnivore blood parasites. As a result of this year's health inspections a paper has been drafted for publication by Professor Frik Stegmann from Onderstepoort on the effects of various anaesthetic combinations we have used to keep our animals under sedation.

There is continual on-going research into the health of the animals at AfriCat carried out by a variety of veterinary experts who attend the annual health examinations. Our rehabilitation program will be entering a new phase in the near future providing numerous opportunities for further research.

Watch this space to keep you updated on AfriCat's research program. 🐾

## THANKS TO THE DENTIST

Dr Gerhard Steenkamp, a veterinary dentist, and his wife Sonja, a pathologist, have been coming to AfriCat for a number of years. Between them they have turned around the oral health of many of the carnivores at AfriCat, in particular the cheetah. As the animals have become older so the normal wear and tear of ageing sets in and there is a need to provide good dental care to ensure maximum functionality with minimum pain.

Gerhard and Sonja are experts in their respective fields and it is therefore a great honour to have them attend the annual health examinations as well as a follow up visit each year when they sort out dental problems which have come to light. Tooth root canal treatments, extractions as well as general diagnostic work have been the order of the day. But Gerhard has not stopped there; he has gone further, using the opportunity to gather information and carry out research into some of the more unusual dental anomalies he finds.

Much of this work Gerhard and Sonja have funded themselves and we are extremely grateful for their help and generosity. However they have now also, together with Professor Frik Stegmann, provided a methoxyflurane vapouriser, a microscope and other dental equipment all for use at AfriCat's veterinary clinic. These items are essential for us to be able to carry out our work successfully.

A very big thank you for everything Gerhard and Sonja have done for AfriCat. 🐾



## AFRICAT HELPS FIGHT POLIO

Below is the press release which made it to the front page of the national daily *Die Republikein* on 21 June 2006, together with the accompanying photograph taken by Dave Houghton.

*"The AfriCat Foundation has today taken yet another step towards its goal of conservation through sustainable living. The Foundation, committed to large carnivore conservation, believes that the only long-term answer to conservation is through the people whose lives are lived in a precarious balance with nature.*

*AfriCat is taking a very broad view in its approach to working with local Namibians. Thus when Dr Laura Brandt, Chief Medical Officer and Acting Director for the Otjozondjupa regional health services, asked her husband Dr Mark Jago, Executive Director of the AfriCat Foundation, for assistance with the critical emergency polio vaccination campaign conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the wheels started turning at a rapid rate and a plan to help was created.*

*Super Spar in Otjiwarongo very willingly agreed to print 7500 copies of a pamphlet giving local details of vaccination sites in the local languages, and these were added to the national flyer organised by the Republikein and NCA. The AfriCat Foundation*

*then supplied its aircraft, flown by Dr Mark Jago, with his wife as "flyer distributor" to deploy these pamphlets over Otjiwarongo as part of the national effort to inform as many people as possible about the details of the campaign. Dave Houghton from the foundation looked on, recording the event on camera from the ground.*

*The effort was a contribution to ensuring that all Namibians know about the threat of polio and when and where to be vaccinated. If every man, woman and child is vaccinated we will succeed in our bid to stamp out the current polio outbreak and save lives."* 🐾



(Human/Wildlife conflict - continued from page 7)

individuals who suffer from HWC in a rapid and appropriate manner just as in an insurance scheme.

In March of this year a second HWC meeting was held at which three presentations on work carried out in the intervening period were presented. These covered: a situation analysis of HWC in Namibia (Dr P Stander), results and recommendations from the survey on HWC characteristics on the northern Etosha boundary (University of Namibia), and results and recommendations from the survey on HWC realities in Ehirovipuka and Omatendeka conservancies (Dr P Stander). A first draft of a National Policy on HWC Management was also presented.

There is still considerable ground to be covered, but Namibia is taking a very proactive role in this critical arena which has a direct bearing on the country's large carnivore populations.

AfriCat was initially primarily involved in trying to mitigate and alleviate the HWC problem on the commercial farmlands where so many of the free-ranging cheetahs live. This work will continue unabated, but to complement the national effort AfriCat has already begun to assist in the communal areas as well. 🐾

## SOUTHERN AFRICAN REGIONAL CHEETAH WORKSHOP

At the end of last year AfriCat joined a number of other cheetah conservation organisations based in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia at the first Southern African Regional Cheetah Workshop. The workshop, hosted by the Cheetah Conservation Fund and facilitated by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group of Southern Africa, of the International World Conservation Union's (IUCN) Species Survival Commission, looked at what has been accomplished in terms of cheetah research and conservation in southern Africa to date and focussed on new objectives for the future.

Group discussions included topics such as census techniques for estimating cheetah populations, human/predator conflict, education initiatives and the conservation of cheetahs within and outside of protected areas. One of the projects resulting from the workshop is the compilation of a Regional Status Report for cheetahs in each country. 🐾



## A BIG THANK YOU TO.....

- 🐾 Ferplast pet products in Denmark and Søren Knudsen for the very generous and most useful sponsorship of a large crate for transporting cats, an enormous kennel for housing and shelter and a host of toys to occupy cubs, kittens and puppies.
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*AfriCat's newest orphan cheetah, Charlie, using the kennel donated by Ferplast for shelter.*

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