



CAESAR & PIGGY THE END OF ANOTHER ERA

1991 saw the arrival of two animals that would each play a notorious part in Okonjima's history. Caesar, a two-year-old cheetah and Piggy, a warthog of the same age, became a familiar sight to guests staying at the Lodge.

Caesar, AfriCat's second cheetah, teamed up with Chinga, another icon from those early days. The two were then joined by Chui to form the famous trio. Taking their afternoon meals on the lawn with the guests looking on, was a daily event to which the cheetahs regularly added their own form of excitement – running up the low sides of the newly-thatched roof, climbing to the top, their claws pulling out the thatch as they went and then proudly standing on the apex, a heart-stopping fifteen metres from the ground. Many hours were spent trying to coax them down without injuring themselves. After many years, Chinga, Caesar and Chui retired from the public eye to spend the rest of their days in more peaceful surroundings.



Having undergone emergency surgery ten years ago for the removal of a ruptured cancerous kidney, we always thought Caesar would be the first to leave us but last year we lost both Chui and Chinga. And in January it was time to say a sad goodbye to the last surviving member of the trio. Caesar, at the age of eighteen years, had succumbed to kidney failure. Caesar, Chinga and Chui, three cheetahs that were here at the start of Okonjima and AfriCat, that left a lasting impression on all those who met them, will never be forgotten.

From the start Piggy was given the freedom of choice as to the kind of life he wanted to lead. His choice? The best of both worlds. Piggy spent many hours around the Lodge, grazing on the front lawn, getting a tray of left-over food, begging an apple from anyone that happened to be passing (who could resist?), wallowing in his personal mud-bath under the tree in the carpark or lounging dangerously close to the evening fire. His home, however, was somewhere in the bush and in spite of many attempts on our part to follow him to his burrow, he always outwitted us and never revealed exactly where he went at the end of the day.

Piggy wasn't at all intimidated by any of the other animals around the Lodge, even challenging Chinga, Caesar and Chui for their meat - while they were still eating. I recall him even winning on a few occasions. But there was one battle where he came off second best and this was when Matata, the lion, managed to get hold of him. Matata



wasn't yet two years old but still weighed about a hundred kilograms. We always did our best to ensure that Piggy and Matata were kept apart from each other – Piggy at the front of the Lodge, Matata at the back. But many a time Piggy would sneak to the back when no-one was looking or simply barge past the person going through the

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(Caesar & Piggy - continued from page 1)

gate. On most occasions when this happened we used to bribe him back to safety with an apple; being a food-lover of note, this usually worked. On this particular day Piggy managed to find his way in and Matata spotted him before anyone else did. It was a matter of seconds before Matata pounced on top of him. Poor Piggy was squealing while trying to get away from Matata's claws, which raked gaping wounds on his hind legs. Someone came running in with a wheelbarrow, the only thing Matata had any respect for. While he was distracted he let go of Piggy who ran off as fast as he could. So fast that none of us could find him to assess the extent of his injuries or to apply any form of treatment. When Piggy didn't make an appearance in the following week we became concerned that his injuries were far worse than we had feared. Because we didn't know where he lived, we didn't even know where to start looking for him. After two weeks we thought he might have died. But - lo and behold - three weeks later, his wounds packed with mud, Piggy trotted in like nothing had happened. It was such a relief to see that he had survived the ordeal.

During the rainy season Piggy spent less time at the Lodge as there was plenty of food and water to be found in the bush. Sometimes weeks would go by with no visits. As he got older we began to wonder whether we had seen him for the last time; but sure enough he would pop up again when the puddles dried up and it required a bit more effort on his part to find food. As old age set in and Piggy became less active, he chose the warmth of the evening fire over his shelter in the bush and the Lodge became his permanent home. Arthritis set in and he lost his eyesight; after sixteen years the time came to say a fond farewell to Piggy. The end of another era.

Carla Conradie



AFRICAT UK FEEDS A HUNDRED CARNIVORES

How much food is consumed by a hundred cheetahs, leopards, lions, hyaenas, wild dogs and caracals in a month? A staggering eight tons!!! And the cost of feeding these animals? An astounding £4000 a month.

When AfriCat UK offered to take care of this hefty bill for three months we were over the moon. In addition to providing for the animals' nutritional needs, our supporters in the UK also raised sufficient funds to contribute to their health care costs as well. This funded the anaesthetic, medication, contraceptive implants, darting equipment and medical supplies used during this year's health examinations. A grand total of £14000.

Thank you to Alan and Sue Hufton, the committee and supporters of Africat UK for this most generous sponsorship.



Air Rescues PATCH & JIGSAW

Patch, a three-month old leopard cub, was fetched from a nearby farm in April. A twenty-minute flight over a four-hour round trip in the car made the choice of transport an easy one. Dave took off in the AfriCat plane (a generous donation by Tusk Trust) and was back a short while later with the little female cub in a crate. In spite of being cornered and caught by dogs, she had no injuries but was obviously traumatised by the ordeal. Patch was released into an enclosure at the clinic where she would be kept until she was big enough to move into a one-hectare area.

A couple of months later we received a call to collect another leopard cub. Jigsaw also arrived at AfriCat by air, Dave picking her up on the way back from a trip to AfriLeo.

It is not often that we receive two small leopard cubs within such a short space of time. Leopards, being natural climbers, are extremely agile, making confinement of the cubs particularly difficult. Jigsaw's arrival once again pointed out our desperate need for additional facilities to accommodate small animals. We only had one suitable enclosure to house a leopard cub and this was occupied by Patch. Although both still small, the size difference between the two meant that they couldn't be housed together. The only solution was to make some alterations to an adult leopard enclosure and hope that these would be sufficient to keep Patch in. The necessary modifications were completed in record time and Patch moved in. Jigsaw, released into the enclosure vacated by Patch, was very eager to leave the confines of a crate. Both leopards soon settled into their new accommodation. Patch and Jigsaw will remain in AfriCat's care until they are old enough to be released.

Carla Conradie

NEW CHEETAH CUBS AT AFRICAT

Since the beginning of the year AfriCat has taken six cheetahs into care, all cubs without mothers and too young to hunt or fend for themselves. The first to arrive were six-month-old siblings, *Hammer and Tongs*. Having been in captivity for a month before coming to AfriCat they were already used to a feeding routine so it wasn't long before we were able to introduce them to four other cheetahs that were slightly older but similar in size. The introduction went smoothly and it wasn't long before the two newcomers settled in.

Salt and Pepper arrived at the beginning of winter and at only two months old they were too small to be placed in an enclosure with no shelter from the cold. Since the only suitable enclosure was occupied by a leopard cub at the time, a quick plan had to be made. In spite of the fact that the cubs would only be housed in the enclosure for a short period of time it had to fulfill a number of requirements. Since cheetah cubs are expert climbers, a roof was needed to stop them escaping. The enclosure had to be in a location where the cubs could get sun (vitamin D is required for the absorption of calcium); shade (when the sun gets too hot); an area where they could be confined at night to protect them from the freezing cold; and it had to be close to the office so that we could feed them three times a day and keep a close eye on them. The area also had to be big enough so that they could run around and get some exercise. An appropriate spot was promptly chosen and Dave began building at a rapid rate as the cubs could not be confined in crates for too much longer.

In the meantime I tried to introduce Salt and Pepper to a new eating regime. I was extremely grateful that they were old enough to go straight onto solids. Here I mean solids as opposed to milk, not solids as in density, as the gooey texture of the food can by no means be referred to as solid. It is a mixture of minced chicken with the bones (a good source of calcium which is vital for bone density and growth in young cheetah cubs) and minced red meat (not having tasted it myself, I go on the assumption that

this makes the food more palatable because it is eaten more readily when this is added) together with mineral and vitamin supplements. There being no other way to present this food, Salt and Pepper had to learn to eat from a bowl. This doesn't come naturally. Cheetahs don't seem to have a keen sense of smell so one has to show them that the contents should be eaten rather than walked through or sat in. The only way to do this was to put the food right under their noses; once they realised that the offering was edible they would grab it and eat it. Using your hands to do this was not an option, unless you wanted to lose a few fingers.



Although a bit cumbersome, a teaspoon taped to the end of a long stick provided the ideal tool. The idea was that once the cubs got the hang of eating off the spoon, one guided the spoon slowly towards the bowl, at which point they would realise that this was where the food was and where it should be consumed. Pepper, the female and the bolder of the two, caught on fairly quickly. Salt, the male, got hung up on the spoon and wouldn't eat out of his bowl unless the spoon was in it. But the penny finally dropped and although I still had to watch them eat (to ensure that each ate the required amount) the three meals a day became less messy and less time-consuming.

Six days after the arrival of Salt and Pepper, our newly-established routine had to be completely reorganised with the sudden appearance of another pair of cheetah cubs. Only five days old,

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ANNUAL HEALTH EXAMINATIONS

An annual veterinary inspection is compulsory for facilities with captive large carnivores. Since our cats require a number of other examinations and procedures to be carried out on a yearly basis we coordinate these to take place simultaneously. Our cats' health is of prime importance and the invited veterinary specialists who attend this event are able to provide the treatment the cats need and supply the expert information we require to ensure that our cats are given the best care. The event also gives these specialists the opportunity to research a variety of animal health aspects, particularly those relating to the health of large carnivores in captivity. This information can be compared to the results of similar studies done at other captive facilities and also be used to gain insight into the health of large carnivores in the wild.

Our regular team, Dr Mark Jago, Professor Henk Bertschinger, Dr Gary Bauer, Dr Gerhard Steenkamp and Dr Remo Lobetti very kindly gave up their time once again to join us for this year's examinations.

Dr Mark Jago has the overall responsibility of sedating and monitoring the anaesthesia of forty-six cheetahs over the three-day-period. Dave Houghton assists with the darting of the cheetahs before they are brought to the AfriCat clinic.



Professor Henk Bertschinger administers the contraceptive implants and takes blood samples. Sperm samples are taken from the male cheetahs and examined under a microscope to verify the effectiveness of the contraceptive.



Dr Gary Bauer, a veterinary ophthalmologist, uses a slit lamp to examine the cheetahs' eyes for the presence of cataracts, corneal scarring, injuries and abnormalities.



Dr Gerhard Steenkamp conducts a thorough dental assessment for each of the cats and performs root canals and extractions where required.



Dr Remo Lobetti uses a gastroscope to look for clinical signs of gastritis and at the same time takes multiple biopsies of the stomach mucosa to look for the condition on a histopathological level. Gastritis is

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the inflammation of the stomach associated with the microorganism called *Helicobacter pylori*, the clinical symptoms of which are chronic vomiting and severe weight loss. The stomach tissue biopsies are analysed by Dr Emily Lane, a veterinary pathologist in South Africa. Comparison of the analysis results to those obtained in previous years allow for the monitoring of the incidence and progress of the gastritis on a cellular level.

Dr Mark Jago carries out a thorough examination of each cheetah and administers the required vaccinations.



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

- ◆ Dr Mark Jago, Professor Henk Bertschinger, Dr Gary Bauer, Dr Gerhard Steenkamp and Dr Remo Lobetti for all their support and giving up their valuable time to help AfriCat.
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- ◆ Africat UK for funding the cost of the anaesthetic, medication, contraceptive implants, darting equipment and medical supplies used during the annual health examinations.
- ◆ Okonjima management and staff for their assistance with accommodation and meals.
- ◆ Peet and Anél du Toit for sponsoring and organising the refreshments.

Carla Conradie

Photos: Roy van der Merwe & Trish Houghton

QUALITY TYRES SUPPORTS CARNIVORE CONSERVATION

AfriCat travels thousands of kilometres throughout Namibia every year, many of these on gravel roads and on some occasions driving on surfaces that one can't even classify as a road. Needless to say we go through a lot of tyres.



Photo: Dave Houghton

Quality Tyres, Otjiwarongo, has supported AfriCat's dedication to saving Namibia's large carnivores since 2000 and this year they have continued their generous sponsorship. Joseph Damaseb travelled to AfriCat to personally deliver four brand-new tyres to Carla Conradie and the Addams Family.

Thank you to Quality Tyres for their ongoing support to AfriCat and carnivore conservation.

RESCUE & RELEASE PROGRAMME REACHES MILESTONE

A female cheetah caught with her three fifteen-month-old cubs on a farm in the Waterberg area turned out to be a milestone rescue – the **900th** cat to be recorded by AfriCat since the inception of its cheetah and leopard rescue and release programme fourteen years ago. AfriCat's commitment to keeping wild animals in the wild is demonstrated by the fact that over 85% of the rescued cats have been returned to their natural habitat.

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(New cheetah cubs - continued from page 3)



Sugar and Spice required our full attention. Although fragile, these tiny, mewling creatures appeared to be in good health – always a good start. There was a desperate dash to find the feeding-bottles,



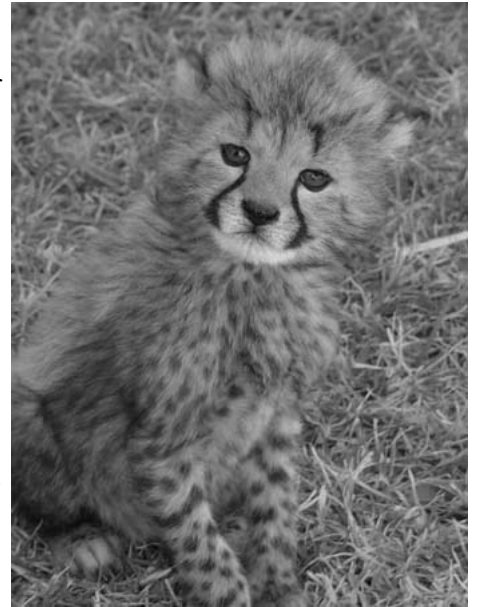
teats and milk formula to give them their first feed. After determining which size and shape teat each preferred, the next trick was to get the hole in the top of each teat the right size. Once this was sorted out, the milk was gratefully accepted by both and after some contented

purring, they promptly fell asleep. The next job was to locate the rest of the necessities required for hand-rearing the little orphans: small crate, blankets, hot water bottle, Snuggle Kitty (furry surrogate mom), scale, sterilising liquid and copious amounts of kitchen paper.

The next few weeks went by in a blur. With Sugar and Spice needing two-hourly feeds and Salt and Pepper still being fed three times a day, there weren't many hours left to



accomplish much more than tend to the needs of cheetah cubs. Sugar and Spice gained weight steadily and at ten days old their eyes opened and they started exploring their new world, albeit on rather wobbly limbs. The new enclosure completed, Salt and Pepper moved in and had



a thoroughly wonderful time playing and chasing each other until exhaustion set in, when they would flop down, take a short nap and start again with renewed energy.

Sugar and Spice got progressively more mobile. We slowly introduced them to the chicken-mince mixture, turning feeding sessions into a rather messy affair and, although we had

reduced the number of feeds per day, each session took a lot longer because the cubs were more interested in running around and playing than eating their food. By the age of five weeks they had been



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(New cheetah cubs - continued from page 6)



weaned off milk and started taking care of their own toilet needs. The latter was a real reason to celebrate. Almost from the start, both cubs would wriggle and squeal and be most uncooperative when it came to Dave and I performing this task for them. The hundreds of scratches on our hands from their sharp little claws would finally get a chance to heal.

front lawn. Salt and Pepper moved out of their home and Sugar and Spice moved in.



The time soon came for the little ones to have an outside area where they could run around and play without us having to watch over them. Their needs had outgrown the daily sun and exercise sessions on my

The experience of raising and caring for more than one group of cubs simultaneously has made us realise that our current facilities are hopelessly inadequate. We are currently drawing up the plans and budget to enable us to raise the funds to build a nursery and appropriate housing to fulfill the special needs of these young animals.

*Carla Conradie
Photos: Dave Houghton*



WILD DOGS REACH SEXUAL MATURITY

Ever since they were puppies, the wild dogs have always had a very strong bond with one another. They are extremely social and have only shown real aggression on the one occasion when Ricki was reintroduced to the rest of the group after being separated for five weeks. This separation having disturbed the hierarchy caused mayhem for a while but eventually was sorted out once their individual places within the pack were reestablished.

Not having had any experience with captive wild dogs or any other “social group” animal for that matter, the last two years have been a steep learning curve for us. We still take it one day at a time and thank our lucky stars that all has gone relatively well so far (touch wood). Those incidents that we have had to deal with, although they seemed like a crisis at the time, we (and the dogs) have managed to live through.

One such incident occurred in March when the dogs were twenty-two months old. At feeding time, around six in the evening, there was nothing unusual in their behaviour to indicate what would take place just four hours later.

A sudden high-pitched screaming from one of the wild dogs made my blood run cold. The ear-piercing noise continued so I knew it wasn't just that one had accidentally hurt another. It sounded as though one of them was being eaten alive. My first thought was that a leopard had jumped into the enclosure and was attacking one of the dogs. I ran outside and called them, relieved to see that five sets of eyes reflected in the torch-light and they were all running towards me – at least they were all still alive and all mobile. It was only when they reached me that I saw that Ricki's face was covered in blood.

Ricki



Rufus (Mouse)



Raine

Before I could get a closer look, Ruby and Raine, the other two females in the group, started going for her and she ran off, the others following. Had Ricki found some food or caught something in the enclosure that she was unwilling to share it with the others? But there had never been this sort of fighting over food before. The chaos continued throughout the night. Bouts of yelping and screaming followed by silence; I cannot remember how many times I ran outside to try and end the fights. Even though I knew that my efforts to stop them would be unrewarded, it made me feel better that I was at least trying. I was truly baffled by this

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SCOTTISH SUPPORT BOOSTS AFRICAT TRANSPORT

A substantial donation by long-time AfriCat supporter, Jim Maltman, has added new life to the transport we use and heavily rely on to carry out our rescue and release and cheetah rehabilitation programmes.

Jimmy hails from the wee town of Clackmannan in eastern Scotland and has been visiting Namibia for many years. His stays at Okonjima have become progressively longer, so much so that he is now considered part of the family.

Jimmy's annual donations have contributed significantly to covering the costs of the veterinary and health care requirements of the cheetahs and leopards in our care. A few weeks after his last visit we were rendered completely speechless when an amount of £40 000.00 arrived in AfriCat's bank account. After recovering from the shock I phoned Jimmy to thank him for his overwhelming generosity and we decided that the money be spent on items that were urgently needed and would be the most beneficial to AfriCat at the time.

The most pressing need was a new car. Jimmy has accompanied me on many farm trips to rescue cats so knows first hand how much AfriCat needs and depends on a reliable vehicle.

The second desperate requirement was the reskinning of the AfriCat Maule. This specific type of plane is covered in fabric which is a lot more susceptible to damage than one made out of metal. With the majority of landing strips used out here being gravel rather than tar, the underside of the plane has sustained substantial damage due to stones and other debris flying up on take-off and landing. The plane will not pass its next annual inspection unless it has been reskinned. Jimmy knows too well how much AfriCat relies on the plane for rescuing cats from traps and radio-tracking the cheetahs and leopards in the rehabilitation area as well as the collared wild dogs in Bushmanland. He is also no stranger to cloth planes as he was a navigator in Wellingtons in WW2. Jimmy has flown with me many times and on the occasion when I had to apologise to him for a bouncy landing he simply stated that he had experienced much worse - and at least this time no-one was shooting at him.



Jim Maltman with the AfriCat Maule.

Photo: Dave Houghton

Our new vehicle has been ordered and is due to arrive shortly. The plane will be reskinned in November just before its annual inspection is due. The fabric on the top and sides will be replaced but the underbelly will be covered with metal to minimise the wear and tear from stones, etc.

We cannot thank Jimmy enough for this extremely generous donation and for the support he has shown AfriCat over the years.

Dave Houghton

(Rescue & Release Programme - continued from page 5)

Other cheetahs rescued in the first half of this year were a five-year-old female and a three-year-old male, both near Grootfontein, as well as a mother and her one-year-old cub in the Otjiwarongo area. AfriCat joined the Cheetah Conservation Fund and officials from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism to collect nine cheetahs that had been confiscated from a farm in eastern Namibia.

Apart from Patch and Jigsaw, all the leopards that have been rescued in the last six months have been adults, although four of them, three females and a male, were youngsters around eighteen months old. In April, a six-year-old male leopard was fetched from a farm in the Grootfontein area. A farmer who has a keen interest in observing the predators that frequent his land called us after he had caught a male leopard which was around eight years old. He was ear-tagged and released from the trap after he had recovered from the anaesthetic.

Carla Conradie

(Wild dogs - continued from page 8)

strange behaviour and their change in attitude towards one of their own.

By light of day it appeared that the dogs had called a temporary truce; probably from pure exhaustion. We found them lying separately: Raine and Ruby at one end of the enclosure, Ricki on her own at the opposite end, and the two males, Rex (Spot) and Rufus (Mouse) in the middle. Apart from Ricki having a large tear on her nose, which was still bleeding slightly, everyone else appeared to be undamaged. When the dogs saw us they all came running over to greet, although Ricki hung back slightly. Our presence however, caused the fighting to resume so we quickly backed off. We watched them from a distance throughout the day and it eventually dawned on us that Ricki was on heat. Both Raine, the alpha female, and Ruby were extremely hostile towards Ricki but Ruby was the main aggressor. Spot and Mouse (both vasectomised) were sympathetic towards Ricki, for obvious reasons, but there was a definite rivalry between the two males. Every time Spot or Mouse made any advances towards Ricki, Ruby and Raine would intervene. Their relentless pursuits continued over the next few days. Ricki was always submissive to the other dogs and although we never witnessed any of them actually hurting her, the piercing yelps whenever they were with her expressed her anxiety clearly.

If Ricki tried to join the group at feeding time Ruby would chase her away. We had to sneak a piece of meat to her over the fence when the others too occupied with their food to notice. Although unsure as to how many days Ricki was in oestrus, normality returned after what seemed like a very long week. And just when we thought it was all over, Ruby and Raine came on heat. The roles reversed, Ricki became the aggressor, mostly towards Ruby; she had not forgotten what it was like to be the underdog.

Three months later Raine, Ruby and Ricki came on heat again - thankfully, all simultaneously. This time round there was no fighting and no-one got picked on. In fact, we might not have noticed if it weren't for the smiles on the faces of both Spot and Mouse.



Ruby



Rex (Spot)



Carla Conradie
Photos: Dave Houghton

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