



# THE AFRICAT FOUNDATION




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## AFRICAT SCIENCE AND RESEARCH



Einstein once wrote "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed", and so it was with a strong desire not to die, but to continue to attempt to unravel the mysteries of Namibia's large carnivores, that the reconstituted AfriCat Scientific Committee met on the 30th of June 2013.

It was agreed that the role of the committee is to afford advice and assistance to the Foundation in developing research projects along the lines of its stated aims and objectives. Permanent members of the committee include Tammy Hoth, Dr. Mark Jago, Prof. Henk Bertschinger, Dr. Gerhard Steenkamp, Dr. Adrian Tordiffe, Dr. Rina Grant-Biggs, Donna Hanssen, Wayne Hanssen, Dr. Laura Brandt, Helen Newmarch and Dr. Sonja Boy.

Namibia's Draft National Cheetah Management Plan is an evolving document which will guide present and future generations of research into all aspects of cheetah biology and conservation. It will also provide both a corner stone and a spring board for much of AfriCat's future work, which will include:

### Wild population priorities

1. Demonstration of the hypothesis that allowing carnivores on game farms is not a threat to game populations and there may be value added
2. Quantify and analyse human-wildlife conflict in selected study areas, implement a mitigation process and test whether or not the mitigation process is working. (carnivores this project will be aimed at: lions, wild dogs, hyaenas, leopards and cheetahs)
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of different types of AfriCat's education activities and develop guidelines to improve environmental education on the basis of the lessons learnt.
4. Evaluation of benefits of AfriCat activities to all levels of rural communities adjacent to reserves.
5. Improve our understanding of population management of free-ranging populations of large predators within fenced game reserves.
6. Improve our understanding of nutrition and prey base choice of free-ranging carnivores in relation to long-term individual and population health.
7. Contribute to the understanding of genetic diversity of the carnivore population in Namibia in relation to their demography.
8. Determine large carnivore population numbers for Namibia.

### Captive population priorities

1. Evaluation of the long-term health and welfare of captive carnivores at The AfriCat Foundation.
2. Long-term reversibility of deslorelin contraception in cheetahs.
3. Cost-benefit analysis of keeping carnivores in captivity.

The meeting agreed to the need for researcher guidelines and agreements which will include details on funding and supervision. A system which will allow for the rating of a potential research project will be initiated to guide the committee in assessing a project's relevance to the Foundation's core scientific aims.

Projects already approved include the much-needed collaborative work with N/ a'ankusê and the Namibia Nature Foundation into Namibia's wild dog population in the Mangetti area, and the vital lion research project in Hobatere in the north west of Namibia. A number of other exciting proposals into Namibia's free-ranging populations of carnivores were discussed and will be reviewed by members of the committee in due course.

On the captive front Drs Tordiffe and Steenkamp will develop a program on the comprehensive long term health monitoring and immune-competence of captive cheetah and other felids at AfriCat, while Prof Bertschinger will continue his valuable work into the reversibility of the contraceptive implant Deslorelin, as well as developing a system for quantifying the benefits of dental intervention in captive carnivores.

Additionally the ongoing predator and prey population density study in the Okonjima Nature reserve will be formalised and taken to the next fascinating level with the help of the highly experienced Dr Rina Grant.

All in all the future looks very exciting and challenging. AfriCat's Scientific Committee will have its work cut out, but the members are convinced that the Foundation will continue to be a major player in Namibia's predator conservation community. Einstein also once wrote "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts"; and so it is AfriCat's firm belief that the Foundation will continue to be counted through her research into that which counts.

Written by Dr Mark Jago

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NEWSLETTERS 2013

**Cheetah Rescue and AfriCat Collared Lion Spotted . . .**

Werda Cheetah Rescue and Collared lion seen at

**AfriCat North Lions go South - To their new home @ AfriCat on Okonjima**

The decision to close the AfriCat North Lion

**Conservation in Namibia**

DAILY TELEGRAPH March 2013 Nigel

Richardson joins Charlie Mayhew, the founder of

Hobaterere waterhole. As Sydney passed through the Veterinary control point at Werda Gate, en-route to mitigate lion conflict on farmland north of the Hobaterere border, a group of villagers excitedly told of a cheetah lying under the bridge ahead.

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Sanctuary on Farm Kaross came when the farm was sold at the end of 2012. AfriCat North's new base will be established close-by and with the ever-increasing pressures to find workable solutions to the farmer-predator conflict, to escalate our lion research and monitoring programmes as well as to continue with our Environmental Education outreach in Namibia's communal conservancies.

**Read more >>**

Tusk Trust, for a closer look at his wildlife conservation projects in the safari camps of Namibia.

By Nigel Richardson. At the AfriCat Foundation, the challenge is how to enable humans and big cats to live peaceably alongside each other – an especially vexatious question in a country with a quarter of the world's cheetah population, of which 90 per cent live on farmland and are automatically perceived as a threat to cattle.

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### Applications of Technology in the Conservation and Counter- Conservation World

WRITTEN BY AFRICAT VOLUNTEER, OLIVIA YETMAN. Technology has come a long way over the last couple of decades; appearing to progress at an ever increasing rate, it is hard to keep abreast of the latest advances in phones, laptops, cameras or TVs. Not only are new products being developed, the application of these products in a growing number of fields and scenarios is escalating, with surprising uses and innovative problem solving visible in perhaps unlikely places.

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### Spots visit to AfriCat March 2013

Simone Eckhard of Stichting SPOTS, Holland, visits AfriCat. Simone Eckhard, founder of Stichting SPOTS and passionate conservationist, spent the Easter weekend in the drought-stricken communal farmlands of Namibia's northwest, happy to see the fruits of her fund-raising efforts standing proudly as a large community kraal (boma) for the protection of livestock from marauding predators, especially lion.

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### Tongs - Our most successful single, female cheetah. The infamous 'Siblings', Coco, Spud & Bones!

On the 18th May 2010, five Cheetahs were released in the Okonjima 20 000ha Nature Reserve – four males, Frankie, Hammer, Spud and Bones and a female, Coco. We call them 'The Siblings', but actually they are a collection of siblings . . . Frankie, Spud and Coco are siblings, and arrived at AfriCat, along with Bones, in 2006 as orphaned cubs. In similar circumstances, Hammer arrived with his sister, Tongs, a year earlier.

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### A New Approach to Disease Research in Cheetahs at AfriCat

There are about 8 to 12 thousand cheetahs left in the wild, and an estimated 1 400 in captivity, worldwide. The captive cheetahs therefore make up a significant proportion of the total world population and are becoming increasingly important as numbers in the wild continue to decline.

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### AfriCat's 2013 Environmental Education Programme

2013 MARKED THE REJUVENATION OF THE AFRICAT ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME. For the past 3 years most of the Environmental Education has been fairly slow and irregular due to the lack of funding as well as a permanent Environmental Educator. During the last quarter of 2012 AfriCat was able to secure funding via TUSK.

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### The Namibia Wild Dog Research Project

The proposed Namibia Wild Dog Research Project Proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Environment & Tourism (MET) end 2010 - for the necessary permission and is the first collaborative effort between the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF), N/a'an ku se Foundation and AfriCat.

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### AfriCat's Footprint in the United Kingdom

The AfriCat Foundation in Namibia has worked tirelessly since 1993 to save the lives of Namibia's large carnivores and work for their long term conservation. This has always been, and remains, our fundamental principle. The good work of the AfriCat Foundation has been made possible only through the generosity of visitors and supporters.

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### First Cheetah Cubs born wild in the Okonjima Nature Reserve!

In June 2012, female cheetahs Dizzy and Dash, along with three males, Baxter, Ruff and Tumble, were released into the 200 sq. km. Okonjima Nature Reserve. Sadly, Baxter was killed by a Spotted Hyena only a short time after their release. He was the weakest of the coalition, always lagging behind, and was not especially alert. All came to AfriCat during 2008, and the five grew up together at AfriCat's Carnivore Care Centre.

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### Chris Packham Supports AfriCat

As a wildlife enthusiast I am constantly concerned by the struggle we face in the battle to roll back the negative impacts that humans make on the world's natural heritage. We are all aware of those horrific images of shark finning, tiger poaching, and savagely de-horned rhino corpses which point firmly to an impending extinction scenarios for these and so many other species. The survival prognosis for so many of the world's natural treasures is frighteningly grim.

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**Rescue and Release - Does it Work?**

Lions were rescued from certain death off farmland adjacent to Etosha by the AfriCat north Team in 2012; the same lions were recently seen with a heavily pregnant female in a park west of Etosha, their new territory. Leopards were collared and released in non-conflict zones and a farmer agrees to the release of a conflict leopard in her original home range; AfriCat monitors her whereabouts regularly.

[Read more >>](#)

**AfriCat accompanies Chris Packham's 'Wild Night Out' Tour**

Chris Packham has been an AfriCat supporter for many years and has taken many of his iconic photographs of big cats whilst staying at Okonjima, home of the AfriCat foundation. During March this year he set off on his 'Wild Night Out' tour of the UK and asked AfriCat to come along. Chris is renowned for his passion about wildlife and his ability to enthuse others and entertain them at the same time.

[Read more >>](#)

**The AfriCat 2013 Dental and Health Checks**

Successful start to a new, long-term research and health monitoring programme. The 2013 annual health checks on the large cats at AfriCat kicked off on the 25th of June this year under the direction of Dr Adrian Tordiffe from the National Zoological Gardens of South Africa.

[Read more >>](#)

**Contraception in Wildlife**

The ideal contraceptive for wildlife should have no side effects. It should be safe, also in pregnant females, have minimal effects on behaviour, should not pass through the food chain, be affordable and delivery should be easy – ideally allow remote delivery. In many cases a reversible method is preferable to permanent methods so that animals can breed again at a later stage.

[Read more >>](#)

**Penta and Cubs - The Quandary of Rescue and Release.**

Late last year, a beautiful mother cheetah and her five cubs were caught about 25 km north-east of Grootfontein on the farm Paarl belonging to Mr Jos van Zyl. The area she inhabited was invaded by thorny acacias and she had probably shared her territory with leopard, brown hyaena and even wild dog at some time or another. She had been in the area for a while and three farmers were after her as she had apparently been catching some livestock, but mostly game.

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**Sightings Stats for our 'Medium' Season, May - July, 2013**

This report records the total number of carnivore sightings in the reserve from 1 May to 31 July 2013. A total of **276** leopard sightings was recorded, which include the majority of resident, territorial leopards present in the reserve. The remaining sightings of the carnivores that are part of the rehabilitation project totalled **213**. These included the cheetah, hyaena and wild dogs.

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**AfriCat Environmental Education Program 2013**

The following is a report on the progress and activities that the AfriCat Environmental Education Program has been involved in since March 2013 at AfriCat HQ. The AfriCat North Environmental Education Centre is currently on hold for 2013 due to re-location. It includes all the schools that have visited the center, as well as the groups that have been booked and confirmed up to the 15th of December 2013.

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**AfriCat, Science and Research**

Einstein once wrote "The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed", and so it was with a strong desire not to die, but to continue to attempt to unravel the mysteries of Namibia's large carnivores, that the reconstituted AfriCat Scientific Committee met on the 30th of June 2013.

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**A Namibia without Lions**

Can you imagine Namibia without Lions, if we had lost all of our lions to persecution, illegal trade and unsustainable off-take? Some farmers might say good riddance, others may be indifferent, but I am convinced that the majority of Namibians would regret not having done more to ensure the lions' long-term survival.

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**When the heat is on, the cheetah is cool**

Why Do Cheetahs Give Up the Hunt? It's a Myth That Cheetahs Overheat While Hunting. ONE of the most prevalent myths in animal biology has been debunked, with scientists proving cheetahs don't abandon hunts because they overheat.

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**MJ - Legendary cat in the Okonjima Nature Reserve**

On the evening of October 1st, MJ was sighted by one of our guides with heavy head wounds, indicating a leopard attack. The AfriCat team was called in to dart her with an anesthetic and bring her into the clinic for a check up. The wounds were cleaned, blood samples taken, teeth and claws inspected and antibiotics given to prevent infection. After two hours of sedation, a deep growl indicated her waking up, and she was quickly put back in a crate.

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**Drought - A Natural Cycle but for Farmers its about Survival not Conservation.**

Namibia is known as the 'dry country', where farmers were once familiar with its regular, dry cycles managing their livestock numbers and crops accordingly; many remember the '80's drought' during which thousands of cattle died of thirst and hunger, especially in north-western Namibia, commonly known as Kaokoveld.

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**The AfriCat Hobatere Lion Research Project**

Title: Conduct a study of the Lion (*Panthera leo*) population within the Hobatere Concession Area and movements between the Hobatere Concession Area, western Etosha National Park and adjacent communal farmland.

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**CONSERVATION**

- Green Living Project
- Jane Goodall
- Dian Fossey

**PARTNERS**

- Okonjima
- Richard VanRenson
- Tusk Trust
- Vetdent SA
- World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)

**PARTNERS**

- World Animal Adoption Program
- Okonjima
- Chris Packham - Wildlife, Places & People
- Tusk Trust
- Cymot
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**PARTNERS**

- IUCN Red List of Threatened Species
- Kavita Lion Lodge
- Namib Desert Environmental Education
- Trust
- Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society
- Namibian Nature Foundation
- Namibia Ministry of Environment & Tourism
- Namibia Tourism

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