



EFBC/Feline Conservation Center

<http://www.cathouse-fcc.org>

DEDICATED TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED FELINES SPRING 2004

Hello to new and old members alike! We're looking forward to another busy year, although hopefully not as busy as 2003, in which we welcomed 16 new permanent residents and over 40 temporary residents! Pictured above is Julian, a male margay, the last new arrival of 2003, coming in Christmas eve. Currently 2 bobcats are housed here until we obtain the export permits to send them to a zoo in Czechoslovakia. The jungle cat that was caught running wild in Georgia has been named "Pandora" and is doing great. She now stays out most of the day and loves talking to visitors. She is housed in the public exhibit area near Teshi the serval, and Rico our young ocelot. Rico is still being trained as an educational animal and despite some expected "young male" acting up, is doing well in his training. Depending on his attitude we hope to allow visitors to have their photo taken with him at Twilight Tours this year. Speaking of Twilight Tours, our first one is coming up on April 24th. If you've never been to one, they truly are the best time to visit the compound. We open the doors at 5 PM to prepaid visitors, 5:30 PM if you pay at the door. The fee is \$15 and it is adults only, 18 and older. The two back areas of compound are open for you to explore, which are normally not open during public exhibit hours. This is your only way to get "up close" with our tigers, margay, and Pallas's cats. There will be a raffle with all kinds of interesting prizes, and you can continue to view the lighted cages after dark, as well as browse in our gift shop. Please consider attending, and encourage your friends and neighbors to come as well! We rely on word-of-mouth support for much of our advertising. Compared to other nonprofit organizations, we refuse to spend a large amount of money on fund-raising and advertising, and we never sell our mailing list. I'm sure most of you have received

some of those "send money or this suffering animal will die" type solicitations for your money. Too many small animal facilities take in more residents than they can handle or overspend their resources. We are very careful to manage our money so that we have adequate reserves. This is a big reason the construction of Project Tiger is not complete yet - we had other priorities with all the new residents last year. We hope this year finds more money available to finish this new exhibit area, where we plan to breed Sumatran tigers and jaguars. If you would like to help us spread the word, we can supply extra flyers or rack cards if you have a good place to display or distribute them. The flyer can also be downloaded off our web site in PDF format. It contains all the information a new visitor needs.

Future Events

In addition to the Spring Twilight Tour on April 24th, there will also be Twilight Tours on June 19 and September 18. In addition, the annual Feline Follies dinner/auction will be August 21 - make plans now to attend!

Donations

Carmen Bouche, Palmdale CA. Wireless microphone unit. Thanks Carmen!

Karen & Russ James, Rosamond, CA. 1990 Chrysler LeBaron. Thanks Karen & Russ!

Sandy & Joe for DVD Recorder.

Cat News

straitstimes.asia1.com, 13 Feb 04

A tiger and a clouded leopard died in a Thailand zoo from bird flu - the same disease that has killed over 20 people in Asia. Another tiger recovered from the illness. It is the first known case of the disease in members of the cat family.

14 Jan 04, BBC News Online

Archaeologists have uncovered the first example of a lion mummified by the ancient Egyptians, in the tomb of the woman who helped rear King Tutankhamun. Although the breeding and burial of lions as sacred animals in Egypt is mentioned by ancient sources, to date no one had found a mummified specimen. The male lion is amongst the largest known to science and its bones show it lived to an old age in captivity.

Various sources, January 04

Cougar kills one, maims one in Southern California park - a male biker was found dead in Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park a day after a female biker was attacked by the same cougar. The woman was rescued by her friend and other bikers, who fought off the animal. It was a young male weighing about 110 pounds. The cougar was shot and it was confirmed the same cat attacked both people. It was possibly a newly independent male just leaving his mother and having to hunt for himself, a hard time in a young cat's life. On the same night, a mountain lion was shot and killed by tribal police on the Hopland Band of Pomo Indians Reservation after pacing only 10-15 yards away from many houses. Cougars have killed 6 Californians in 114 years, with 3 in the last 10 years. They are protected in California; over the past 20 years the Department of Fish and Game, on average, has issued between 200 and 300 permits to individuals to kill problem lions. On average 100 to 120 mountain lions are killed a year by depredation permits.

Wild Amur Leopard Status report Dec 03 M. Hotte (Tigris Foundation)

Amur leopard population monitoring: During the winter 2002/2003 a camera-trapping survey was conducted in the Amur leopard range in

Southwest Primorye. This was the first time camera-traps were used for this purpose in Russia. With 24 pairs of cameras 16 different leopards were photographed a total of 112 times in the central and northern part of the leopard range. The survey was held simultaneously with a traditional track count survey. The track count covered the whole Russian Amur leopard range. Both surveys, conducted independently, provided remarkably similar results and estimated the total population at approximately 30 mature leopards. Tigris Foundation provided the majority of funds for these surveys. Coming winter camera trapping is planned for the southern part of the range that was not covered during the first survey. New anti-poaching activities: The count results indicate the Amur leopard population is stable. This is good news. A decline was feared, because no less than 6 leopard skins were confiscated in Russia in 2002 and the first half of 2003. The large number of confiscated skins are proof that Amur leopards still have much to fear from poachers. We therefore modified and intensified our anti-poaching efforts. Villages involved in poaching and illegal wildlife trade are now targeted by a large team of anti-poaching staff. The prosecutor arranges warrants for searches of houses of known poachers. A total of 15 searches were organised since August 2002. They resulted in 8 confiscated rifles and 3 suspended jail sentences. We also introduced a new anti-poaching activity that is very effective in combination with the searches. Since May 2003 we offer a financial compensation (between \$25 and \$200) for illegal rifles that are handed in voluntarily by villagers living in leopard habitat. Villagers started to fear the searches by the prosecutor and many became eager to hand in their illegal rifles. The new project proved very successful (in fact it is making us poor!). A total of 30 weapons were handed in since we started this project in May 2003. The project is co-financed by WWF Russian Far East.

Jungle Cats

The jungle cat (*Felis chaus*) isn't named very well - it's rarely found in jungles. Instead it lives along rivers or marshlands, or even in open grassy areas. Other names for it include the swamp cat and reed cat. Some live in northern parts of Africa but most are found in India and Southeast Asia. They are not shy around humans and are

often seen in the daylight. Some even live at the edges of villages in abandoned buildings, hunting rodents and chickens. They are common in irrigated plantations, especially sugarcane. The jungle cat has long legs and a slender body. Their fur is solid colored, generally sandy brown to reddish brown, although black individuals are sometimes seen. They have stripes on the legs and tail. The tail is short for their body length, and very bushy. Their large ears have black tufts at the ends. They weigh 8 to 15 pounds. Kittens are born heavily spotted, which fade by 6 months of age. Up to 6 kittens can be born at a time. They are mature by 1 year of age. Males often help the female raise the kittens, rare in the feline world. Throughout its range the jungle cat is considered to be common. Destruction of its wetland habitat is the main threat to wild populations.

Cheetah Conservation Botswana by Nancy Vandermeij

My fourth trip to Africa began with an email to the wildcats email list. A new organization called Cheetah Conservation Botswana (cheetahbotswana.com) was looking for volunteers. I've been a volunteer at EFBC/FCC for over 12 years, and my friend Eric has been volunteering here since May. We were accepted for the month of November. Rebeccah Klein, the CCB project coordinator, met us at the airport in Gaborone. We spent the first night at Mokolodi Nature Reserve and met one of the other volunteers, Emmanuel. The other volunteer, Lorraine, had arrived a week earlier. The CCB office is located at Mokolodi, which is just outside of Gaborone ('Gabs'). In the morning, the project veterinarian Kyle Good picked us up for a visit to Mokolodi's two cheetahs Duma and Letotse. They were orphaned as cubs and are very tame. They purred as we petted and posed with them. We then met the field biologist Ann Marie Houser whom we would be working with for the next month. After a quick trip to the grocery store we were off to Jwaneng, where the field project is currently located. A large diamond mine run by Debswana Mining Company (part of DeBeers) is located there, and they have established the Jwana Game Reserve around the mine itself. Many animals have been introduced into the reserve and are doing well. The only predators are small ones - brown hyena, cheetah, and jackals mainly, with a few leopards. Warthogs dig holes

under the fence around the reserve, and the farmers around the reserve claim that the mine's cheetahs are killing their goats and cattle. The project is radio-collaring cheetahs in the reserve and collecting other data to determine if this is true. They also talk to local farmers about ways to protect their animals, such as timing the births of their animals to coincide with the births of the wild game animals, redesigning their corrals ("kraals") to keep cheetah out, or keeping an aggressive mother donkey with their herds. We then settled into our accommodation, which turned out to be a small "A" frame building with two comfortable beds and a table. Ann Marie lived in a trailer a short walk down the road, past the transfer pens for holding cheetahs temporarily. We were ready to start work at 7 am the next day. We learned how to tell cheetah tracks from brown hyena and jackal and baboon tracks, and heard how a leopard track would look different. If fresh cheetah tracks were found, we would set up a trap to try to catch and radio-collar it. They had caught and collared a female with 5 cubs the previous month. We also looked for playtrees, which are trees or tall termite mounds of a certain shape that cheetahs use as communication stations, marking them with scat to tell other cheetahs who is in the area. We would also be mapping roads in the park, as the maps supplied by the mine were very outdated. We found many hartebeest kills, as well as a young eland and female kudu, all larger than normal cheetah prey - is it because they are the top predator here? We enjoyed hearing and seeing two large thunderstorms our first two nights in camp, the days were dry but hot and humid. The rain brought many different wildflowers - Ann Marie had never seen the park so green. One day as we were driving the outer fence line, we found several goats had entered the reserve. We pushed a few back through the warthog hole they had climbed through, but couldn't catch them all. Later on the drive, we heard a loud metallic noise..what could we possibly have run over? Oops, the drive shaft had fallen off. Mine officials had to come rescue us - luckily Ann Marie's cell phone had coverage where we were. We worked on the cheetah pens, picking up endless bits of wire the workmen had left in the pens and filling in dirt in the walkways. One day there is a predator control talk in Jwaneng that Ann Marie, Rebeccah, and Kyle

are going to, while the volunteers relax. As we're about to leave for a picnic, we hear that a cheetah had been killed by a car a few days earlier. We split up and look for cheetah tracks. Eric and I find a fresh set of tracks (adult plus at least 2 cubs) near a waterhole less than 2 km from camp! The next day while looking for tracks again, Eric and I see two young (about 6 months) cheetah cubs running away from us! We set up a trap near the waterhole. We catch a baboon that night, and another the next day. We need better bait than the guinea fowl we're using! Eric and I drive roads mapping the west half of the park, using GPS because the land rover has no odometer. At 4:15 PM we decide to call it a day and head in by a scenic route. What's that crossing the road in front of us? A cheetah! I climb on the roof and see 3 more to our right, which rejoin the 4th one behind us. All are similar sized - is it a coalition of adults, or a mom with 3 large cubs? We head in to tell the others, going a little too fast approaching the gate, when - another cheetah runs across the road in front of us! We slow down, look to our right, and there's ANOTHER cheetah, very young and terrified of us! We keep driving, as we don't want it to cross the main mine road again which they had both just crossed. In the meantime, Ann Marie had borrowed a young goat from a local farmer and put it behind the cheetah trap. Our trap setup had the bait in a small cage, the large cage right next to it, with acacia branches blocking access except through the open doors on each end. A pressure plate in the middle then releases doors on each end when the animal steps on it. The bait is unharmed. The next morning, we all drive out to check the trap. We stop some distance away and observe with binoculars. The trap gates are down, but is anything in it? I look to our left, and there behind a bush is a cheetah! In the trap is another one. In fact there are two to our left, both then walk over to the trap. All are adults, so we assume it's a coalition of 3 males. Cheetahs in the wild are known to form coalitions of adult males, while adult females live alone. We transfer the captive cat to a squeeze box, then to a holding cage that we replace the goat cage with. Now instead of using goats for bait we use the cheetah itself - its friends will come to visit, and the only way to get next to their friend is to enter the trap cage. I reset the trap cage, getting hissed at by the captive as I do so. We go off to track the first female (named Jenny). Eric and I do more road

mapping that afternoon, finding some beautiful open plains in the northeast of the park. A thunderstorm rolls in as we see 11 giraffe. Upon returning, we learn that a second cheetah had been caught! The others have transferred it to the holding cage, while the first has been released into the large cheetah pen we spent a lot of time working on. The next morning we are all confused at what we find at the trap - the 3rd cheetah has been caught, but an adult female with 2 cubs is also visiting outside the traps! We move the 2nd cat to the pen, the 3rd to the holding cage, to see if we will trap yet another cheetah. Kyle the vet will be here the next morning (Thursday) to perform physicals and place a radio collar on one cat. We would like to have satellite collars, but they are very expensive. A big goal for the project is to get an ultralight aircraft, so we can track multiple cats without spending all day driving around the reserve. Also, when other research areas are established in Ghanzi, Maun, and the Tuli block, the project will have to have a plane to monitor all 4 areas regularly. Ann Marie is eager to get her pilot's license! In the afternoon we track Jenny again, map more roads, and build an examination area near the cheetah pens. Wednesday night is not as bad as Tuesday at least. We made the mistake of turning on the large outside fluorescent light Tuesday, which attracted every bug for miles around. Also, many many VERY FAST scorpions! We vowed to never use the outside light again, and had to kill many bugs in our chalet. Thursday morning I woke up feeling something squishy in bed with me - it was several small green inchworms! We had started seeing these the day before, but now there were a lot more. I did laundry at 6 am as the worms made cocoons in our clothes and sheets. The other 3 cheetahs do not return, so we put the 3rd captured cat in the squeeze box and wait for Kyle and Rebeccah to arrive. The cheetah sits in one corner of the squeeze box, and guess who gets all the weight - me! Ann Marie goes over the different jobs we will be assisting with (health chart, medicine chart, measurements). Blood, fur, and skin samples will be collected. Kyle uses telezol, and the cat goes down fast. We had overestimated its weight, thinking it was male. Surprise, it's a female. She weighs 37 kg. We name her Diana. We take pictures of her spot patterns for future field

identification. This one doesn't get the collar, as we are hoping to put that on a male. The other two are together in the pen, and we have to get one in the small pen. The transfer system works smoothly, and this one is soon in the squeeze box. Another surprise - not only is this one female too, she's very far along in a pregnancy. They are both 4-5 years old - what are adult females doing hanging out together? This has never been seen before in cheetah studies in other countries, such as Namibia, South Africa, Kenya, and Tanzania. They decide to collar the pregnant one, whom we name Maria. The third one turns out to be another female of about the same age, possibly pregnant as well but not very far along. DNA testing will determine if they are related, and hopefully the collar will tell us if they stay together as a female coalition. Could the other female with the 2 cubs have been part of the group, and left when she had kids? CCB has picked a great place to start their research in! We return to the chalet at 4 PM to find it invaded by several hundred green worms! We track Jenny again that evening with Kyle; they spend the night to see us release the cats. The cats run out of the cages very fast, but we get a few good pictures. That afternoon we find the signal from Maria's collar. The next day. We go to find Jenny, follow the beeps, and...there she is! Mother and 5 cubs all cross the road in front of us. It's a cool wet morning - we also see a jackal. That afternoon we spend hours listening for Maria's signal, with no luck. I finish the map finally that evening. On Sunday we do Jenny first, it takes us a long time to find her as she has not followed her standard movement pattern. On Monday morning Eric and I go off to find Jenny, triangulate in on the beeps and flush her and the cubs out of the grass, 30 feet away from us. We celebrate with a picnic far out in the park. In the meantime Emmanuel and Ann Marie spend 6 hours listening for Maria with no success. It's possible she/they have left the park, Ann Marie will try to arrange an airplane this weekend if we haven't found her. On a night drive that evening, we see giraffe, a genet and then spot 6 pairs of eyes in the grass - it's Jenny and the kids! On Tuesday it's Eric's and my turn to spend hours not finding Maria. In the morning, Eric and I get to track Jenny, but she isn't following the pattern still and it takes us 4 hours of driving to get a signal. We start to clean camp, as we'll be leaving early Friday morning. We also go shopping for a feast Thursday night - it's our last day in

camp, and also happens to be Thanksgiving in America. Eric and I walk to a nearby tower for the sunset, and find fresh cheetah tracks of an adult and 2 cubs. If we were staying, we would try to trap them. Thursday morning the 3 volunteers go to find Jenny and again it takes 4 hours! It's satisfying but sad to hear our final "beeps". We clean camp, and get ready for dinner. We are treated to an absolutely gorgeous sunset, and eat roast chicken, fillet mignon, mashed potatoes, Greek salad, and chocolate mousse. YUM! Friday we drive to Gabs early, hang out at Mokolodi for a while, and go to the local mall. Eric downloads all his memory sticks onto a CD so we can leave one with the project. Eric and I have a 7 am flight to Jo'burg. We then flew to Mala Mala Game Reserve in South Africa and spend two days there, relaxing and enjoying great game drives, before starting the 43 hour journey home.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

Zoo Reciprocal list update: Add this zoo to the list - Miller Park Zoo, 1020 S. Morris, Bloomington, IL. - Free admission.

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50/50 raffle tickets enclosed. The drawing will be held at our June 19th Twilight Tour. Winner receives 1/2 of the net proceeds.

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Our June 19th Twilight Tour is also Foster Parents night. All current Foster Parents can attend free as our guests. Just call to add your name to the list