

Ammann K. 1985. Letter to Stephan.

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Abstract: Correspondence about the situation of cheetahs and wild dogs in the Masai Mara reserve and the surrounding areas. A project for protection is needed because of high predation on the cheetah and disturbance of tourists. It is suggested to formulate a scientifically sound research project to protect the rehabilitating cheetahs.

Karl Ammann

November 14, 1985

Letter

Hi Stephen,

Here some of the points which we discussed and might be relevant in relation to the proposed research project: Wild Dogs

Based on interviews with Masai <sup>elders</sup> ~~elders~~ the Masai Masa reserve and the surrounding areas (especially the plains to the west of Aitong) have in the past been part of the home ranges of several wild dog packs. The last group 4 animals disappeared sometime in 1982. The only sightings reported since is a pack of 17 animals which appears to have the Loita Hills as its territory and occasionally has been spotted in the vicinity of cottaro camp. There is also a recent report that five dogs were seen near Keekero~~K~~ some ten months ago. The game department caught 4 animals near Naro~~K~~ in 1983. They all died of rabies within a short time. This seems to confirm the theory that the dense human and domestic dog population could be responsible for the decline insofar as wild dogs would more often interact with Masai domestic dogs and as such be more prone to get all the typical canine diseases which in most cases can ship out whole packs. In reintroducing dogs the animals could be vaccinated in advance. Their movements could be monitored by radio tracking (transmitted transplanted under the skin) and offsprings could be inoculated as well.

The source for the dogs could either be Tanzania which presently costs them as US 400 per animal as ~~US 2000~~ <sup>2005</sup>. We discussed the potentially more interesting PR appeal of introducing captive dogs.

The reintroduction procedure would be as discussed.

We would fence in an area of 2-3 square miles which would be stocked with traditional pray animals (Thommies, rabbits/hares etc) and the animals hunting behavior and success would be studied through a blind.

Once released radio tracking by air might be necessary.

Obviously one of the reasons for such a project is the improving of the quality of game viewing in the Masa and if this is put in visitor satisfaction and dollar terms associated with happy tourist then it also makes economic sense. Maybe one would also want to play on the competitiveness of Kenya and Tanzania and point out that the Serengeti offer some of the best wild dog viewing areas which Kenya can not match.

In rehabilitating cheetahs the scenery is more or less the same. Presently these are approximately six captive cheetahs under the jurisdiction of the game department. They represent a financial burden to the orphanage which has as its objective the rehabilitation of animals. The Mara's cheetah population has not been faring to well, probably due to the very high density of lions and hyenas which must increase the cats mortality rate and the tremendous tourist vehicle

pressure on the few habituated animals (this should be especially highlighted). Introducing additional animals would result in less pressure on the individuals.

The mechanics of reintroduction I discussed with Mitch. The same enclosure and technique as suggested for the wild dogs could be used, including radio monitoring. Maybe some Serengeti figures giving cheetah density around Seronera will support the argument that the Masa could support a lot more cheetah and that by introducing fully grown animals the risk from competitive predators would be minimized. Again vaccinating the animals would probably make sense as well.

I would appreciate if you could take this letter as the basis to formulate a scientifically sound research project outline which I could then (hopefully with Dr. Leakey) try to get past the red tape at the Kenya end.

The more extensive and impressive the final document will look, the better. Please also attach all credentials of all the parties which might be associated with it.

OK, I have no more paper, I will talk to you soon.

Take Care.

Karl