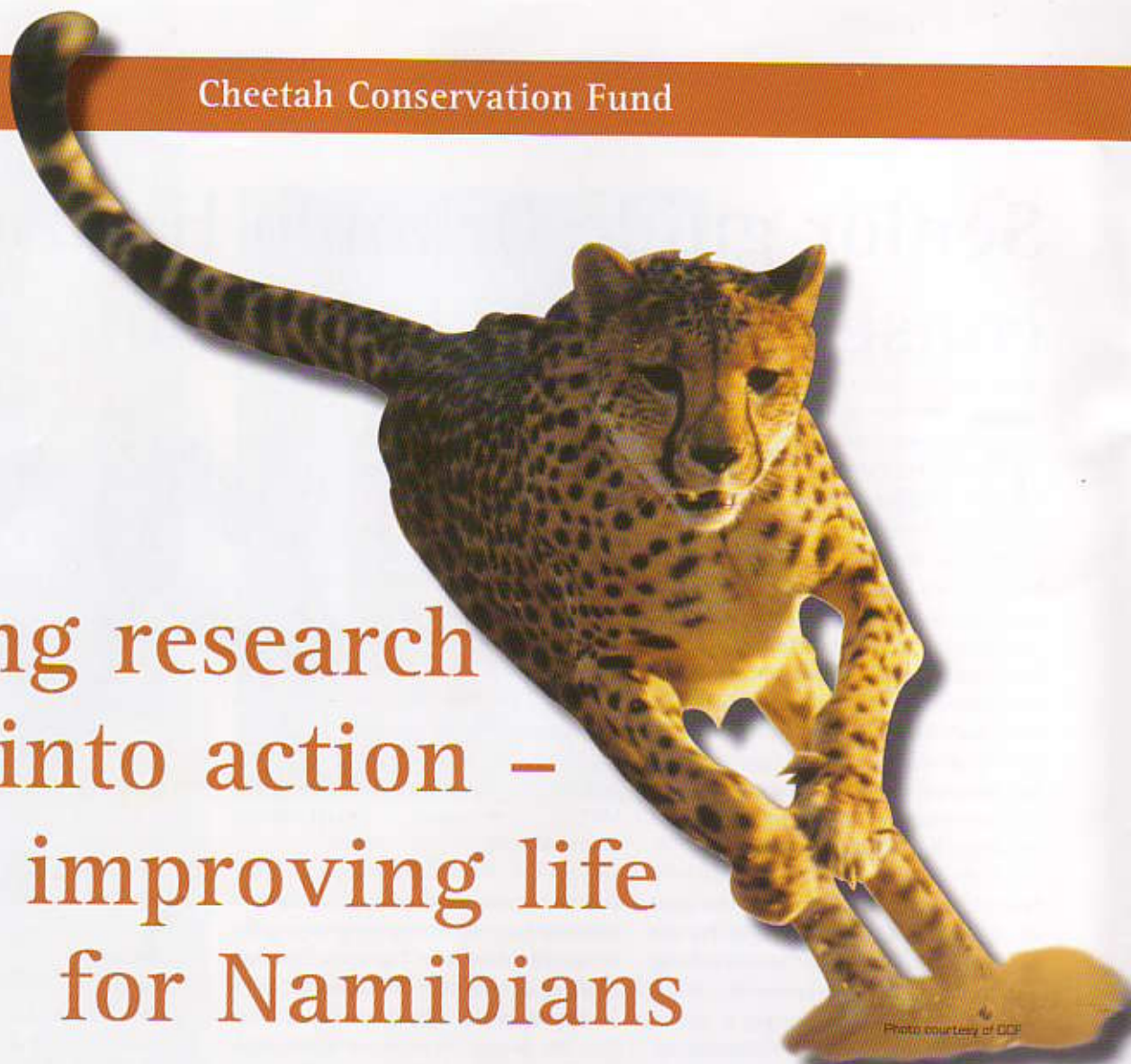


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Abstract: Many researches papers line desk drawers, meaning nothing in developing countries without practical applications. With these and other important programmes, the CCF is putting research into action, improving live for Namibians and helping to ensure survival of the cheetah.



Putting research into action – improving life for Namibians

Photo courtesy of CCF

The Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), born out of passion and commitment to cheetah conservation in the year of Namibia's independence, has its foundation in sound scientific research. In fact, in the 15 years since Dr Laurie Marker founded the CCF, long-term studies on the cheetah's biology and ecology have been conducted, resulting in more than 35 scientific papers, and providing practical applications that extend far beyond the CCF's research and education base in Otjiwarongo.

From reproduction to genetics and the resulting international Cheetah Studbook, from disease surveillance to demographic rates, the CCF's research has several areas of focus. Doing this research and initiating practical changes for the survival of the species is the work of the CCF's Human and Wildlife Conflict Resolution team. The scope of the work is broad, varied and

ongoing, involving international experts and local Polytechnic students having their first taste of fieldwork. It assesses what the CCF's scientific research tells us about cheetah home range, the cats' behaviour, and their prey base. Then it uses this knowledge to develop educational programmes to help farmers and others share their land with these magnificent cats.

"Research is the basis from which we make our decisions. It leads us forward," says Dr Laurie Marker. Some of this research has its roots in the past.

Six thousand years ago the Turks began using Anatolian shepherd dogs to protect their sheep from wolves. Today, as part of the CCF's Livestock Guarding Dog programme, more than 200 Anatolian shepherds are making a difference on communal and commercial farms in Namibia. These dogs are trained not to chase stock, which could incite an attack, but to

put themselves between the animal and the threat and bark loudly.

Since 1994, when the Livestock Guarding Dog programme began, eighty per cent of farmers involved have reported a significant decline in stock losses. Researchers continue to evaluate each dog's performance, training and over-all health. The programme's success is reflected by the fact that although thirty dogs are bred and donated to farms each year, there is now a waiting list for dogs in Namibia. The project's success has also led to the CCF helping to develop Livestock Guarding Dog programmes in other countries where carnivores are in conflict with livestock.

Namibian conservationists have long recognised that if humans and wildlife are to co-exist, man must gain tangible benefits to offset the costs of living with wildlife. Using its model farms and ongoing research on plots at the CCF's Elandsvreugde farm,

CCF researchers are studying the effects of bush encroachment, a degradation of the land that causes an estimated N\$700 million loss annually and affects the cheetahs' habitat and prey.

Taking scientifically sound and economically practical steps to harvest thorn trees and turn them into household fuel, the CCF developed the Bushblok. Production of this product is now underway at a plant in Otjiwarango employing 20 people. An additional 20 to 30 personnel are working in the field harvesting and chipping wood. And this is only the beginning. As its distribution network in Namibia, South Africa and Europe grows, the CCF hopes to expand the operation, employ more people and work with more farmers. The Bushblok programme not only helps restore cheetah habitat. It also provides vital training and employment to previously disadvantaged Namibians.

Since its inception, the CCF has worked to establish a positive relationship with farmers. Over the years a great deal of research has been geared to balancing the needs of the farmer with the needs of the cheetah. CCF has provided farmers with valuable research and practical help, including a new book entitled *Integrated Livestock and Predator Management: A Farmer's Guide*, thus encouraging farmers to become partners in cheetah conservation. Now, in an innovative new programme, they are rewarding them.

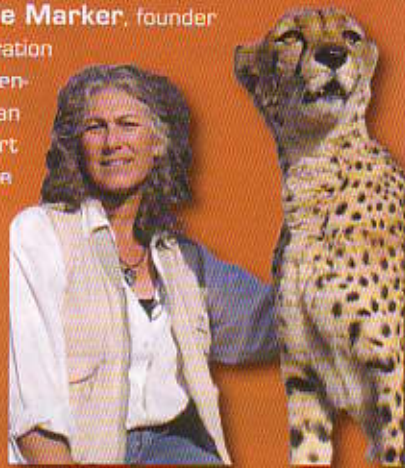
In association with the Conservancies Association of Namibia (CANAM) and the Namibian meat industry, CCF recently began a pilot programme, branding a Cheetah Country Beef eco label. The project is very much producer-driven, with interested farmers signing an agreement with CANAM saying they will not kill cheetahs indiscriminately on their farmland. In return for their efforts to practise cheetah-friendly management techniques, farmers will receive a premium price for each kilogram of meat sold to MEATCO.

Many research papers line desk drawers, meaning nothing in developing countries without practical applications. With these and other important programmes, the CCF is putting research into action, improving life for Namibians and helping to ensure the survival of the cheetah.

by Ginger Mauney

My heart and soul is in Namibia

In a recent edition of *Discover* magazine, Laurie Marker, founder and Executive Director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund, described Namibia as the country she identifies with most. "I'm much more Namibian than American. I speak American English, but my heart and soul and investment is in Namibia, and I believe that it is a country that can show the world a lot about natural resource management and living with predators." Laurie is committed to sharing this message internationally, and the world not only listens, it rewards her for her dedication to cheetah conservation.



Laurie has been working with cheetahs for over 30 years. Before moving to Namibia in 1990, she helped establish the most successful captive cheetah-breeding programme in North America, work that led to her developing and continuing to manage the International Cheetah Studbook, a registry of captive cheetahs worldwide. With collaborators from the National Zoo and National Cancer Institute in the USA, Laurie helped identify the cheetah's lack of genetic variation, and later, again with these two institutions, she became the Executive Director of the Center for New Opportunities in Animal Health Sciences (NOAHS) based at the Smithsonian Institute's National Zoo. She continues to serve as a NOAHS Research Fellow. She began her cheetah research in Namibia in 1977.

In 1996 she was made vice-chairperson of the World Conservation Union's Species Survival Commission: Cat Specialist Group and now serves as a member in the core management group. In 2000, Laurie was recognised as one of *Time* magazine's Heroes of the Planet and was given the Cincinnati Zoo's Conservation Award in Ohio. In 2001 and 2002 her work was also honoured in Namibia, when Laurie received the Paul Harris Fellowship from the Windhoek Rotary Club and a special award from the Sandveld Conservancy, signifying acknowledgement of Laurie and the CCF's contributions by Namibia's farming community. In 2003, Laurie's thesis *Aspects of Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) Biology, Ecology and Conservation Strategies on Namibian Farmlands* earned her a doctorate from Oxford University, England. In that same year, Laurie was awarded the ChevronTexaco Conservation award, giving her another international platform to spread the message of Namibia's commitment to cheetah conservation.

To find out more about the CCF, visit its Field Research and Education Centre at the CCF 44 kilometres east of Otjiwarango, open to the public seven days a week, except on Christmas Day.

www.cheetah.org

