

ACTION FOR CHEETAHS IN KENYA

NEWSLETTER

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE BY MARY WYKSTRA



Partnerships are a strong foundation for success. Internally, our staff work well together through coordinated efforts resulting from regular communication and planning meetings. I began working in Kenya in December 2001. We initiated research in February 2002 after Cosmas Wambua came on board. We are affiliated in Kenya with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and, internationally, with the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF). Over the years, other partnerships provided technical advice, funds or resources needed to conduct research and community initiatives aimed at saving cheetahs in Kenya. We are so grateful to everyone who works together with ACK to strengthen our efforts.

In June of this year, ACK completed a process with KWS and the research branch now called the Wildlife Research Training Institute to formalize partnership with organizations that are committed to the projects implemented by ACK and to complete a second national cheetah survey. Through our base in the Meibae Community Conservancy and continued affiliations with KWS and CCF, local pilot studies in cheetah and habitat monitoring form a foundation on which the national survey will be completed in the coming years. As a part of the survey, genetic mapping will also enable KWS to strengthen support of cheetah conservation efforts and to link to other organizations to fight the illegal trade of cheetahs that is a growing threat to the future stability of cheetah populations in east Africa.

With support from donors and fellow researchers, ACK will extend the national survey, particularly the scat detection work, into many more areas in the coming months. Together with the Forensic unit at KWS/WRTI we have selected a PhD student who will complete the analysis of samples collected to date as a base to her programme.





Fieldwork

2022 UPDATE

Cheetah Sightings: ACK field staff are committed and persistent in wildlife monitoring despite the current drought situation. Cheetahs are extremely shy and hard to see in the wild. During random patrols, 11 cheetah sightings were recorded during this past quarter. Evidence such as foot tracks and fresh poop combined with use of our scat dogs enables our staff to monitor trends in cheetah presence. Internal partnerships assure that accurate data is collected and compiled.

Data Collection: Our program manager Kelvin Mwambilo joins field officers on patrols and transects to enable our staff to share challenges and to work together to ensure consistency in data collection.

Data Management: Cheetah monitoring requires that information on sightings are shared as they happen. Asst. Research Scientist Timothy Maiyo follows up with Kalama Community Conservancy, Samburu and Springs National reserves rangers for reports. A total of five different sightings consisted of either an adult only or with cubs in the past six months. We thank our partners for their dedication to conserving the wildlife and providing us accurate information on cheetah occurrences.



Mother with three juvenile cubs at Samburu National Reserve. Photo by *James.kadaa Photography*

Wild Dog Sightings 2022

Wild dogs are known for their stamina and high success rate when hunting. The community reported wild dogs on different occasions. The latest sighting was a pack that caused loss of livestock. Our field team engages community members to increase vigilance and links them with researchers from Laikipia to assist in monitoring activities aimed at conflict mitigation of this endangered species.



Conflict Training

MAY 2022

To add value to the current Conflict Toolbox, we finalized feedback meeting sessions in both Makueni and Taita Taveta counties. The meetings gave insights on the wins achieved while using the toolbox, and to the challenges faced, and identified areas of improvement in the resource guide.

All participants reported that the toolbox resource contributed significantly towards their increased knowledge and skills on correct predator identification. Continuous utilization of the toolbox boosted their confidence on proper conflict investigation, and their ability to assist the community in providing practical solutions to minimize conflict occurrences. After our final edits are made to the toolbox, we will work with new communities to share the resource further.



Outreach coordinator -Adelaide (left) with participants at the conflict mitigation follow up session in Malili town Makueni County.

Market Waste Management

2022



Clean up meeting with the mixed group of men and women.

In previous meetings and clean up sessions, we only had women taking responsibility for cleaning the market. This quarter, four men joined to provide additional support to the group of sixteen women. The group identified practical ways of sensitizing the community during market days. They also requested allocation of waste bins for proper disposal of waste within the market. To support this effort you can donate to ACK general funds [here](#).



My Livestock, My Responsibility

April 2022

One community member used creativity to design a simple noise making instrument using scraps collected around the manyatta (homestead). The simple device is complimenting the already installed LED lights to scare away potential predators who visit the manyatta at night. A combination of simple devices as suggested in the solutions section in the Mitigation Toolbox proves to be effective as the family reports less predator visitation and significantly reduced livestock losses.

Carnivore Workshop

MAY 2022

Carnivore Workshop
Mountain and Eastern Conservation Areas

A two-day workshop held at Nanyuki was part of the implementation process for the National Large Carnivores' Strategic Plan (NLCSP). The stakeholders ranged from NGO's based within the two conservation areas that focus on large carnivore conservation, wardens of Nyeri, Isiolo, Laikipia, Samburu and Meru counties, county representatives and Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Wildlife Research and Training Institute(WRTI) representatives from the mountain and eastern conservation areas. The need for renewal of the outdated wild dog and cheetah strategic plan was addressed.



ACK Research Scientist Jane Wanjira presenting at the stakeholders meeting.

Silent Auction

MAY 2022

Our 2nd Annual Silent Online Auction was a success. We raised \$2,290! Congratulations to the organizers. Thank you to the bidders for taking part in this event through buying of COOL Crafts (Kenyan made items) to support the craft industry. Your support has contributes towards conservation of the cheetahs of Kenya as well as talent promotion. Watch for updates to our next auction and other promotions of [COOL Crafts](#).



K9 Training

MAY 2022



Director Mary Wykstra (left) and Jennie Willis (right) together with ACK staff (Timothy Maiyo, Edwin Kimutai and Kelvin Mwambilo) and dogs Persi (center) and Madi (right)

Our scat dog team continues to receive specialized trainings and consultations from international partners and volunteers. Kayla Fratt, Heather Nootbaar and Rachel Hamre from K9 Conservationists enhanced our teams' ability in search strategy combining GIS aspects, updating our training manual, and further scent discrimination techniques. Instructor & Animal Behaviorist, Jennie Willis from Colorado State University improved the team's understanding dog behaviour and its modification. The generous donation of their time, play toys and reading materials to our scat dog team is highly acknowledged and appreciated.

K9 Conservationists Podcast

2022

Catch Director, Mary Wykstra, and canine handlers, Edwin Kimutai and Naomi Kung'u in their own unique episodes of "K9 Conservationists" with Kayla Fratt discussing one on one about their journeys in the field of conservation detection dogs. Listen to [Mary](#), [Edwin](#) and [Naomi](#) Here!



Co-Existence

April 2022

The persistent drought within our research sites is causing strain on the essential resources such as water and pasture. As a result, both livestock and wild prey share the remaining scarce resources available. From a safe distance, our field officers have sighted elephants, gerenuks and shoats (sheep and goats) grazing and browsing within proximity to one another.

Reminder!

WILDLIFE WARRIORS

In case you missed the rerun of our episode 'Best Friends for Cheetahs' a couple months ago.

Use the Password: WWS3ason2! on [Vimeo Here for Free](#) to learn more about our work with the dogs.



Now accepting donations through
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ACK Mission

ACK aims to promote the conservation of cheetahs in Kenya through research, awareness and community participation. ACK works closely with local wildlife authorities and land holders to develop policies and programmes which support wildlife conservation and human livelihoods for the long term development of sustainable human and wildlife zones.

ACK is a non-profit project working in affiliation with: Cheetah Conservation Fund, Kenya Wildlife Service, and the University of Nairobi.

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