



Happy New Year
2024

May your coming year be filled with magic and dreams and good madness. I hope you read some fine books and kiss someone who thinks you're wonderful, and don't forget to make some art – write or draw or build or sing or live as only you can. And I hope, somewhere in the next year, you surprise yourself.

Neil Gaiman



Chris Packer
Janet
L. Packer

The Action for Cheetahs in Kenya team wishes you a year filled with peace, joy and elegance!

2023 A Year in Review

The past few years have challenged the world. Organizations that are still recovering from the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic have many memories of time before the pandemic and how we are dealing with the changes it brought. Kenya has had drought, floods, fires and locusts along side of the issues of the pandemic and wars that the rest of the world has faced. The ACK team had a painful loss in June with the passing of our co-founder and Assistant Director, Cosmas Wambua.

Despite all of the challenges, our team and the cheetahs have been resilient. Our research continues to find methods to document threats and mitigate conflicts that put cheetahs at risk. We are grateful for the affiliations and partnerships in Kenya that embrace the cheetah as a species that deserves protection. Together we have found methods that will enhance cheetah management on a range-wide scale, we have worked together to mitigate threats to human livelihood and we have improved the health and well-being of domestic pets to prevent the spread of diseases.

We look forward to another year with hope and enthusiasm. Together we will assure a future for cheetahs!

Sincerely,

The ACK staff



JANUARY 2023

- Field Officer work plans include 3-5 patrols and one five km transect weekly to monitor cheetah presence and prey distribution. In 2022, ACK Field Officers completed over 700 patrols where cheetah sightings, tracks and community reports were documented on 25 occasions in different social groupings within the Meibae Community Conservancy.
- Mary Wykstra, ACK Director co-led George Mason University students (10) on a Study Abroad Safari focused on **KENYA: Wildlife Ecology and Landscapes**
- The annual **Ginger's Hope** vaccination and sterilization campaign included rabies and distemper vaccinations (1,443 dogs and cats), sterilization (96 dogs and cats) and sampling (102 dogs). The 10-day campaign was a partnership with TNR trust, International Livestock Research Institute, Samburu County, Meibae Community Conservancy and volunteer veterinarians.



February 2023

- Monitoring and evaluation of 48 homesteads fitted with flashing deterrent lights (Boma lights) established an 85% reduction in livestock lost over a 2-year period. However, 40% of the lights were no longer working. Field officers and local electricians provide a guide for light owners to repair or replace their lights.
- Annual digital **Careers in Conservation** talks gather people in various conservation careers to present their journey in conservation work encourage people from around the world to follow their dreams in conservation. Jane Wanjira, ACK Senior Research Scientist shared her journey and experience of working with ACK for last four years.



CAREERS IN CONSERVATION SOCIAL HOUR



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17 @ 5:30-6:30 PM PST

COME CHAT WITH US!

JANE WANJIRA, ACK SENIOR RESEARCH SCIENTIST

SUSAN UNDERKOFFLER, WILDLIFE FORENSIC SCIENCE EXPERT



March 2023

- Sampling of dogs at day 30 at Meibae and Wamba was conducted. About 50 were resampled and an additional 10 new were sampled. 115 new dogs and cats were vaccinated. The next sampling was scheduled for July at 6 months.
- Canine team changes: Naomi Kung'u completed her internship and was replaced with Nicholas Karimba. Anthony Oyugi became a one-year consultant and Kelvin Mwambilo took a joint position as Programme Manager and Canine Handler. Edwin Kimutai was appointed as the lead handler. Consultants Jane Sharp and Susanne Broughton worked with the team to develop training techniques in various field locations.



April 2023

- The ACK field team, accompanied by Cosmas Wambua and Jane Wanjira, visited Big Life Foundation at Kimana near Amboseli and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy to learn about digital data collection from rangers working in the field. The team had a hands experience on the use of various digital data collection platforms such as SMART, CyberTracker and the EarthRanger digital management tool.
- K9 Consultant, Dr. Leopold (Leo) Slotta-Bachmayer from NATURSCHTZHUNDE in Austria joined the Canine team to assist with search techniques and long-term planning.



BIDDING Now OPEN!



AUCTION FOR CHEETAHS IN KENYA

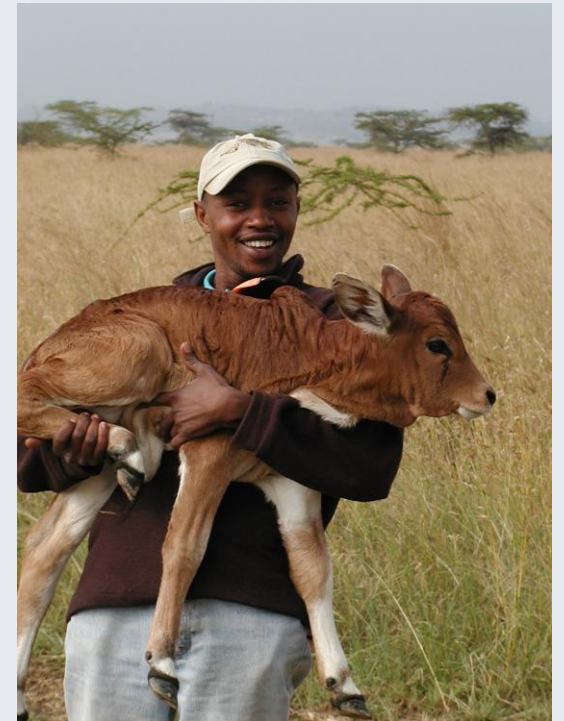
May 2023

- CaLL USA volunteers organized an ACK online Auction that raised over US \$4000 for ACK general operations.
- The K9 detection dog team conducted searches in Meibae to learn GPS and tracking equipment.
- We Strengthened partnership with Colorado State University through their Study Abroad safari to Kenya – Kenya Mammal Behavior. Mary Wykstra accompanied the team on the entire safari, and on their visit to Meibae the group learned about cheetah ecology and research techniques.
- Since 2021, food aid has been distributed to 75 families affected by the drought.



June 2023

- ACK field team was joined by MSc student intern Emily Mosswood who conducted an evaluation of community attitudes towards cameras and also assisted with training and set-up of camera traps along identified corridors with the conservancy.
- ACK lost Assistant Director Cosmas Wambua –our friend and colleague – due to sudden illness. This month the team participated in gatherings of family and friends who gave tremendous support to the ACK family. We held traditional ceremonies and met with grief councilors to help us each deal with the emotional loss of this amazing man from our team and our lives. Cosmas began working with ACK (then CCF Kenya) in 2001, and was the co-founder of the project.



July 2023

- Our field team completed review of mapped corridors and selected a corridor in one of our study blocks. Camera transects were set-up along each corridor. To better ensure the security of the cameras, focus group meetings were conducted in 9 zones to inform community of the importance of the project. Two youth were selected to monitor the camera traps. The study was set-up to evaluate the interactions of conflict species with human land use along historical wildlife corridors to seek solutions that will benefit both animals and people.
- Jane Wanjira attended the Ewaso forum meeting on behalf of ACK and gave an update of the current status of cheetahs within Meibae and the reserves.
- The third set of samples were collected from dogs and an additional 40 were vaccinated in Meibae and Wamba. Ewaso Lions completed their sampling as well with day 0, 30 and 6-month sampling showing that 10% of unvaccinated dogs had already contracted distemper.



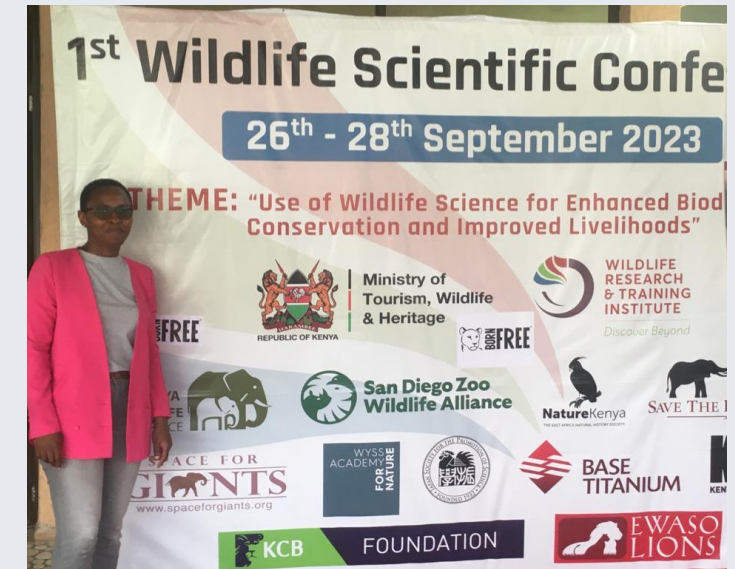
August 2023

- Mary Wykstra launched the fall fundraising tour in the US with events in Virginia (2) and Connecticut, starting out the tour with significant donations and well attended events. Thank you to all who assisted in making the tour a success.
- Community feedback on the camera trap gave insights into the efforts needed to protect cameras from tampering, especially on misconceptions about the use and value of the data from the traps. Spotted hyenas and elephants were the majority of species caught on cameras.
- Volunteers, Cael Hansen & Natalie Nussbaum, join ACK team to assist in development of camera trap sorting software and updating education materials.



September 2023

- Mary Wykstra attended conferences for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) and began a westward journey via Tanganyika and Utah's Hogle Zoo.
- Jane Wanjira attended the Africa Conference on Linear Infrastructure and Ecology. She presented on the linear development and corridor monitoring programme in line with the LAPSET developments planned for Northern Kenya. Dr Slotta-Bachmayer represented our canine team with a presentation on detection dogs as a tool for conservation research.
- Jane also attended the Wildlife Research Training Institute Conservation Research conferences where she networked with stakeholders from different regions and government sectors.
- ACK K9 & field teams collaborated on follow-up in areas with frequent reports of cheetah by local herders. The teams found cheetah tracks and the dogs indicated on scat that was collected further analysis. It was noted that cheetah numbers have increased since the end of the drought.



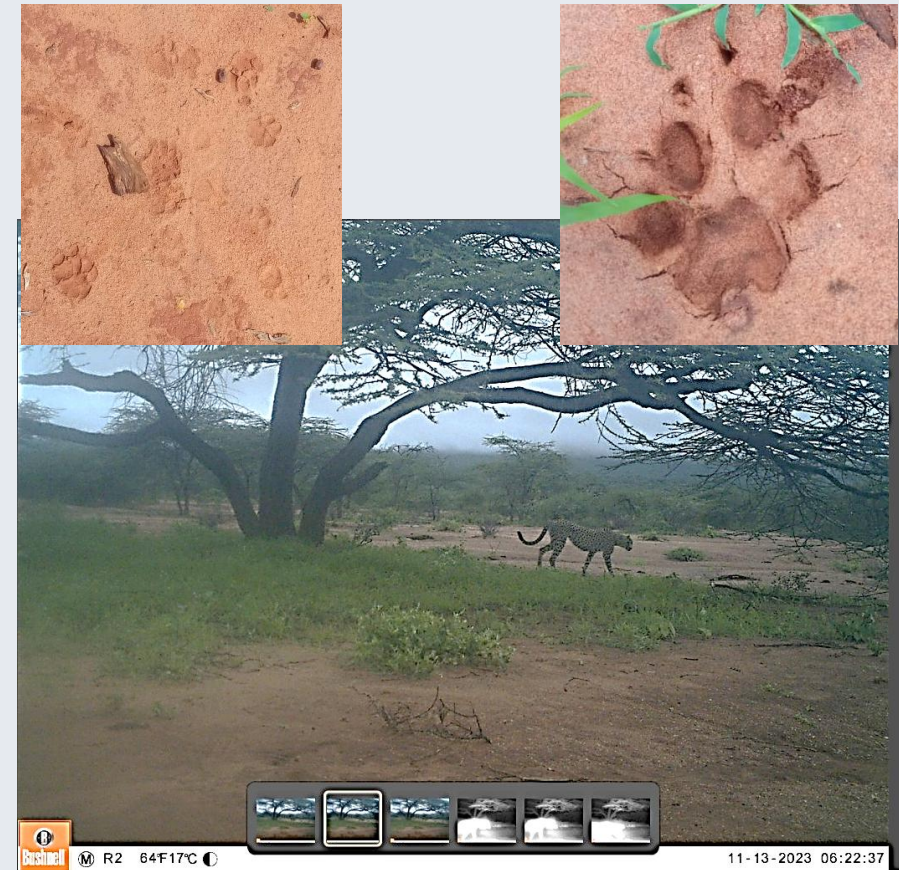
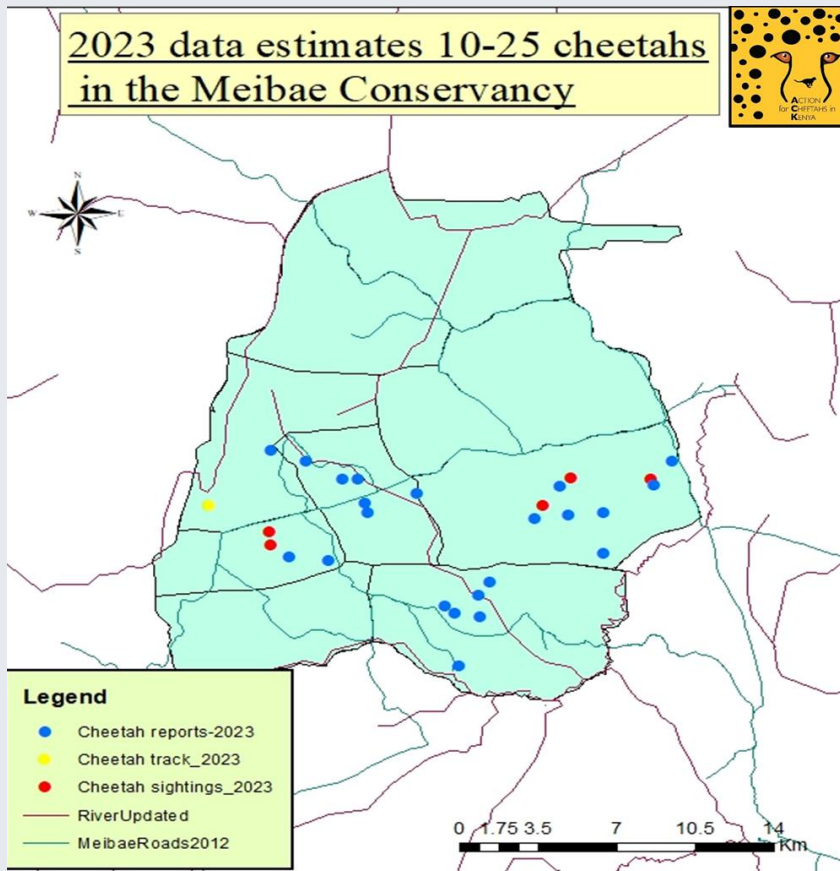
October 2023

- Mary Wykstra completed the fall fundraising tour and secured several commitments for long term donors. We are grateful to everyone who assisted with the tour, especially Holly Koppleberger who joined Mary on the road for 5 weeks.
- Dr. Slotta-Bachmayer (Leo) joined the k9 team in using search equipment (GPS tracking and analysis) and further fulfilling the growth and expertise of our team. We are excited that Leo will continue working with us virtually and plan to join the team fulltime in the coming year as we launch into the field work.
- Youth engagement to rebuild eco-bench at Lloomli centre as part of the ongoing Taka taka program. The bench built in 2021 was destroyed by herders from outside of the region thinking that the bottles could contain value. Youth from Lmooli committed to environmental caretaking as a priority.



November 2023

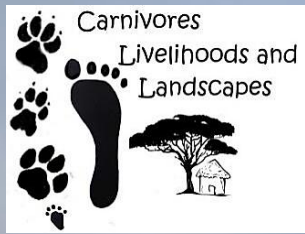
- Results of Field Staff data were mapped to share with stakeholders. Lack of data in the northern part of conservancy is because of having no staff working in those blocks. We will hire 4-5 additional staff in 2024 to better cover the entire conservancy.
- The research team set-up camera traps to monitor two play trees in the Barsalinga area. Cheetah(s) are seen visiting the tree and scent marking on different occasions. Scat was collected on several occasions to confirm with genetics if the cheetah are the same or different. Tracks confirmed a mother and cubs even before photos were analyzed.



December 2023

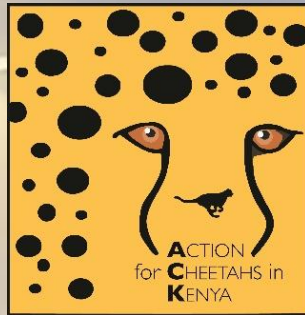
- The third International Cheetah Day Football Cup was held at Silango in Meibae Community Conservancy – Congratulations Super Eagles! We also had an eco-village aspect where Born Free, Northern Rangelands Trust and Grevy's Zebra Trust participated in creating awareness on conservation issues and programs. Support from RAW Africa Ecotours, Samburu County and Born Free helped make this year a great success.
- Mary Wykstra and Chris Lentaam attended a Carnivore Conflict and Boma intervention strategy meeting with conservation and research groups from Northern Kenya. The Conflict Mitigation Toolkit and Deterrent light projects were highlighted as advanced studies on effective mitigation efforts that can form the foundation for further collaborations
- ACK staff completed data and outlined a 3-year strategy plan that will form the foundation of activities for the coming years years.





THANK YOU

*We share our success and gratitude for
your support and encouragement!*





Support and Partners

