

ACTION FOR CHEETAHS IN KENYA NEWSLETTER



January – June 2020

DIRECTORS NOTES

In spite of the challenges of the COVID pandemic, ACK staff have remained united in cheetah conservation and community. The field staff were given three months to work from home and care for their families, especially children who came home from school. We proudly watched as staff members took a leading role in distributing information about hand washing units and worked with local health officials to distribute food relief and masks. We have all realized how important our work is for people and the environment in both of our study areas.

I hope all of our supporters have enjoyed the Cheetah Tales videos ([Action for Cheetahs](#)) and live chats ([Action4cheetahs](#)). We are cautiously looking forward to becoming more active in our communities as soon as it is safe again. Meanwhile, our staff have embraced technology to incorporate phone calls, weekly online meetings and international consultations for completing publications.

We hope you will continue to follow our work and to support our staff even in these challenging times.

Mary Wykstra, Director

HIGHLIGHTS

Rabies Vaccination Campaign: In partnership with Samburu County, Ewaso Lions, TNR Trust, and other organizations, we welcomed the New Year in style by holding our 3rd annual rabies campaign. This year, locusts and the COVID-19 pandemic hindered our campaign, so we were forced to do it in phases. ACK hosted 40 veterinarians, staff and volunteers at our Meibae camp to complete 908 vaccinations in January and 190 in May! Seven additional campaigns were conducted between October 2019 and May 2020. We vaccinated a total of 2,647 dogs and cats and donated the remaining vaccines to the KSPCA and North Valley Veterinary Clinic. During the January campaign we sterilized 27 dogs in collaboration with TNR Trust. We thank all our volunteers for their efforts in the campaign. [read more](#)

Pathways 2020: ACK Director Mary Wykstra, was one of 30 people selected from a pool of over 500 applicants to attend a Women in Conservation Leadership course as a part of the Pathway's to Human Dimensions in Conservation conference held in Nairobi. Colorado State University and the PRIDE Alliance hosted the conference which focused on leadership through personal growth. The three-day conference that followed was attended by Adelaide Moturi, Sara Blake, and Jane Wanjira who gave presentations in a session chaired by Mary on conflict resolution. Cosmas Wambua and Stephen Musemi also attended the conference, learning more about how ACK activities compliment human dimensions in conservation around the world.



Adelaide and Sara (third and fourth from right respectively) in company of board member Dr. Steven Chege (second from left) and other Pathways participants.

Locust Invasion: Locusts came into Kenya from the north invading the Meibae Community Conservancy between January and May. The pests caused a lot of devastating damage to grazing areas across northern Kenya. Our staff worked together with the Conservancy and Kenyan government to keep the locusts from remaining for too long in one place as the government set up eradication plans.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Community Awareness: Rabies and Distemper: Rabies is a zoonotic disease that kills over 2,000 people in Kenya annually. The majority of human infections are caused by dog bites. ACK initiated a mass rabies vaccination campaign in 2017. Following a 2018 and 2019 distemper outbreak, we

THE ARTIST

In Kenya, art comes in all shapes and forms. Last year we hired a local artist to work with local motorcycle taxi drivers (bodaboda in Kiswahili) to create murals at the shade structures that ACK donated to the community. The artist took great care to represent the cheetah, the bodaboda and the views from the area in his murals on the structures.

The same artist has been hired by shopkeepers in the Meibae Community Conservancy to paint murals on their shops. The shopkeepers sometimes just tell Roymando Ekal to paint what he likes. We found him after he completed this shop, very proud of the effort he had put into the life-sized cheetah “just for ACK!”

Thank you Roymando!!



WATER IS LIFE

Imagine the surprise in the middle of the night when the earth shakes and you hear a large crashing sound coming from the office area. Sara in the tent above the office thought elephants were in the camp. Other staff members were uncertain what it was until they heard the sound of water running down the hill. Our 2500 liter tank had burst!

After alerting the tank company, TOPTANK, we were informed that the tank was covered under warranty! We told them that the other tank at the camp had also cracked and our repair was not holding and to our joy, the company agreed to replace that tank as well. We posted the situation into our social media platform and a quick go-fund-me campaign raised enough to cover the cost of transport and shade structures to reduce future wear and tear on the tanks.

Thank you TOP TANK!

developed flyers in English and Kiswahili to raise awareness about various aspects of pet care and the benefits of sterilization. Prior to our January and May Rabies Vaccination Campaigns, our staff sensitized the community about rabies and how it affects both animal and human health. Support from Ewaso Lions and TNR Trust funded the printing and distribution of 500 flyers to schools and the community.



Learkeri- ACK Field Staff helping create awareness on rabies in the community ahead of the campaign.

Takataka Team, School Programmes and Conflict

Mitigation: The education department is gearing up for the reopening of movement by assuring we have exciting activities to engage our communities in environmental awareness and wildlife conservation. Our staff have been working together to design messages for youth and adults in our outreach programmes as soon as COVID allows.

Salama: Following rising cases of predator conflicts in Ishamba village in the Salama site, our field officers and village head man evaluated the complaints and helped to evaluate and advise on future farm reinforcements to protect livestock. Three of the homes evaluated had learned about livestock defense previously - they continued to heed the advice and were not impacted by the recent conflict with a leopard. Other households in the area experienced conflict in the form of commotion, which the owner was able to respond to, and had a loss of goats and other livestock. Advice was given on ways to prevent loss and no further losses occurred after the consultations. This evaluation stressed the importance of continuous community interactions to prevent future conflicts.

Samburu: This period created an opportunity for our staff to explore and learn more about cheetah pooping sites near their homes. And, although they were not conducting patrols due to the pandemic, our staff continued to be alert about wildlife conflict in their area. Sadly, three people’s lives were lost to elephants between March and June. Although Meibae rangers, police and KWS attempted to calm the community, both incidents resulted in an elephant being killed. Generally during staff patrols, our field officers are able to alert people to elephant presence or accompany single people as they walk for water or firewood. The community and our staff are now more aware of the importance of our work in protecting both people and animals. ACK sends our condolences to the families who lost their loved ones from these incidents.

STAFF UPDATES

All Staff Meeting: We gathered our entire staff for a meeting at our Nairobi main office. The meeting focused on implementing a staff wide policy manual and strategic plan with insight from employees at every level to assure a resilient and impactful project. We included Basic First Aid Training into the meeting to assure that all of our staff are familiar with life-saving skills. Everyone left the meeting with inspiration and a stronger appreciation for teammates that many had previously only met in digital groups.



ACK staff during a discussion session at the Nairobi office.

Admin and Research: Cosmas Wambua was a founding member of ACK, working as the Senior Scientist between 2001 and 2014. He returned to the project in 2018-2019 as a consultant and in 2020 accepted the position of Assistant Director. Cosmas will be the oversight for field logistics and student projects, allowing our Director to focus on the administrative and fundraising elements of the project.

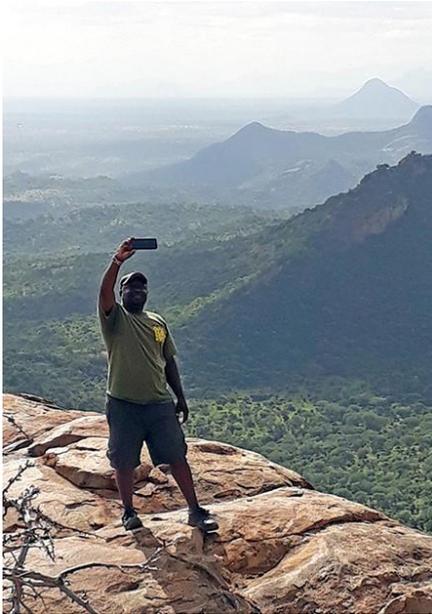
COMMUNITY CARE

ACK would like to commend our Salama area field supervisor, Jimmy Muli, for the work he does in his community. Jimmy serves on a local school board where he has encouraged the planting of indigenous trees and the creation of an environmentally friendly compound. Jimmy goes out of his way to always share his passion for wildlife and has earned the nickname “Cheetah Man” from his community.

During the pandemic, Jimmy’s dedication to the community shined again. Jimmy created a hand washing station at his home and invited neighbors to learn how to make their own. He also worked with a local humanitarian organization and the government to identify needy families for food and hygiene aid.



Peter Kibobi was appointed a full-time position as a Research Scientist with focus on linear ecology. Peter will work with other members of our team on issues of connectivity and linear development. He will also liaise with our partners on a range wide scale to raise awareness on the impacts of linear development (roads, rails, pipelines, powerlines).



Assistant Director Cosmas in the field and preparing for the National Survey by going through some ground-truthing excersizes.

National Survey: We would like to wish Brian Mlamba the best of luck as he has finished his contract in the genetics lab and has moved on to complete his Master's degree and the next challenges in his personal career. Noreen Mutoro remains in Austria and Germany completing her technical courses. We welcome Timothy Maiyo as a full-time employee for the national survey project as a research assistant. Timothy will manage survey data and field work pertaining to the completion of Noreen's PHD and into the other regions of the national survey.

Canine Unit: Two interns joined the Canine team - Audrey Mandi and Antony Oyugi. They have trained on basic care and handling techniques, and most importantly built a bond with each of our four scat dogs in preparation for returning to the field.

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 not-for-profit project working in affiliation with: Cheetah Conservation Fund, Kenya Wildlife Service, and the University of Nairobi.

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