



ACTION FOR CHEETAHS IN KENYA YEAR END SUMMARY 2017



The staff of ACK is grateful to our friends and supporters. We would like to share the highlights of 2017 and wish you a prosperous New Year!

January 2017

- ACK moved our office base from the Mountain View area of Nairobi to a property out Limuru Road where there is more room for detection dog kennels and training.
- Field Staff in Samburu and Salama continued to conduct patrols and walking transects to monitor wildlife movements and mitigate conflicts.
- Staff were issued smart phones in 2016 and began all patrol data collection on iNaturalist in anticipation of paperless data collection by end of year.
- Masters students **John Wachira** (University of Nairobi) and **Brian Solomon** (Kenyatta University) were selected to conduct trend analysis of cheetah and their prey in the Salama area and genetic analysis of cheetah fecal samples respectively.
- ACK Director, **Mary Wykstra** was a co-author on a publication "*The global decline of cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and what it means for conservation.*"



Photo: Evans Odundu with detection dogs Madi and Warrior at the new training facility.

February 2017

- Field work in Salama and Samburu included taking the detection dogs to areas of recent cheetah sightings.
- National Zoo Keeper, **Regina Bakely**, visited ACK for 5 weeks with support from the Friends of the National Zoo support through donations of equipment for the dogs and genetic analysis.
- Previous scat samples collected by ACK staff, tissue samples from the Kenya Wildlife Service and scat samples from the Nairobi orphanage were used to initiate isolation of DNA for mitochondrial and micro-satellite analysis for population dynamics and relatedness of cheetahs across their range.
- PHD candidate, **Noreen Mutoro**, completed development of field survey questionnaires and initiated the mapping of survey areas for the National Survey using mapping tools and training on social survey methodology in collaboration with **Jan Christian Habel** (Technische Universität München, Munich)



Photo: Chris Lentaam, Mary Wykstra and Regina Bakely with Madi and Warrior in Samburu – Meibae Conservancy

March 2017

- Lion, giraffe, oryx and eland were reported in the Meibae conservancy several times in the first quarter of 2017, these species have not been present with regularity since the initiation of the conservancy.
- Fiona Tande held meetings with community members, school head masters and staff to develop a work plan for education and outreach activities through the remainder of the year, including the testing of a new curriculum based student workbook.
- Aiive and Kicking footballs were distributed to 40 schools in the Salama and Samburu study sites.
- Interviews were completed in both study areas to evaluate people's knowledge and interest in rabies to initiate an awareness and vaccination campaign in collaboration with county veterinarians and the African Network for Animal Welfare.



Photo: Chris Lentaam, Mary Wykstra and Linfang Yang distributing footballs in Meibae Conservancy

April 2017

- Volunteers **Linfang Yang** and **Taofei Chen** worked with ACK staff on education materials and staff professional photographs.
- The ACK Salama and Canine teams were featured on *NTV Wild*, a local television show about conservation in Kenya.
- **Jan Jedersberger** was accepted as a Masters student to conduct his project in developing and implementing digital data collection using customized mobile phone applications.
- **Violet Gatonye** (University of Eldoret) continued the proposal for highway mortality monitoring and solutions for maintaining wildlife corridors during development.
- **Chris Lentaam** attended poison training workshop in Laikipia and a mortality investigation training in Kalama Conservancy.
- We completed renovations to our field vehicle to carry dog kennels for transportation of scat dogs for field work.



Photo: The ACK Salama and Canine staff with the NTV Wild film crew.

May 2017

- We added new tent replacements, shade structures, solar and water collection systems to our camp in Samburu. We renewed our memorandum with the Meibae Conservancy through 2022.
- Development in Northern Kenya including power lines, wind turbines, pipeline and railway will pass through the center of Meibae. A dam is planned for the boundary of Isiolo, Samburu and Laikipia and will influence the water supply of the Ewaso River. ACK along with the other conservation groups in the region have held several meetings with the development authority to map wildlife corridors for minimum impact if our suggestions are considered by the developers.
 - Our education officer, **Fiona Tande**, joined with other education/conservation groups in northern Kenya to unite our efforts in schools and communities to raise awareness about the environment. The group is supported by San Diego Zoo Global and meetings are hosted at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy.
 - **Chris Lentaam** received a scholarship and was accepted for an undergraduate two year diploma programme in Community Conservation Management at the Mt Kenya University Meru Campus.



Above: The entire ecosystem along the Ewaso River is threatened by the LAPSETT development project, but efforts to unite our voice for sustainability and corridor recognition are being heard.

June 2017

- A young cheetah, Nalepo, was picked up by a herder boy who took it to a manyatta thinking it was a puppy. While we nursed the cub to build his strength the community rallied to help search for the mother. Sadly, the mother was not found, but the cub was turned over to KWS and is thriving. The community effort to reunite the cub to his mother was commendable.
- **Brian Solomon** prepared genetic samples processed at the KWS laboratory for taking to complete his training on sequencing and micro-satellite analysis at Cheetah Conservation in Namibia.
- **Noreen Mutoro** completed training on social analysis in a project in the Galana Conservancy in northeastern Kenya through a scholarship with the German university partners.
- **Sarah Omusula** was accepted and received a scholarship to the Yale University Forestry and Environmental Studies masters programme (2 years) and was granted study leave through June 2019.
- **Stacey Pekke** joined the Canine team as an intern and assistant dog handler. Stacy will graduate from Karatina University in December and join the team as a full time handler in January 2018.



Above: As Nalepo gained strength the ACK and Meibae Conservancy staff searched for his family. After several days of hand feeding it would be unlikely that the mother would take him back, so he was taken to the Nairobi Orphanage where KWS would raise him.

July 2017

- **Fiona** worked with two interns (University of Nairobi undergraduates) – **Francisca Kasuku** and **Geraldine Mutoro** to test the student workbooks through an eight week after school programme that included pre and post student and teacher surveys to finalize the materials for national distribution. **Geraldine** will complete a thesis project on this study and defend in December.
- **Jan Jedersberger** completed implementation and staff surveys on the digital data project and all staff are using the new phone applications for staff patrols, interviews and the national survey. Data will be digitally submitted into a cloud storage base where it is retrievable for analysis.
- **Lorena Singer** joined ACK as a student intern after completing her coursework in Germany before returning to her home area in Switzerland. **Lorena** assisted with setting up the data bases for data analysis and completing data input for staff patrols and transects.
- **Sara Blake** joined the ACK team as a volunteer (18 months) to fill in for **Sarah Omusula** while she is on study leave.



Photo: Fiona Tande with students from the Tangu Primary School – one of three schools participating in workbook trials.

August 2017

- Plans are underway for the second International Cheetah Day event in Salama – football tournament and eco village.
- ACK partnered with the Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW), Meibae Conservancy, the Samburu County Veterinary Department, and the Kenya Veterinary association to plan a rabies vaccination campaign for December in the Samburu study area.
- Director, **Mary Wykstra**, travelled to the USA for the annual fall fundraising tour and conferences. Her travel is supported by several zoos and private donations. The Carnivore's Livelihoods and Landscapes USA chapter was granted charity status in the USA and held its first official board meeting and officers were appointed. We are awaiting the final approval for 501c3 status. After 6 years, **Erica Hermesen** resigned from being the ACK volunteer coordinator and was replaced by **Alysa Hansen**. Erica also resigned from her volunteer activities on the CaLL boards for the US and Kenya in order to focus on her family and other career opportunities. Her support is greatly appreciated and she will be missed.



Above: Noreen Mutoro, Lorena Siner, Jan Jedersberger, Sara Blake and Sarah Omusula review data cloud access and analysis tools associated with the Classic Escapes sponsored digital data applications.

September 2017

- Field staff now collect all data using the phone applications. Conflict mitigation includes assistance with lost livestock, advice on boma (enclosure) improvements and healthy livestock advisement.
- PHD student (University of Nairobi) **Titus Adhola** received scholarships and is working in affiliation with ACK in Samburu to analyse diets of key predators and is evaluating tolerance of the communities towards livestock depredation. He is affiliated with the Museums of Kenya and will work with the ACK field staff in Meibae as a part of his project.
- **Geraldine** completed her internship and is writing her analysis of the student workbook pilot project. **Francisca** will remain on staff with ACK to replace Fiona who resigned to take a position with another organization.
- **Brian** and **Noreen** began their training programmes in Namibia and Germany respectively for genetic analysis and national survey programmes.
- **Mary** attended the *American Association of Zoo Keeper* and *Association of Zoo and Aquarium* meetings in the USA as well as giving several presentations at zoos and universities as a part of the fall fund raisin tour.



Above: Lumumba Mutiso shows the improvements made by members of the community thanks to conflict mitigation advice received by him earlier in the year.

October 2017

- The ACK staff is saddened by the sudden death of **Pius Wamunyu** who was a field officer since 2008. **Pius** will not only be missed for his contributions to ACK work in Salama but as a husband, a father, a local tailor and a respected member of his church and school committees.
- Elections in Kenya in August were met by opposition and violence in several areas of the country. ACK efforts often include travel through areas affected, thus our field visits were reduced in the past two months as the country returned to peace.
- The detection dogs were taken to three field sites in the past couple of months, but only a few scats were found as drought has caused cheetahs to move to other areas outside of our regular study sites. Only two cheetahs were confirmed in Salama, five in Athi-Kapiti and five in the Samburu study site.
- Rains returned to Kenya to break a 3-year record drought. We are hopeful that wildlife will return.



Photo: Pius Wamunyu was an active field officer providing advice to community members in the Salama area. Our sympathies to the family and friends who will really miss him, as will our ACK team.

November 2017

- Due to the political climate in Kenya we cancelled the football tournament for International Cheetah Day. Instead we decided to plant trees with several of the schools over the weekend of ICD. Our plan for the football tournament in 2018 will be bigger and better!
- Staff submissions to the field data base were lost from the server. We spent much of the month recovering data from August to October as and repairing the issue with assistance from **Jan** in Germany.
- Plans for the Rabies vaccination campaign in Samburu were firmed and we received 1000 vaccines and syringes through grants and in-kind contributions from the *Sharon Live Foundation, Animal Care Clinic, Doctari Wildlife Foundation* and the *John Ball Park Zoo*.
- All field staff took their leave time between August and October, so operations were back to normal starting in mid-November.



Photo: As a part of environmental caretaking the ACK team, Francisca Kasuku and Jimmy Muli planted 60 trees at Salama schools

December 2017

- Sixty trees were planted at three schools on 2nd December for International Cheetah Day
- Seven hundred and eleven dogs and 74 cats were vaccinated using four volunteer veterinarians, two county veterinarians, ten Meibae Conservancy staff, and seven ACK staff.
- The digital data issue has been resolved and all data is being stored on the server. We have centralized the purchase of voice and data packages for the field phones so the ability to upload all data is secure.
- **Brian** and **Noreen** returned from their trainings in Namibia and Germany. **Brian** will complete his master's thesis paper on the analysis with anticipated defence in August 2018. **Noreen** is awaiting scholarship results to know when she will initiate her formal PHD coursework and will start field work.
- **Lentaam** and **Sarah** completed their first terms of coursework. Both will be doing their thesis field work in 2018.
- **John Wachira** has nearly completed the analysis of trend data for the Salama region and will be defending his thesis in March 2018.
- **Violet** transferred to another university and her advisor suggested **Peter Kibobi** as a replacement for the highway study. Peter will defend his proposal in January and will conduct field work between February and June 2018.



Photo: About 300 homes were visited to complete the rabies vaccinations in Meibae. We had nine clinic sites where about 150 dogs were vaccinated in the early morning and late afternoons, but most of the effort required travel from homestead to homestead.