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Dear Reader

2014 has been an incredibly good year for Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe. We were able to carry out our field work without any delays and therefore managed to cover a much larger area than expected. On the 1st of May we packed our car and hit the road, only to return at our base in Victoria Falls six months later.

Together with our students (p.2) we travelled through the southern part of Zimbabwe, where we interviewed 691 people about the carnivore occurrence in their area (p. 4-6). We passed through 24 districts, covering 190 000 km<sup>2</sup> of land (p. 4-5). And yes, there are cheetahs in this part of the country (p. 6), maybe not as many as we were hoping for, but something is better than nothing.

People continued to send us their sightings and, often incredible, pictures (p. 2-3 & 7). This enabled us to add 23 new animals to our data base, making the total of identified cheetah in Zimbabwe 86. Even though we were often miles apart, the sightings and pictures enabled us to follow some of the cheetahs through good and bad times (p. 2-3).

In between our field work, we attended a conference about transfrontier management (p. 7) and, to ensure cheetahs are taken into account in the new management plan, participated in the Hwange National Park management planning workshops (p. 7). This is important because Hwange National Park inhabits the largest cheetah population in Zimbabwe.



Our cheetah sighting Malilangwe

After six months on the road it was definitely time to go back home and enjoy life in a house for a while. We are extremely pleased with the work we've done and will look back on a fruitful field season in which we again travelled through beautiful places, met incredibly nice people and even managed to see cheetah twice!

In those six months on the road, not once did someone refuse to answer our questions, not once did someone turn us down when we asked for a place to pitch up our tent. I would therefore like to end with a huge thank you to all the people and organisations that continue to support us by participating in our survey, sending us cheetah information, and last but not least by funding our work. We would not be able to do our job without you!

Best wishes,

*Esther*

Dr. Esther van der Meer  
Project director & senior researcher

# The next generation



Simba

The Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe is affiliated to the National University of Science and Technology (NUST), department of forest resources and wildlife management. In March we visited the department to give a lecture about our cheetah work and the conservation of carnivores. Simbarashe Mpansi, a third year NUST student joined us in 2014 as part of his attachment. Ashton Goronga, who just obtained a BSc from Chinhoyi University of Technology, joined us to gain experience in carnivore research. In addition

to our affiliation with NUST, we have recently started to develop a relationship with the Mushandike Wildlife College, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority training college, which we visited during our field trip. We're very pleased to tell you that from the 1st of January we will have two students on attachment from this college.



Ashton

***“ Thanks to all the sightings and pictures we have been able to add 23 new individuals to the cheetah database ”***



Female HNP012 with her cub in 2014

## For better or worse

In 2014 people send us 279 cheetah sightings accompanied by 1192 pictures, thanks to this input we have been able to add 23 new individuals to our National cheetah database. The sightings and pictures also enabled us to follow some of the known cheetahs through good and bad times.

Ever since her birth in 2011 we have been able to keep track of cheetah female HNP012. We were so excited when we received confirmation at the beginning of 2014 that she was sighted with two cubs of her own. Unfortunately, two months later, one of her cubs was killed by a leopard. Six months later this

female's sister, HNP013, was photographed in the same area with

three cubs. The sisters' cubs are now past their first most vulnerable six months, which bodes well for their survival.

Male HNP003, an approximately eight year old male which we have been able to follow since 2009, had a tough year. In October he was pushed out of his territory by a male coalition of two young cheetah brothers. After his defeat he roamed all over the park but since October he seems to have settled down in a new territory. Somewhere along the line he lost one canine, this does not seem to bother him though; on the last pictures he looks strong and healthy.



Female HNP012 and HNP013 as cubs in 2011



Male HNP003

*Continued on page 3 ...*

Continued from page 2

Remember the cheetah mother with three male cubs which we reported on in last year's annual report? The brothers left their mother at the end of 2013. In October 2014, we received a picture of this supermom with four new cubs. Unfortunately, in November, this female got into trouble when she got injured during a hunt. After consulting two wildlife veterinarians, we travelled to Hwange to monitor the cheetah family. Over the course of a week we saw the wound get smaller and confirmed the cheetahs had had food. After we left Hwange we received regular sightings, female HNP014 is certainly recovering and able to provide for her cubs.



Female HNP014 with her cubs

## Caught on camera



Female VF001 with cubs in Victoria Falls

This year the Hwange Lion Research Project extended their camera trap survey to the Matetsi Safari Area and Ngamo. They captured lion on camera trap, but also took pictures

of cheetah which they courteously shared with us. Thanks to these pictures we were able to add six new cheetahs to our database. We also found some long lost friends back. In 2012 a female cheetah and her three cubs were caught on camera trap by the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust on a concession 10 km out of Victoria Falls. In 2013 they disappeared off the radar. Until four months ago, when the Hwange Lion Research Project picked up two of the, now adult, 'cubs' on their camera trap in Matetsi. The two brothers, which, according to cheetah tradition, stay together in a male coalition, look healthy and seem to have settled down 70 km from where they were born.



Full grown 'cub' in Matetsi

For the past three years Stephen Long from the Bhejane Trust captured male HNP010 on camera trap in the Sinamatella area. This male marks his territory on the National Parks signpost right in front of the camera. When we received another set of camera trap pictures of a male marking this signpost our first thought was 'him again!'. However, after a closer inspection of the coat patterns we realised one individual didn't match. The male in this picture was not male HNP010 but male HNP015 who normally resides 34 km West, in the Robin-scamp area.



Male cheetah HNP010



Male cheetah HNP015

Phumuzile Nyoni caught a cheetah on camera trap on Debshan ranch. In January 2014 she found the tail of a cheetah on one of her pictures, which confirmed there are cheetah on the ranch. In October she snapped the perfect cheetah picture, which we were able to add to our National data base. This is the first identified cheetah in this region.

# CHEETAH SURVEY



Back on the road for our cheetah survey

On the 1st of May 2014 we resumed our field trip where we finished last year, along the southern boundary of Hwange National Park. For 6 months we travelled through the south of the country covering an area of 190 000 km<sup>2</sup>, interviewing 691 wildlife professionals, farmers, community spokespersons and others (Table 1) about the cheetah and carnivore occurrence in their area.

Table 1. Profession of respondents

Profession	nr
Campfire staff	26
Forestry Commission staff	44
National Parks staff	182
Hunters and trackers	50
Safari guides	5
Village heads	78
Security staff	224
Commercial farmers	59
Other	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>691</b>

Most of the people we interviewed correctly identified cheetah (85%) (Table 2), 40% of these people had actually seen a cheetah in the wild. The majority of the people knew cheetahs are very fast (79%), only eat meat (93%), are not dangerous to people (82%) and also occur in countries other than Zimbabwe (81%).

Table 2. Percentage of respondents who correctly identified species

Species	Correct ID
Aardwolf	15%
African wild cat	38%
African wild dog	72%
Bat eared fox	20%
Black backed jackal*	24% (full name) 79% (incl. jackal)
Brown hyena*	33% (full name) 74% (incl. hyena)
Caracal	22%
Cheetah	85%
Leopard	86%
Lion	95%
Serval	18%
Side striped jackal*	14% (full name) 40% (incl. jackal)
Spotted hyena*	40% (full name) 91% (incl. hyena)

\*In the local languages there is no differentiation between the different species

Within Zimbabwe conflict with cheetahs is minimal, during this year's survey we came across two recent (< 3 years) cases of cheetahs killing livestock. However, 57% of the people we interviewed incorrectly assumed cheetahs often kill livestock. This did not seem to affect the cheetah's popularity, most people felt positive about cheetah (82%) (Fig 1) because it has a nice appearance (32%) and does not give problems to people and livestock (34%). The few people who did not like cheetah (9%) thought it is dangerous to people (25%) and kills livestock (72%).

Continued on page 5 ...



At the National Parks office in Mwenezi



The three cheetah males in Tuli circle

## Cheetahs without borders

Since 2009 we received several sightings of a male coalition of three males in the Tuli Safari Area along the Botswana border. After liaison with Aliénor Brassine from the Northern Tuli Cheetah Project we confirmed these are the same three males as she sees in her study area in Botswana. Although it does not come as a surprise that cheetahs move across borders, especially in small wildlife areas like the Tuli circle, it is nevertheless nice to confirm we are dealing with the same animals.

**“ Due to changes in land use, most of the historical cheetah hotspots no longer exist ”**

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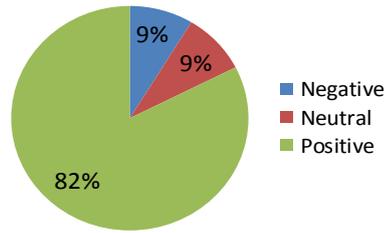


Figure 1. Way respondents felt about cheetah

land use, most of the historical cheetah hotspots outside protected areas no longer exist, and cheetahs now predominantly occur in wildlife protected areas (Fig 2a). For an overview of the cheetah and carnivore occurrence in the southern part of Zimbabwe see Figure 2a-m (see page 6).

With our questionnaire based survey we have so far covered 70% of the country, encompassing most of Zimbabwe's wildlife protected areas and historical cheetah hotspots. In 2015 we will cover the remaining 30% of the country, after which we will write up our results in a cheetah population status report.

Continued on page 6 ...

Within the southern part of the country there were several areas in which people have seen cheetah passing through, or where people reported a few (< 10 adults) resident cheetah on the property (Fig 2a). However, the main populations (≥ 10 adults) were found at Nuanetsi ranch, Buby Valley Conservancy, Gonarezhou National Park, Malilangwe and Save Valley Conservancy. Due to changes in

## *In situ education*

While in the field we spent a considerable amount of time on education. After each questionnaire we gave respondents the opportunity to ask questions, explained how to identify the different carnivores and discussed several aspects of cheetah ecology.

In addition, we spoke about human-carnivore conflict mitigation and how to improve record keeping for management purposes. We left material explaining how to identify carnivores and, in areas with human-carnivore conflict, left booklets (kindly

donated by the Dambari Wildlife Trust) explaining how to mitigate this conflict.

This year we were able to add a bonus to our *in situ* education programme: an outdoor cheetah movie night! With our computer, projector and inverter we were able to show a cheetah movie on any available wall we encountered. It was a great way to provide educational entertainment for not only the rangers and scouts but also their families. Especially the children were mesmerized by the cheetahs running over the movie screen.



Movie night in Umguza Forestry

© CCPZ

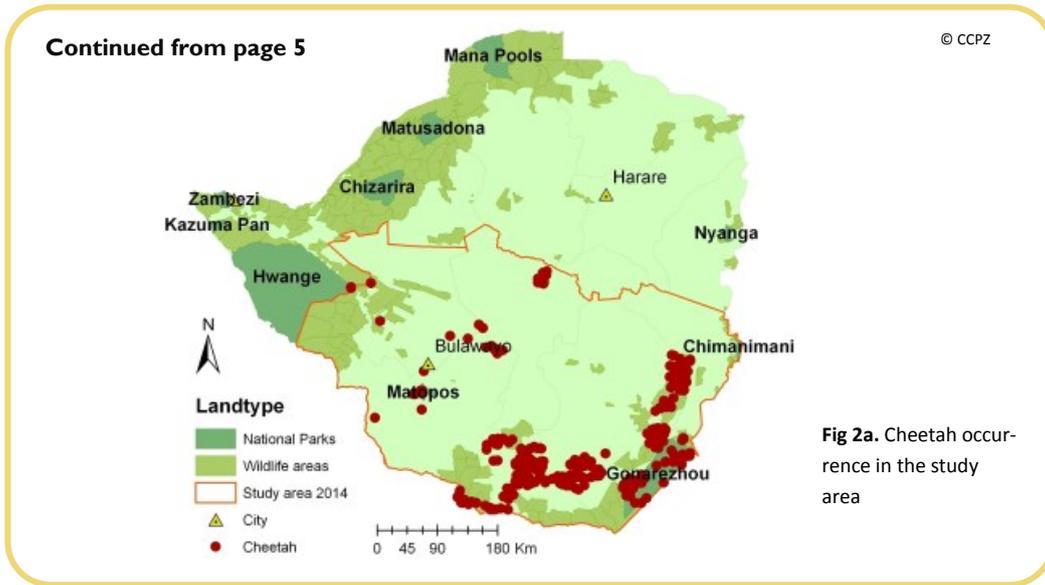


Fig 2a. Cheetah occurrence in the study area

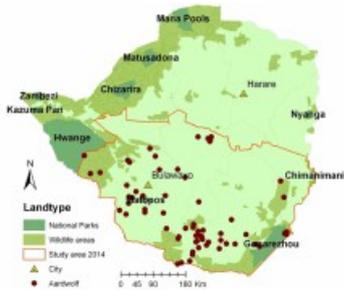


Fig 2b. Aardwolf occurrence

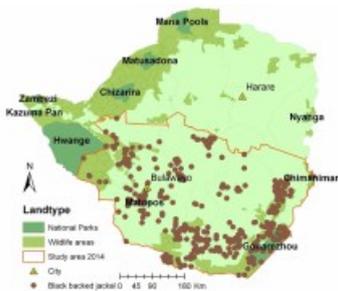


Fig 2f. Black backed jackal occurrence

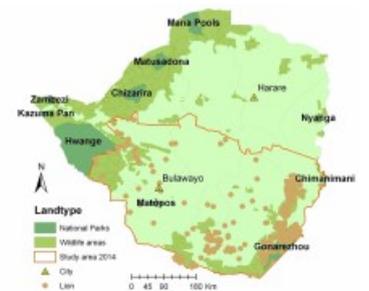


Fig 2j. Lion occurrence

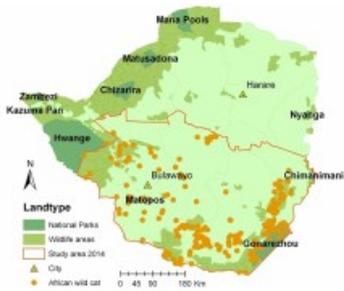


Fig 2c. African wild cat occurrence

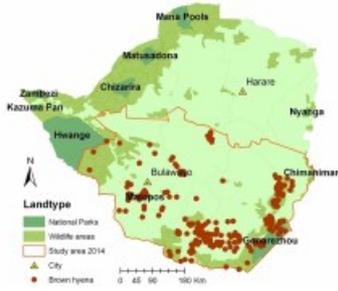


Fig 2g. Brown hyena occurrence

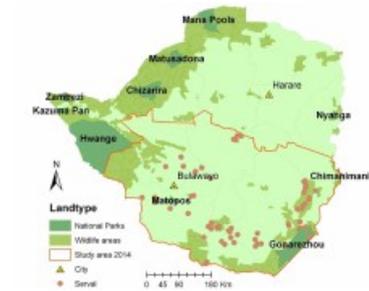


Fig 2k. Serval occurrence

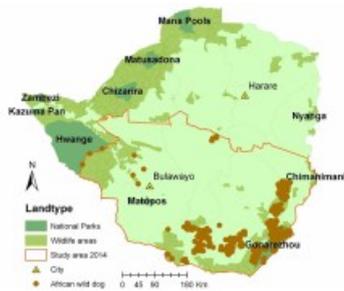


Fig 2d. African wild dog occurrence

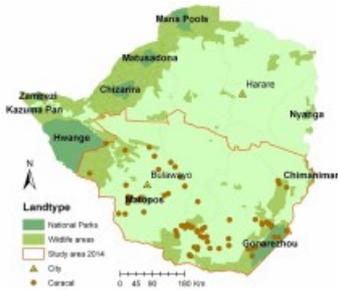


Fig 2h. Caracal occurrence

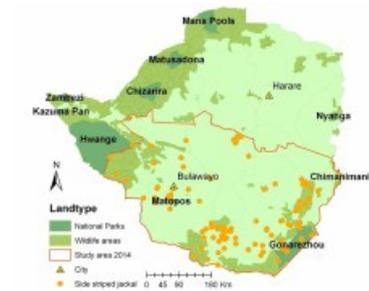


Fig 2l. Side striped jackal occurrence

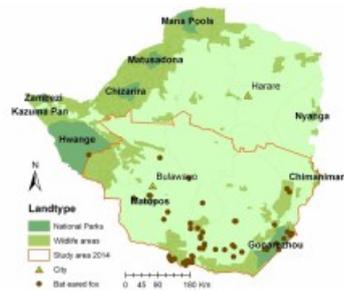


Fig 2e. Bat eared fox occurrence

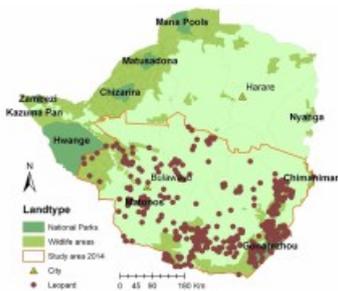


Fig 2i. Leopard occurrence

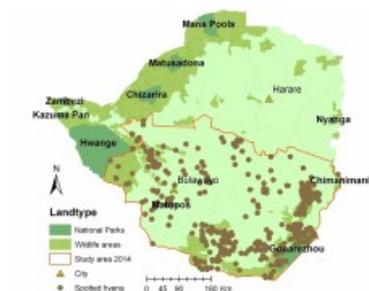


Fig 2m. Spotted hyena occurrence

## Cheetahs on the agenda



Biodiversity workshop Hwange management plan

Meetings; at one hand they take away valuable field time, on the other hand they provide an opportunity to meet colleagues and more importantly, an opportunity to ensure cheetahs are part of the agenda.

On the 17th of April we organised our annual scientific get together with researchers who are working in the Victoria Falls region. This meeting, prior to the start of the field season, helps to share ideas, discuss protocols and set up collaborations.

From the 12th till the 15th of May we attended the RP-PCP & AHEAD-GLTFCA conference. The central theme of this conference was the co-existence of people and wildlife in transfrontier conservation areas. Several people, including myself, gave presentations on the effect of people on wildlife and wildlife on people.

On the 19th and 20th of August and the 22nd and 23rd of October we attended the Hwange National Parks Management Planning Workshops. With 30-40 adult cheetahs, Hwange National Parks is home to the largest cheetah population in Zimbabwe, it is therefore important to ensure this specially protected species is incorporated in the new management plan.



Cheetah in Hwange National Park

## Sighting highlights



© Jane Hunt

This year's most remarkable sighting was without a doubt Jane Hunt's sighting of two cheetahs fighting in the waterhole at Camp Hwange in Hwange National Park. Both cheetah went down under, with only a tail visible above the water. After a while the cheetahs got fed up with their fight and went their separate ways.



© Jane Hunt



© Jane Hunt

# Cheetah awareness



Because we have been on the road during most of the year we have not been able to generate as much PR for the cheetahs as we had hoped for. We did manage to update everyone about our work and the cheetahs of Zimbabwe via Facebook though. Towards the end of the year we had as many as 1400 likes. For us it is encouraging to know there are that many people interested in following us and the cheetahs. Our

website is in serious need of an upgrade and we hope to launch a new version of the site by mid 2015. So keep an eye on [cheetahzimbabwe.org](http://cheetahzimbabwe.org) and continue to follow us via [facebook.com/CheetahZimbabwe](https://facebook.com/CheetahZimbabwe).

## Seen a cheetah in Zimbabwe?

Support our work and send us your sightings and/or pictures via:  
[cheetah@cheetahzimbabwe.org](mailto:cheetah@cheetahzimbabwe.org)  
or  
[Facebook.org/CheetahZimbabwe](https://Facebook.org/CheetahZimbabwe)



Cheetah female HNP012 and her cub in Hwange National Park



P.O. Box 204, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe  
[Cheetahzimbabwe.org](http://Cheetahzimbabwe.org)  
[info@cheetahzimbabwe.org](mailto:info@cheetahzimbabwe.org)

Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe (CCPZ) was founded in 2012 by Dr. Esther van der Meer. The aim of the project is to help to conserve cheetahs through research, education, collaboration and capacity building. CCPZ tries to improve the knowledge on the conservation biology of cheetahs and to promote co-existence between cheetahs and the people of Zimbabwe. CCPZ sees research as a tool to improve the conservation strategy of the cheetah and tries to build capacity in conservation by working with Zimbabwean students.

Cheetah Conservation project Zimbabwe is affiliated to the National University of Science and Technology and works in conjunction with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

### Donations:

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