



ACTION FOR CHEETAHS IN KENYA  
YEAR END SUMMARY  
2016



The staff of ACK is grateful to our friends and supportors. We would like to share the hilights of 2016 in this brief summary

**January 2016**

- Dr. Laurie Marker and Louisa Richmond from Cheetah Conservation Fund visited the KWS Genetics lab and Samburu field site and attended **Pathways to Development Conference** with Sarah and Mary.
- The tent shade structures and water tanks were installed at the Samuru camp
- All three Master's students from 2015 analysed data and completed their thesis reports between January and June – *Adriana Casillas (A multi-method approach to understanding and mitigating human-carnivore conflict in Meibae Community Conservancy, Kenya )*; *Santiago L'lore (Comparison between low-cost deterrents lights in Meibae and Salama, and how anthropogenic activities affect their effectiveness in the prevention of livestock predation by carnivores, and herbivores destruction of crops respectively)*, *Juliana Masseloux ( Using detection/non-detection surveys to model land-use by East African carnivores and make suggestions for maximizing detection on range-wide rapid surveys)*.
- Samburu Staff participated in the Great Grevy's Rally.
- Launched showing of "Big Cats" video at primary schools in the Salama area – four schools to be visited in the next 6 months.



ABOVE: Cheetah Conservation Fund, Action for Cheetahs in Kenya, Mara Meru Cheetah Project and Kenya Wildlife Service team members at the KWS genetics laboratory

**February 2016**

- ACK staff met with the Machakos and Makueni Community Conservation and Compensation chairmen along with KWS wardens at the Salama Camp to confirm consistency in data collection and support from ACK to KWS in conservation and cconflict mitigation.
- We developed Terms of Reference for Scat Detection Dog training with **Kenya Canine Kennels**.
- *Noreen Mutoro* and *Cynthia Nyunja* travelled to Namibia for one month to train on scat collection and DNA isolation.
- Veterinary student *Daisy Amondi, University of Nairobi* Veterinary student, conducted surveys in Salama and Samburu to develop an animal health project in collaboration with the county governments in rabies eradication and domestic animal husbandry – particularly focused on dogs and cats.



Above: Action for Cheetahs in Kenya, Kenya Wildlife Service and Community Conservation and Compensation Committee team members meet to discuss joint conflict mitigation activities.

### March 2016

- Alysa Hansen, **Antioch University New England**, arrived to set up her MSc project testing different combinations of deterrent lights with reflective tape at 15 manyatta in the Meibae Conservancy.
- ACK conducted a debate at the **Kiima-kiu Secondary School** in the Salama study area, where students discussed the pros and cons of living with wildlife.
- Staff in Samburu and Salama completed six months of transects for predator occupancy surveys – 24 transects per month equals 144 total transects.
- ACK initiated a search for a new Education and Outreach Coordinator.



Above: Head Teacher, Mr Kimali introducing students to the debate topic – “Can human beings co-exist with Wildlife?”

### April 2016

- Alysa’s project completed the interviews and set up the testing sites. ACK hired **Kivoi Letongoine** (Nyrere) to assist in the project. Samburu staff began three months of boma monitoring at the 15 test bomas to evaluate predator visitation at a control, a boma with only Foxlights and a boma with Foxlights and reflective tape.
- Kenya burned ivory, rhino horn, sandalwood and other endangered species artefacts to send a message that animals are worth more alive and that we will not support wildlife trade.
- ACK staff members Mary and Sarah attending meetings on the effects of Standard Gauge Railway between Mombasa and Nairobi and LAPSET development in northern Kenya. Monitoring in the Salama area is documenting the increased conflict and poaching, highway mortality and impact of construction on wildlife movements. Proactive partnerships in Samburu will work to prevent the same issues from occurring during construction in the north.
- Salama and Samburu staff continue with community patrols, conflict mitigation and recording of wildlife and domestic stock mortality. MSc student **Viola Gitonye** from the University of Eldoret is developing a proposal to analyse road kill data and promote solutions to animal crossings in new development.



Above: Alysa and Kivoi setting camera traps at one of the study manyatta.

### May 2016

- Mary Wykstra, ACK Director, Presented at the **ICT4D Conference**. A scholarship was given to Mary to attend the conference where she networked with other groups using technology to advance development in relation to the Millenium Development Goals for alleviation of poverty and improved health in the world. Mary’s presentation was on the use of digital phones and ArcGIS mapping software in evaluation of the status of cheetahs across their range in Kenya.
- Digital cameras and training was given to six rangers in the Meibae Conservancy to assist with data collection and security in the area.
- ACK field staff were given mobile phones and trained on the use of phones in collection of data. We welcome **Jan Jedersberger** who is conducting his Masters thesis project on the development of a phone application that will allow ACK to go paperless on all field data collection. Jan is with **Karlsruhe University** in Germany under supervision of Gertrud Schaab.



Above: Meibae Rangers during camera training.

### June 2016

- We welcomed Masters Student **Delaney Laughlin** from Colorado State University to assist in developing our education and outreach program and to complete the edits on the student workbook and teacher guidebook.
- ACK hired **Fiona Tande** as the new Education and Outreach Officer. Fiona will develop school and community outreach activities centered on our two field bases and will complete the student workbooks for testing in early 2017.
- In Salama a leopard invaded one of our staff members livestock on three occasions despite strong/predator proof enclosures. We backed up his facility with a combination of foxlights and Predator Guard lights after which no more predators invaded the compound.
- Our detection dog, Madi, is completing his first phase of official training with Canine Kennels. The focus of this phase has been in endurance and scent training using reward based training techniques.



*Above: Mary Wykstra, Delaney Laughlin and Lumumba Mutiso installing deterrent lights at site of repeated leopard attacks on Lumumba's boma.*

### July 2016

- ACK welcomed 20 students and three chaperones from **Kalamazoo Christian High School** (USA) for their study abroad program. Although difficulties with flights and a shortened trip this year the students accomplished highway monitoring, walking patrols, and many activities at the Kiima-Kiu Secondary School centered on our environment and our health.
- Alysa and Delaney completed their projects and returned to the US to analyse and write their thesis.
- Salama staff completed the analysis of highway mortality as a part of the long term evaluation of development impact on wildlife corridors.
- Canine Kennels offered to donate a second dog, Warrior, to the detection team. Warrior has been in training with Madi at the kennels.



*Above: The Kalamazoo Christian Schools and Kiima-Kiu AIC Primary and Secondary Schools have become sister schools.*

### August 2016

- Noreen Mutoro submitted her final thesis results *Assessment of Cheetah Prey Base Outside Protected Areas in Salama and Kapiti Plains of Southern Kenya* and graduated from the University of Nairobi. Noreen continued to work with ACK after completing her study to finalize several publications on education and ecology. She also began the process of PhD scholarship applications for using our National Cheetah Survey to determine cheetah connectivity and threats to the range wide cheetah populations across Kenya.
- Two cheetah scat detection dogs graduated for field training to start in Salama and Samburu. Handler **Evans Odundo** joined the ACK team to work with Kenya Canine Kennels and the Wells Fargo Canine.
- **Brian Solomon** joined the ACK team as a Masters Student from **Kenyatta University** to conduct his thesis project on the collection of fecal samples for genetic analysis as a model for range wide cheetah genetic mapping.



*Above: Brian Solomon and Cynthia Nyunja in the KWS Forensic laboratory.*



### September 2016

- The last meeting of the Natural Resource Management team in Salama was held to review targets and threats and to identify solutions to issues threatening a stable environment.
- Mary attended conferences and gave presentations in the US as a part of the annual fundraising efforts to support continued work of ACK. A special thanks to the Virginia Zoo and Regina Bakely for a great opening event in that region, to the Living Desert in Palm Springs for the launch of “Year of the Cheetah”, and to Erica Hermsen, Guy Combes, Andrew Deman, and the Cat Haven staff for our first annual fundraiser in San Francisco.
- The first board meeting for **Carnivores, Livelihoods and Landscapes (CaLL)** was held in San Francisco. CaLL is an umbrella organization under which ACK has been operating in Kenya, and will soon be a register non-profit organization in the US. CaLL is set up to enable ACK, COOL Crafts and other start-up projects to have a platform for conducting sound business based conservation and meeting regulations of employment of staff members.
- Volunteer **Abel Ferrer** from **Universidad Complutense Madrid** joined ACK staff in the field for an internship. He participated in education and monitoring activities.



*Above: Representatives from the community discuss natural resource management solutions for the Salama ecosystem.*

### October 2016

- **John Wachira** joined ACK as a Master’s Student from the **University of Nairobi**. John will be looking at the trends in cheetahs and their prey since ACK began work in the Salama region. John will work with ACK staff to complete transects over the next six months and will compare the events of development in the Salama region to changes in wildlife abundance and distributions, as well as to conflict.
- Brian and Cynthia along with team members at the Kenya Wildlife Service were able to successfully isolate fragments of DNA from fresh scat as well as older samples from Salama and the Masai Mara. ACK works with our partners at the **Mara Meru Cheetah Project** to analyse scat collected to verify maternal relationships of cheetahs in the Masai Mara as a pilot for the planned National Survey. Mapping genetics across Kenya will not only provide us with corridors in which to focus conservation efforts, but it will also let us know where the hot spots for illegal cheetah cub trade originate.
- Fiona Tande linked with the Northern Kenya Conservation Education Working Group to harmonize our efforts in conservation education in the Meibae Conservancy and surrounding areas with other like institutions.



*Above: Mary, Andrew, Guy, Stevie and Erica in Dublin Holiday Inn following the “Change for Cheetahs” fund raising event. Thank you to the Cat Haven staff and Jazz the cheetah for helping make the event a success.*

### November 2016

- Video shows were given in two schools in the Samburu study site.
- Partnerships in anti-rabies campaigns were initiated with **Africa Network for Animal Welfare** (ANAW) and the county representatives in Samburu and Makueni. These campaigns will include awareness starting in early 2017 and will end with a vaccination project near the end of the year.
- ACK hosted our first dedicated *Classic Escape Adventure Safari* with **Jameson Weston** as the project guide hosted by Utah's Hogle Zoo. **Susan Patch** from the San Diego Zoo and **Kathryn Sippel** from the Binder Park Zoo were the participants. We conducted habitat and vegetation surveys of areas where past cheetah sightings occurred. The participants walked with rangers from both the Salama and Samburu study sites and spent some days on safari in Amboseli, Ol Pejeta and Samburu.
- Noreen Mutoro attended and presented her project to map cheetah distribution at the ESRI East Africa GIS conference. Her PhD advisor in Remote Sensing, Dr Gertrud Schaab, was also in attendance. This conference enforces our link to the mapping community and builds stronger relationships with expertise in the field.



*Above: Fiona Tande and Kiris Lentaam taking collecting data in the Meibae Conservancy where our digital data collection protocols are being finalized.*

### December 2016

- ACK partnered with **Alive and Kicking** and **Sporting Conservation** to host a football tournament in Salama featuring a special cheetah football (soccer for our American friends!) in honor of **International Cheetah Day**. The day hosted fun and awareness about the cheetah including cheetah trivia.
- **Brian Johnson** joined the ACK staff for two weeks in the field while we had consultants from the UK who assisted us with the final phase of detection dog training for Madi and Warrior. Madi found his first wild cheetah fecal sample in Samburu during the training.
- We are in the final phase of the thesis projects for Brian Solomon and John Wachira, their field work and lab work will be completed in the early part of 2017 with expected graduations in 2018 and 2019 respectively.
- We are excited to start the next phases of work with the livestock detection dogs for the National Cheetah Survey!



*Above: Scat detection dogs, Warrior and Madi taking a rest from training in the Athi Kapiti area (Lisa Ranch).*

Thank you for your support and interest in Action for Cheetahs in Kenya. We look forward to your continued support and involvement in our programmes.

Sincerely,

Mary Wykstra

Director