



## **The Carnivore Conservation Group**

A Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust

**Investigation into the consumptive utilization  
of Cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and Leopard *Panthera pardus*  
in South Africa**



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## SPONSORSHIP REQUEST

***The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Group is requesting financial support for a project to improve the conservation management of Cheetahs and Leopards in South Africa. The entire project will last for three and a half years and is divided into three stand-alone but connected phases. The total budget for the entire project is R 1,200,592, and the budgets for each phase are R 318,304 (Phase 1), R 550,408 (Phase 2) and R 331,880 (Phase 3). This project will significantly contribute to the responsible management of Cheetahs and Leopards in the region.***

### 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE

#### CHEETAHS

The largest part of South Africa's Cheetah population occurs outside protected areas on privately owned cattle and wildlife ranches. Conflict with landowners is common and there is a drive to obtain a CITES permit for trophy hunting of Cheetahs. Little is known about the status and growth trends of the Cheetah population in South Africa and along with persecution, legal trade in live animals are major threats to Cheetah survival.

The legal trade of Cheetahs in South Africa is poorly regulated with many so called 'breeding centres' sourcing their animals from the wild. It is also reported that wild Cheetahs are smuggled from South Africa to Namibia to be 'canned hunted' on Namibia's CITES permit. Further reports claim that landowners are capturing and holding Cheetahs in the hope that South Africa will obtain a CITES quota. Additionally, some of the export records on the CITES register appear to be irregular. The trade in live Cheetahs in South Africa is fraught with irregularities and loop holes in the permitting system. The extent of the trade and the conservation impact thereof is not known and requires investigation.

A PHVA for Cheetahs was help by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and the EWT during April 2009 (Daly *et al.* in prep). This workshop identified the removal of Cheetahs through uncontrolled live trade and products together with illegal hunting as major threats to Cheetah survival on both a local and regional level. This was further highlighted in the *Status and Conservation Needs of Cheetahs in Southern Africa* (Marnewick *et al.* 2007, IUCN).



Cheetahs are regularly shot. Photographer unknown.

## LEOPARDS

Despite proof that estimates of Leopard numbers in South Africa are hopelessly inaccurate, the 2004 application for an increase in Leopard (*Panthera pardus*) quotas under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) was approved. This effectively allowed for an increase in the numbers of Leopards killed for trophies by foreign hunters. This trade driven exploitation of a species is recognised by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) as a major cause of loss of biodiversity and a decline in ecosystem health (DEAT, 2006).

The increased quota prompted the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (of the IUCN) Southern Africa to initiate a Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) to evaluate the current status of Leopard in South Africa, collate all available data and make informed recommendations on the management and conservation of this species. This workshop was held in April 2005 and included representatives from government, provincial and national conservation authorities, local and international NGOs, academic institutions, professional hunting associations, and private individuals. Workshop proceedings were produced into the report entitled *Leopard (Panthera pardus) Population and Habitat Viability Assessment* (Daly *et al.*, 2005).

Due to the fact that Leopards are the most widespread of the large cat species, and occupy the widest variety of habitats, there is a misconception that they are widely abundant. In many regions in South Africa, Leopards are readily persecuted based on the perception that they take livestock or large numbers of antelope, their natural prey, which now have a high commercial value on privately-owned game farms throughout the country. Urgent attention needs to be paid to the fact that, as a country, we know very little about one of our most persecuted species which holds enormous economic value to this country due to its charismatic nature and its profile as one of South Africa's "Big Five".



Photographer unknown








## 2. THE CARNIVORE CONSERVATION GROUP

The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Group (CCG) promotes research on carnivores with emphasis on those aspects that will improve their conservation status through the implementation of sound management strategies. The EWT-CCG's vision is to develop southern Africa into a region where carnivores are managed in an ecologically and economically sustainable manner, free from irrational and unnecessary persecution. Projects have been conducted on a variety of carnivore species, including African Wild Cats, Black-footed Cats, Cheetahs, Honey Badgers, Hyaenas, Leopards, Lions and Wild Dogs, raising our levels of knowledge and understanding about this important group of mammals.




### 3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will encompass three successive phases that will incorporate (i) an assessment of the existing Cheetah and Leopard permit and quota allocation systems, (ii) an investigation into the illegal utilization of Cheetahs and Leopards (through illegal hunting, unreported problem animal control, unregulated captive breeding, etc.), and (iii) the dissemination of information and an advocacy programme promoting more effective management of Cheetahs and Leopards in South Africa.




#### Phase I (9 months)

-  Conduct a thorough review of existing legislation relevant to Cheetah and Leopard utilization, highlighting gaps which need to be addressed.
-  Conduct a thorough review of the existing permit and quota allocations, including international and national records, and identify gaps in record-keeping and monitoring systems.
-  Conduct a thorough review of Cheetahs in captivity and the extent of the captive breeding industry.
-  Assess the level of experience and training received by customs officials to identify and handle cases involving Cheetahs and Leopards.
-  Review historical records of seizures and prosecutions for cases involving Cheetahs and Leopards, in order to assess the capacity for law enforcement to manage and control illegal Cheetah and Leopard utilization.
-  Determine spatial distribution of the formal utilization of Cheetahs and Leopards in South Africa, including a GIS analysis of permitted hunt locations, reported problem animal control off-take, live capture and captive breeding centres.
-  Overlay various data with population distribution maps to highlight hotspots for Cheetah and Leopard utilization and conflict.

#### Phase II (18 months)

-  Conduct an investigation into the illegal utilization of Cheetahs and Leopards in identified utilization hotspots to assess the extent of this trade and the potential impacts on extant Cheetah and Leopard populations.
-  Investigate the disposal methods for illegally utilized Leopards and live Cheetahs, including laundering, trade routes and transportation networks.
-  Conduct a population modelling exercise to examine potential impacts of various levels of total Cheetah and Leopard off-take.

#### Phase III (9 months)

-  Collate off-take data from Phase I and Phase II to gain estimates of total annual Cheetah and Leopard off-take.
-  Make recommendations on the mechanisms and procedures required to enhance the efficient and responsible administration of permits and quota systems, and lobby government regarding policy and legislation.
-  Hold workshops and meetings to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations emerging from Phase I and Phase II.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

### Phase I

- 🐾 Improved understanding of the current permit, quota and administration system in South Africa for Cheetah and Leopard.
- 🐾 Improved understanding of the impact of legal Cheetah and Leopard utilization on current populations.
- 🐾 Identification of utilization and conflict hotspots.
- 🐾 Identification of gaps to be addressed.
- 🐾 Production of a detailed Phase 1 report.

### Phase II

- 🐾 Improved understanding of the potential impacts of illegal utilization on Cheetah and Leopard populations.
- 🐾 Detailed knowledge of trade dynamics, and specifically disposal mechanisms.

### Phase III

- 🐾 Improved implementation of trade utilization regulations.
- 🐾 Increased awareness of the impact of both legal and illegal off-take of Cheetahs and Leopards in South Africa.
- 🐾 Informed management strategies to guide future quota allocations for trophy hunting, PAC and live capture.



**A Cheetah and Leopard photographed on ranchland in the Thabazimbi district using a remote triggered camera. The survival of these predators is at risk due to trade, utilisation and conflict.**

## 4. PROJECT ADMINISTRATION

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a registered 501(c)3 organisation (details available on request). The Endangered Wildlife Trust is also a registered Non Profit Organisation (NPO number 015-502) and Public Benefit Organisation (PBO Number 930 001 777) in South Africa. The conservation activities of the EWT are recognised as Public Benefit Activities and donations made to our work to an amount of 5% of taxable income are tax deductible under Section 18A of the Income Tax Act, 58 of 1962. Accounting procedures follow Generally Accepted Accounting Practices (GAAP). External auditors Deloitte, audit the

Endangered Wildlife Trust annually and audited financial statements are made available to all interested parties.

## 5. ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

### THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST (EWT)

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is a non-governmental, non-profit, conservation organisation, founded in 1973 and operating throughout southern Africa. The EWT conserves threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa by initiating research and conservation action programmes, implementing projects which mitigate threats facing species diversity and supporting sustainable natural resource management. The EWT furthermore communicates the principles of sustainable living through awareness programmes to the broadest possible constituency for the benefit of the region.

Vision Statement: *A healthy planet and an equitable world that values and sustains the diversity of all life.*

Mission: *The Endangered Wildlife Trust is dedicated to conserving threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.*

- The EWT fulfils its Mission by: Initiating and implementing conservation research and action programmes;
- Preventing species extinctions and maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem functioning;
- Supporting sustainable natural resources use and management;
- Communicating the principles of sustainable living and empowering people by capacity building, education and awareness programmes to the broadest possible constituency;
- Taking a strong leadership and advocacy role in promoting environmental and social justice

The EWT currently addresses, through its 17 Working Groups, which collectively coordinate around 90 projects.

These Working Groups include:

-  African Cranes, Wetlands and Communities (ACWAC)
-  Airports Wildlife Working Group (AWWG)
-  Blue Swallow Working Group (BSWG)
-  Birds of Prey Working Group (BoPWG)
-  Carnivore Conservation Group (CCG)
-  Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) Southern Africa
-  Conservation Leadership Group (CLG)
-  Law and Policy Working Group (LPWG)
-  Marine and Coastal Conservation Group (MCG)
-  Oribi Working Group (OWG)
-  Powerlines Wildlife Working Group (PWWG)
-  Riverine Rabbit Working Group (RRWG)
-  South African Crane Working Group (SACWG)
-  Wildlife Conflict Prevention Group (WCPG)