

Newsletter

Spring 2004



The first few months of this year have seen us very much office bound with only two brief field trips. A number of loose ends were tied up during this time including receiving our long awaited research permit which is an official document from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism permitting us to continue our field based work with large carnivores.

The biggest hurdle of not having access to an aircraft has been overcome, which can be read about within this newsletter. If all goes according to plan, we should be airborne within the next few weeks.

The paperwork department has kept us extremely busy with a number of funding proposals in process. We are still waiting for the audited financial report for 2003 to put the finishing touches to our annual report. The delay is due to trying to locate an auditor that does not charge astronomical rates.

For those who regularly visit our website, you would have noticed a vast number of changes and additions including a section called "Kids stuff", a photo gallery and carnivore sound files that have been added to the carnivore information pages, and in the last day or so the facility to make a donation through the website has been added. Details about the website are covered in this newsletter.

During March we were invited to participate in a Science Day at a school in Windhoek which we hope will become an annual event. During March we also travelled to the south of Namibia where we conducted a small game

survey at Kalahari Game Lodge. Small game cannot be counted during a conventional aerial survey and it is important to have the full understanding of the prey base in order to carry out the next exciting chapter of carnivore work at KGL. After successfully reintroducing both cheetahs and lions, we hope to tackle a wild dog reintroduction project between June and August this year.

In addition to the wild dog project, other exciting undertakings over the next few months include exhibiting the work of the Predator Conservation Trust at a four day tourism expo to be held at the Windhoek show grounds from 12 to 15 May, producing the first Atlas Report for 2004 as well as countless field trips in the new aircraft to continue the work on the desert lion population.

As both the UK and the Namibian PCT teams strive to share all new and exciting developments with supporters, I am sure you will enjoy reading the third newsletter from the Predator Conservation Trust and the UK and Namibian teams will continue with their efforts in reporting all new and exciting developments

Each and every newsletters grows and improves from the last as the PCT teams from the UK and Namibia strives to report all new and exciting developments to supporters. We hope you enjoy reading all about the activities over the past few months in the third newsletter from the PCT.

Lise Hanssen

PRINTER CARTRIDGE RECYCLING SCHEME IN UK

PCT in the UK have signed up to a printer cartridge recycling scheme, which will help to protect the environment, and raise funds for the work of PCT.

The scheme is in two parts: Used inkjet cartridges can be placed in supplied envelopes and posted free of charge to the firm running the scheme. Where people have laser printers or use large volumes of inkjet cartridges, recycling bins can be provided, and these will be collected free of charge once they are full.

Unfortunately Epson inkjet cartridges are not suitable for recycling and cannot be used with this scheme.

For each cartridge sent for recycling, PCT will receive a donation from the firm administering the scheme.

UK recipients of this newsletter will find a printer cartridge recycling envelope enclosed. If you don't have a printer, please pass the envelope on to someone you know who may be able to use it.

Extra envelopes are available on request from PCT in the UK. Similarly if anybody in the UK would like a recycling bin for laser and inkjet cartridges, please contact us and we will arrange for one to be sent out to you.

PARACHUTE JUMP UPDATE

The parachute jump by UK trustee Simon Marsh unfortunately had to be delayed due to low cloud levels on the planned date

A new date has now been arranged - 24th April (weather dependent)

SCIENCE DAY AT WINDHOEK SCHOOL

St. Georges School in Windhoek held their third Science Day on Thursday 18 March 2004 with a view to encouraging the kids to do science projects for the Annual Science Fair, which is a well established event in Namibia each year.



Flip Stander talking to the schoolchildren

Guest speakers were invited by the school to share their experiences ranging from elephant behaviour to solar energy with the students. Flip and I presented our work on large carnivore conservation in four one-hour sessions to grades 4 and 6.

The enthusiastic response from the students highlighted the need for communicating information and knowledge at all levels which has resulted in us signing up for next year's Science Day.

Thank you very much to Peter Muller and the teachers and pupils at St. George's School for inviting us to take part in this exciting event.

Lise Hanssen

WEBSITE UPDATE

The Predator Conservation Trust website has had a lot of additions in the past few months.

One of the major additions is a library section, which contains copies of past and present carnivore atlas reports and Kunene lion project reports.

We have also added pictures of spoor for the various large carnivores, and have just added a number of sounds, so visitors can hear some of the noises made by the various large carnivores.

Details of the Brown Hyena project have been added as well as updates on the various projects being run by PCT.

The latest addition to the site is a kids section which includes a number of fun and educational games.

Anthony May

INFORMATION CENTRES IN NAMIBIA

Two new information centres are either open or due to open soon in Namibia which will contain information about PCT and its work.

The first is the Brown Hyena Projects information centre which opened in Luderitz in March this year.

The second is on the Duesternbrook guest farm and is due to open later this year



ART EXHIBITION AND SALE

Thanks to the wonderful generosity of Edwin and Biddy Collins, PCT UK will be holding an art exhibition and sale at Chester Zoo this summer.

Edwin and Biddy, who strongly believe in the need for research and conservation of all wildlife, have donated over forty original paintings and limited edition prints for us to sell with all the money going to PCT. They include works by W.S.S.Forsyth, Neave Parker, Anthony Gibbs, Stephen Grayford and Donald Grant.

Dr Jeremy Paul has generously donated copies of his latest print "Brothers" and Henk van Zanten has donated a print of "Lioness and Cub". Many thanks to both of them.

Thanks to Chester Zoo for hosting the exhibition. This is just one of many ways that the Zoo contributes to conservation in the wild.

The starting date is still to be confirmed and will appear on our website when known as well as in the next edition of our newsletter. Please feel free to contact us for further information.

Jean May



Edwin and Biddy Collins

Brothers by Dr Jeremy Paul



Great White Tiger by Stephen Grayford

A place in the shade by Dr Jeremy Paul



Young Lions by Stephen Grayford



PLANS FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF WILD DOGS

The cheetahs and lions that were reintroduced at Kalahari Game Lodge (KGL) almost two years ago are thriving. KGL are very keen on having wild dogs on their property and this possibility was discussed in the early stages of the lion reintroduction. It was decided that a wild dog reintroduction would be dependent on the outcome of a wildlife census to make sure that the prey base could sustain further carnivore pressure.

It is extremely important to monitor the impact of the reintroduced animals on the game numbers as a decline in prey species could result in the failure of the reintroduction. KGL have conducted annual game counts for many years and we conducted a total game count after the release of the lions and cheetahs. The figures show that the majority of species have remained stable and that springbok numbers have increased dramatically resulting in us making plans to reintroduce wild dogs.

Although the project needs the approval of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) before we can go ahead, we have made tentative plans for the reintroduction to take place during Namibia's winter months.



It is important that free-ranging animals are used as they already have survival experience which includes competition with lions. Rather than capturing wild dogs from protected areas where the core population is stable, we need to source animals that have ventured onto commercial farmland, as these would most likely end up being killed due to conflict with live-stock farmers.

They will be transported directly to a holding boma at KGL where they will most probably spend between two and three months acclimatising to the local conditions.

We are in the process of revising our original carnivore management plan to accompany a proposal to MET. If this project goes ahead, it will be the first attempt at reintroducing wild dogs on private land in Namibia.

Flip Stander

AUTUMN TALKS IN THE UK

Flip Stander and Lise Hanssen will be visiting the UK in September to give a number of talks.

The first confirmed dates are Fauna and Flora International (FFI) on Friday 24th September and Chester Zoo Members on Saturday 25th September, both in Chester Zoo's lecture hall

Further dates will be advised in the next newsletter.

STEENBOK SURVEY AT KALAHARI GAME LODGE

Reintroducing large carnivores to new habitats in Namibia, and hence expanding their ranges, is one of our primary functions and important for their long-term conservation. During 2002 three lions and two cheetahs were released on the 26,000 hectare Kalahari Game Lodge (KGL), where free-ranging large carnivores were resident more than a century ago. We faced many unknown factors and risks during the planning phase of the introduction.

One of the more important concerns was whether there were sufficient prey animals to support the lions and cheetahs. If there were too few prey animals the predation pressure from three lions and two cheetahs in a confined area might cause the prey populations to decline. We were particularly concerned about the cheetahs and their impact on some antelope species. Cheetahs are highly effective predators and in small, confined areas they are known to eat themselves out of house and home. In areas where springboks are abundant, such as at KGL, they form the main prey for cheetahs. Based on an estimated 4000 – 5000 springboks at KGL, we developed a mathematical model to calculate predator/prey ratios, and to predict the predation impact on the springbok population. The results suggested that two cheetahs will not have a negative impact of the springboks, and we decided to go ahead with the introduction.

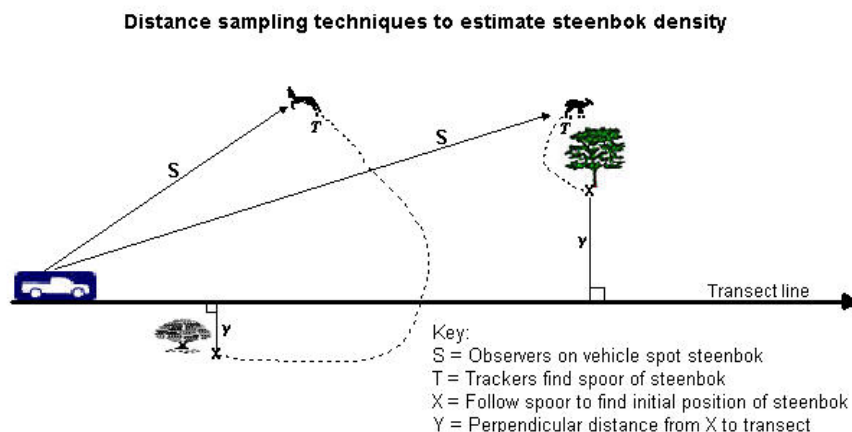
A few months after the cheetahs were released the KGL manager, Hennie Moller, made a remarkable discovery. The cheetahs were not selecting many springboks, instead, they killed the smaller steenbok and duiker. More than 60% of their kills were of these two species. This discovery, exciting as it was, highlighted the concern that our predator/prey model was obsolete. In fact, we had no information on the population size of steenbok and duikers, and could not predict the possible impact of cheetah predation. Obtaining reliable estimates of steenbok and duiker numbers, therefore, became a matter of urgency.

Small antelope species, like steenbok and duikers, are difficult to count. The traditional aerial survey approach, used for most larger antelopes, unfortunately does not work for these smaller species. As an alternative we decided to attempt a ground count of steenbok and duikers that relied on “distance sampling” techniques along transect lines.

After much anxiety and head-scratching over the complicated statistics of “distance sampling” we arrived at KGL late one Thursday afternoon in March. Early the next morning we divided all the eager hands into three survey teams. Each team, equipped with a vehicle, GPS, and data forms, consisted of a driver, a data recorder, and two San (Bushman) trackers. This was an innovative approach of combining age-old tracking skills of the San, with modern Global Information System (GIS) technology, to survey steenbok and duiker populations. After a brief training session and a practise run, the three teams set off in different directions with much excitement.

The procedure was simple. Each survey team was allocated a number of transect lines to complete. The vehicles drove slowly along the transect lines with the San trackers scanning and searching for signs the quarry (see diagram).

Upon spotting (**S**) a steenbok or duiker, the is vehicle stopped, and the San trackers walk to the area where they had first seen the antelope, searching for fresh tracks. Once found (**T**), the trackers “back-track” the antelope’s spoor (following the trail in the direction from where it came), reconstructing its’ behaviour, and finding the exact spot (**X**) where the animal stood/lay when the vehicle approached. The coordinates of this position is recorded, using Global Positioning System, and the perpendicular distance from this point to the transect line (**y**) is measured and recorded.



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For two days the survey teams searched, counted and measured, covering the length and width of the 26,000 hectares. Immediately after completing the last transect we entered the data on our laptop, and before the dust had settled, we started the daunting task of data analyses. There were insufficient data for duikers and they had to be excluded. Surprisingly, the analyses ran smoothly, and Billy's software only crashed twice. There was much excitement when the results of the survey finally appeared.

We drove a total 243 kilometres along transect lines and encountered 46 steenboks. The average distance of steenboks from the transect line was 60.9 metres, ranging from 1 to 218 metres. The final "distance sampling" analysis indicated that the steenbok population estimate for Kalahari Game Lodge is 375, at a density of one steenbok on 70 hectares.

Flip Stander

AIRCRAFT FOR PCT



Studying the ecology of wildlife species that live at low densities in arid or mountainous environments is a daunting task, even for the most seasoned and experienced conservationists. The study of desert-adapted lions in Namibia, that the Predator Conservation Trust (PCT) has elected as a priority project, is a classic example. Scientists and conservationist have, for many years, grappled to overcome the constraints of studying animals under these conditions. Among the many innovative techniques employed, the use of light aircraft and radio telemetry technology has made the biggest contributions. The research and conservation projects of the PCT are, not surprisingly, entirely dependent on regular aerial support.

Raising funds to purchase an aircraft is almost as challenging and time consuming as studying lions in the desert, and it was likely that it would be some time before PCT was in a position to finance the purchase of an aircraft. It is with this background and urgency, and with much deliberation that I decided to purchase the aircraft myself. Getting the funds together, however, was equally challenging. The sale of commodities, like my car and bike, and securing a healthy loan all contributed. After an extensive search I found the ideal aircraft, a Maule 6-235, in Virginia, USA. The Maule was dismantled and

shipped to South Africa, where it is scheduled to arrive at the end of April. We are planning to be there when it arrives, to assist with the reassembly, and then fly it to Namibia.

The Maule will be committed to the PCT research and conservation projects. Details of this arrangement were developed by the Namibian Board of Trustees. In short, it was agreed that PCT will rent the aircraft on an hourly basis, at a rate that will cover basic running costs and maintenance. The maintenance of the aircraft, insurance, and any additional or unforeseen costs will be my responsibility. When not needed for the PCT projects, the aircraft can be rented out for other specialised services, like aerial surveys.

Flip Stander



PCT IN THE UK FUNDS RADIO COLLAR PURCHASE FOR THE BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT IN NAMIBIA



The Brown Hyena Research project is based in Luderitz - a port in the South West of Namibia. The project is run by Ingrid Wiesel. The original study sites are located in the area between Luderitz and Elizabeth Bay, but more recently study sites have been added to the North of Luderitz at Saddle Hill, Sylvia Hill, and Meob bay, and at Van Reenan Bay and Bakers Bay to the south of Luderitz.

The project is concerned with long term monitoring of the Brown Hyena population and studying their feeding ecology, and to this end work closely with the Seal section of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in Luderitz as Brown Hyenas regularly prey on Cape Fur Seals. The work at the study site at

Van Reenan Bay focuses on monitoring the hunting behaviour of the Brown Hyena, allowing the feeding ecology data obtained from the original study sites to be combined with behavioural information. Having a number of study sites means that Brown Hyena densities and behaviour can be monitored in a number of different environments. Inland sites are likely to differ as there are no seals for the brown hyena to prey upon. Similarly the seals are not as abundant in the area north of Luderitz, and this combined with the fact that the environment is less suitable for Brown Hyenas could result in lower population densities.

Monitoring movement of Brown Hyenas to identify home ranges is done by fitting a number of individuals with radio collars, then tracking the signal to locate the animal. Initially the tracking was done from vehicles, but the extremely limited road network combined with a ban on off-road driving in the area means that it is difficult to get accurate locations unless the animal is close to a road. To improve on the situation a number of aerial monitoring flights have been carried out as this allows the Brown Hyena to be located even when they are nowhere near areas that are vehicle accessible. Aerial tracking flights now take place approximately every three weeks. A number of Brown Hyena have been fitted with GPS collars in collaboration with Duke University. These have a shorter battery life, but offer a significant advantage over tracking via traditional radio collars as they record the GPS location of the hyena at set intervals, which means they will allow the movements of the Hyenas at night to be recorded. After approximately six months, the GPS collars will be recovered to allow the data to be retrieved and analysed.



Four Brown Hyena clans are monitored by the

Brown Hyena Research project. These are...

The Agate beach/Anigab clan: This clan resides in an area that stretches from the port of Luderitz up to the north of the Anigab Pan. No mainland seal colonies occur in this area but dead seals washed up on the shore are available as a food source. One male and one female in this clan are fitted with collars.

Peninsula clan: The area occupied by this clan comprises the Luderitz town lands and the Luderitz peninsula. No mainland seal colonies exist in the area but there are a good number of herbivores, washed up dead seals, carrion and refuse from the towns rubbish dump are available food sources. Two females in the clan are fitted with collars

Wolf Bay clan: The area stretches from Grosse Bucht Bay just south of Luderitz to just north of Elizabeth Bay. There are two mainland seal colonies in the area. One female and two males in the clan are fitted with collars.



Elizabeth Bay clan: The area occupied by this clan stretches from Atlas Bay to south of Elizabeth Bay, and it is believed the area may overlap with the Wolf Bay clan territory. One mainland seal colony exists in this area. One female Brown Hyena in the clan is fitted with a collar, and a second hyena is planned to be fitted with a collar in 2004

In early 2004 Predator Conservation Trust in the UK agreed to fund the purchase of three radio collars to replace two life expired collars, and to allow an additional Brown Hyena to be collared.

PCT IN THE UK FINANCIAL UPDATE

With the financial year having just ended in the UK, details of accounts for PCT in the UK are now available.

PCT did not start operations till three months into the financial year, so the figures below are for the 9 months that PCT was in existence.

Donations: £4997.00
Gift Aid: £1068.69
Sponsorship of costs: £1389.67

Giving a **total income of £7455.36**

Total Grants Approved: £5578.15
Costs: £1389.67

Total outgoings: £6967.82

Bank balance at end of financial year: £487.54.

The breakdown of the £5578.15 in grants awarded is as follows:

Radio collars, anaesthetic and darts for the Kunene lion project: **£2182**

Grant to Lise Hanssen: **£2700**

Radio Collars for the Brown Hyena Project: **£696.15**

The grant to Lise Hanssen resulted from a donation which was made on condition that the funds were to be used to provide a salary to Lise Hanssen.

All costs incurred by PCT in the UK (website, printing, and postage) were covered by sponsors who kindly agreed to meet these costs. The figures shown above include the costs and the matching sponsorships. By having all our costs sponsored in this way, it means that all the money from donations we receive goes towards work in the field.

The benefit of obtaining our charitable status is already clear - as a direct result of obtaining charitable status at a very early stage, PCT in the UK have already managed to reclaim over £1000 from the Inland Revenue under the Gift Aid scheme.

RESEARCH PERMIT

Organisations in Namibia carrying out research require a permit from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. PCT received its permit on 1st March, and the permit is valid for 12 months before it requires renewal.

PCT INFORMATION BOARD

Chester Zoo have kindly provided a PCT information board located near the children's area of the zoo.

The board gives visitors information about PCT and its work.

PCT would like to thank the Zoo and the education department in particular for their support

KUNENE LIONS UPDATE

In February we received word that one of the male lions in our Kunene Project had been trophy hunted. Xpl-8 was part of a group of three lions that spent most of their time in the south of the Palmwag concession and intermittently ventured into the Torra Conservancy where many communal farmers are dependant on livestock farming. Losses of livestock over a period of months resulted in the community applying for a permit to trophy hunt one lion.

The Professional hunter was extremely helpful in supplying us with information like skull and body measurements as well as activities that had taken place leading up to the hunt. The radio collar was returned to us, but was unfortunately damaged. All information that we had about Xpl-8 was compiled and sent to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the professional hunter and the conservancy.

The Torra Conservancy will receive trophy hunting fees from the professional hunter which will compensate for livestock losses suffered by the community and promote increased tolerance of the lions living in and around the conservancy.

While gathering information on this trophy hunt, it came to our attention that another lion had been shot in the region. After many phone calls we heard that a lion had been shot in October 2003 and the radio collar had been handed in at Outjo MET office. The collar frequency was given to us on the phone and our records indicated that the lion was Xpl-21, a female that we had been searching for for many months. She had been shot as a problem animal by a community close to Sesfontein. We will be investigating this incident further.

Lise Hanssen