



CCF is an international non-profit incorporated association dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems.

RESEARCH

CONSERVATION

EDUCATION



Welcome to the
cheetah Conservation Fund
Research and Education Centre



Dr. Laurie Marker, the Founder and Executive Director of the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), is a distinguished conservation biologist and research scientist renowned for her expertise in cheetahs. She has trailblazed research, conservation models, and cooperative partnerships, notably stabilizing Namibia's largest wild cheetah population. Since 1990, her leadership has elevated CCF into a premier institution for research, education, and conservation, nestled on a 140,000-acre (56,000ha) reserve and Model Farm near Otjiwarongo, Namibia.

Since 2018, Dr. Marker has directed efforts in Somaliland to combat the Illegal Wildlife Pet Trade (IWT) and inaugurated CCF's Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Center (CRCC) spanning 1400 acres (800 ha) in Geed-Deeble. This facility shelters cheetahs seized from the illicit trade. Furthermore, Dr. Marker and CCF played a pivotal role in reintroducing eight cheetahs to India in 2022, imparting training to the Indian Project Cheetah team and facilitating the transfer of cheetahs gifted by Namibia.

Dr. Laurie Marker

Dr. Marker grew up with animals. She rode horses from four years of age, was a veterinary technician, had her own dairy goat herd and was a goat judge. Her first University studies were in agriculture, entomology and viticulture at Napa College and University of California at Davis, and she pioneered the Oregon Wine Industry. In 1974, Dr. Marker began working with cheetahs at Oregon's Wildlife Safari (1974-1988). While there, she developed one of the most successful captive cheetah breeding programs in the world and initiated a groundbreaking research project that brought her to Namibia for the first time in 1977. She hypothesized that a captive-born cheetah could be taught to hunt, and tested this theory with Khayam, a cheetah she hand raised from a small cub. Dr. Marker successfully taught Khayam to hunt, but during her time in Namibia, she learned that livestock farmers were killing thousands of cheetahs each year as a perceived threat to their livestock and livelihoods. She returned to the USA and developed the International Cheetah Studbook, a registry of all cheetahs in captivity, to assist with captive management of the species and collaborated in groundbreaking research revealing that cheetahs greatly lacked genetic diversity.

Already a species in peril due to habitat loss and lack of genetic diversity, the actions of Namibia's livestock farmers were driving the cheetah even closer toward extinction at an accelerated pace. Dr. Marker moved to Washington, DC as the Executive Director of the New Opportunities in Animal Health Sciences (NOAHS) Center at the Smithsonian's National Zoo (1988-1991), and searched for an organization to champion the cheetah. Between 1977 and 1990, she traveled back and forth to Namibia and other cheetah range countries, gathering data and networking with conservation biologists and researchers studying cheetahs and other predators.

In 1990, after an exhaustive but fruitless search for someone to take the lead on saving the species, Dr. Marker set up the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), sold her worldly belongings, and moved to Namibia in order to dedicate her life to supporting the long-term survival of the cheetah in the wild.

Her in-situ research in Namibia was the first of its kind into cheetah ecology, biology, demographics, and genetics. Her work was the first predator research done outside of protected areas, specifically with the livestock farmers who were living with and killing cheetahs. Using the findings of her research, she began developing conservation and educational strategies to mitigate the conflict.

Living in a borrowed farmhouse outside of Otjiwarongo, for the first couple of years Dr. Marker drove door-to-door in an old Land Rover and surveyed rural

farmers about cheetahs and their impact on the livestock farming industry. These early interactions inspired Dr. Marker to develop the highly effective, non-lethal predator control methods that CCF employs today on CCF's Model Farm. Her innovative strategies that balance the needs of people and wildlife sharing land have not only stabilized the cheetah population in Namibia, but have also helped mitigate human-wildlife conflict with large carnivore species in many regions around the world.

In 1994, she introduced Livestock Guarding Dogs to Namibia. The LGD program is one of the most successful programs, with Kangal and Anatolian Shepherd Dogs being bred and placed with rural farmer's livestock. The use of the LGD has shown an 80-100% decrease in livestock loss and the reduced need for farmers to kill cheetahs and other predators.

Dr. Marker's rigorous scientific research and holistic conservation programs, that consider all stakeholders, have gained her the respect of an entire nation. The vital and ground breaking information she has assembled on cheetah health, reproduction, ecology, and genetics has proven invaluable in the management of both wild and captive cheetah populations around the world.

In 1994, Dr. Marker moved to and built CCF's Field Research and Education Centre, a working livestock farm which today is over 140,000 acres (56,000ha), a private game reserve and model farm, within the Waterberg Conservancy and the Greater Waterberg Landscape. Dr. Marker has worked through the cheetah's range and helped develop programs in many countries and has trained several hundred conservation scientists from most cheetah range countries.

Currently, Dr. Marker is working actively in Somaliland to stop the Illegal Wildlife Pet Trade in live cheetah cubs from the Horn of Africa to the Middle East. She has created CCF's Cheetah Rescue and Conservation Center (CRCC) in Geed-Deeble for animals confiscated by the government of Somaliland and is developing strategies in Somaliland and Ethiopia to address the root causes of threats to cheetahs in the Horn of Africa region.



In 2022, she facilitated the introduction of eight cheetahs gifted from Namibia to India as part of Project Cheetah to reintroduce the species to India after being extinct for over 75 years.

Dr. Marker earned her DPhil in Zoology from the University of Oxford, WildCRU in the United Kingdom. In 2013, she was named an A.D. White Professor-at-Large at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. She has published more than 150 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals, several book chapters and four books, including being the lead editor of *Cheetahs: Biology and Conservation*, a comprehensive textbook on cheetahs.

Dr. Marker is the Chair of the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia (LCMAN), a core member of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group, and resides on the Scientific Committee of both Panthera and the Mountain Lion Foundation.

Dr. Marker has been the recipient of many awards including:

- 2020 Explorer's Club President's Award for Conservation
- 2015 Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation
- 2015 E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Technology Pioneer Award
- 2015 Eleanor Roosevelt Val-Kill Medal Award
- 2010 The Explorers Club Lowell Thomas Award
- 2010 Tyler Prize for the Environmental Achievement Laureate
- 2008 Tech Museum Intel Environmental Award
- 2008 San Diego Zoo Lifetime Achievement Conservation Award

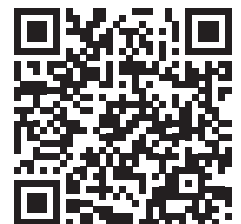
Dr. Marker was featured by TIME Magazine as a Hero for the Planet. She was also featured publications including: Smithsonian Magazine, National Geographic Magazine, Discover Magazine and The New York Times. She appeared on numerous television shows, including The Tonight Show, Good Morning America, The Charlie Rose Show and the Today Show.

In 2021, Dr. Marker became a founding Trustee of the Arabian Leopard Fund, an organization working to return wild leopard and cheetah populations to Saudi Arabia.

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