Highlights of 2012

The OKORUSU – AFRICAT Communal Carnivore Conservation Unit (CCCP) collars 3 lions on farmland and relocates them to Etosha

The ever-present Human-Wildlife Conflict along the borders of the Etosha National Park (ENP) annually results in the destruction of large numbers of livestock as well as lions.

The AfriCat-Okorusu Communal Carnivore Conservation Programme (CCCP) has established a unit able to react to calls from farmers, especially those communal and free-hold farms adjacent to Etosha, to help develop and implement workable livestock protection methods.

AfriCat-Etosha’s collaborative Trans-boundary lion research project, run by the same team, gained momentum with the immobilisation and relocation of three young adult, male lions on Independence Day, 21 March 2012.

Lazy and unperturbed by the farmer’s presence, three full-bellied, sub-adult males were seen basking in the sun on the dam wall of a cattle and game farm bordering the Etosha NP. As our base is on the neighbouring farm, the CCCP Team found the cow carcass by midday; after adding more meat and entrails to attract these lions, AfriCat North’s Project Co-ordinator Sydney Dirisuwe, and MET Etosha Vet, Dr. Ortwin Aschenborn were prepared for a long, uncomfortable night.

By 21h13, the first dart hit home and by 10h00 all three males were immobilised.

For the next 3 hours, the CCCP unit comprising Tammy Hoth (Director AfriCat Foundation) & Sydney Dirisuwe, accompanied by the Etosha Vet and Wardens, Titus and Immanuel, proceeded to examine, draw blood samples, collect hair and whiskers as well as fit the VHF Collars onto each of the lions.

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At approx. midnight, we off-loaded the still immobilised lions at ‘Duineveld’, one of the waterholes in western Etosha furthest from the farm along the southern boundary.

Vital signs were checked, the reversal administered and by 01h00 the three lions, having regrouped and bonded once again, walked unsteadily off into the darkness. The lions are regularly monitored using VHF Transmitters and telemetry, either from a vehicle or from a light aircraft.

The Etosha Trans-boundary Lion Project aims at monitoring lion movement along its borders especially the frequency of crossings onto farmland, whether or not these lions establish viable populations outside of the Park as well as identify specific weak points in the said fence.

“SPRING CLEANING” - Why Spring Cleaning? Because it is something instinctive in all of us, as it is in nature, each year there are new leaves, new feathers and fur, new life, clean cupboards, new ideas, fresh concepts, changing attitudes and any spring cleaning starts at home!!

Consequently, this year our Adult Education programme has focussed on some of our adults here at home on Okonjima!

We started with refresher courses for our Guides, filling in any gaps and training the new members of our Guides Team. This will be an ongoing exercise to ensure that the Okonjima Guides are the best in the industry! These guides also spent a brief but inspiring few days at AfriCat North, where valuable insights were gained as to the challenges of community support and the ever-present Human-Wildlife Conflict issues and mitigation options.

The first African Lion Working Group (ALWG) Conference to be held in Namibia

The African Lion Working Group Conference (Feb 2012): a gathering of conservationists and researchers establish the true status of the African Lion, discuss present projects and the way forward – action plans to ensure the survival of the species Panthera leo.

The first ALWG Conference to be held on Namibian soil took place over two days at Okaukuejo in the Etosha National Park.

As member, the AfriCat Foundation was tasked to organise this Conference and we could not have given the Namibian Lion such representation without the most generous support received from Namibia Wildlife Resorts (NWR), Total, Waltons, River Crossing, Okonjima & Kativa Lion Lodges, Cymot/Campmor Outdoor and Wildphoto Shop, with special thanks to our cousin Roy!
Chris Packham recently spent 10 days in the 200 km² private, Okonjima Nature Reserve – documenting the work we do, our mission to try and change the way Namibians understand Human-Wildlife Conflict and that the survival of carnivores’ depends on a more tolerant land-owner. Making ‘Conservation Through Education’, a priority, hope to get our message across with the help from someone who understands the concept ‘sustainable, long-term conservation’.

Please view this interesting clip: Chris Packham:

Abbey, Tintin, Mulder and Scully

This sibling group came to the Africat Foundation in 2004, as 8-month old orphans having lost their mother who was shot by a farmer for killing livestock.

25th October 2010, saw their release into the 16 000 ha (now 20 000 ha) Okonjima Nature Reserve, where it took them about ten days to make their first kill; a month later, Mulder was badly injured by an eland and Scully attacked by a warthog. Mulder recovered but sadly, Scully died due to kidney failure.

Even though Abbey and Tintin had lost 2 members of their coalition within a week, it did not seem to affect their hunting skills as they still managed to make regular kills. However, when Mulder was reunited with his siblings, they seemed to recognise him but soon moved off without him; on his own, Mulder’s irregular kills were insufficient to sustain him.

In February 2011 (mid-rain season), the three cats were struggling to hunt in the high grass and were returned to their smaller, soft-release camp – we had hoped that this reunion would bond the group once again and that Mulder would regain his ability to hunt. This programme succeeded and the 3-some were once again released into the Park early May.

Their behaviour had changed somewhat but they were able to sustain themselves until the fateful day when they reached the Park boundary fence... it was as if they had decided to stop hunting! After numerous attempts to encourage this group to resume their ‘instinctive’ hunting behaviour, they were fast losing condition and it was decided to return them to captivity and to give another group of cheetah the chance to once again be wild.

The fact that they had spent 7 years in captivity, may have contributed to their inability to effectively adapt.

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How hot is a hunting cheetah?

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Introduction

Cheetah are the fastest terrestrial mammals. During a hunt, cheetah metabolism and heat production increases by more than fifty-fold. Treadmill studies (Taylor and Rowntree 1973) conclude that neither evaporative nor non-evaporative heat loss decrease during a run, so all metabolic heat is stored. If cheetah indeed do use this heat-storage strategy, the duration of a sprint (and hence hunting success) would be determined by the amount of heat the cheetah can store without thermal compromise. We measured body temperature and activity every 5 min, using biologging, in six free-living cheetah in Namibia. We test whether free-living cheetah employed heat storage during hunts, and whether hunts were thermally limited.  

Methods

We used biologging technology to measure body temperature and activity every 5 min in six free-living male cheetah. The cheetah were equipped with a data-logger, mounted on a harness, with a sensor embedded in the abdomen and under one of the rear thigh muscles (see figure). The cheetah lay panting in the shade (93 ± 20 breaths.min⁻¹) for 2h following the hunt. The lower body temperature was evident in cheetah not directly involved in the hunt (lower right panel), yet his rate of body activity levels, body temperature averaged less than 39°C, much less than the 40.5°C thermal limit to exercise reported for captive cheetah (Taylor and Rowntree 1973) and within the daily variation of body temperature of free-living cheetah. One of our male cheetah came close to maximum hunt distance (500m) and speed (100km.h⁻¹) yet his rate of body temperature increase (0.02°C.min⁻¹) was a fraction of the estimated 1.6°C.min⁻¹ required to store the heat produced by cheetah running at 110km.h⁻¹. Based on 15 hunts per cheetah, we conclude that the increase in body temperature following successful hunts was twice that of unsuccessful hunts, despite no difference in activity levels. Therefore physical exertion of the hunt contributed little to the increase in body temperature. It may be that the energy required to subdue prey further increases the heat production or that the act of suffocating the prey may prevent the panting required to dissipate the heat produced. However, because the increase in body temperature was evident in cheetah not directly involved in the hunt (lower right panel), we propose that the increase in body temperature following a hunt may reflect stresses or excitement, and is elevated following hunting success.

Results

We found no evidence that hunts of free-living cheetah were thermally limited. At maximal activity levels, body temperature averaged less than 39°C, much less than the 40.5°C thermal limit to exercise reported for captive cheetah (Taylor and Rowntree 1973) and within the daily variation of body temperature of free-living cheetah. One of our male cheetah came close to maximum hunt distance (500m) and speed (100km.h⁻¹) yet his rate of body temperature increase (0.02°C.min⁻¹) was a fraction of the estimated 1.6°C.min⁻¹ required to store the heat produced by cheetah running at 110km.h⁻¹. Based on 15 hunts per cheetah, we conclude that the increase in body temperature following successful hunts was twice that of unsuccessful hunts, despite no difference in activity levels. Therefore physical exertion of the hunt contributed little to the increase in body temperature. It may be that the energy required to subdue prey further increases the heat production or that the act of suffocating the prey may prevent the panting required to dissipate the heat produced. However, because the increase in body temperature was evident in cheetah not directly involved in the hunt (lower right panel), we propose that the increase in body temperature following a hunt may reflect stresses or excitement, and is elevated following hunting success.

Conclusions

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References


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Africat North (then Afri-Leo), set out in 1997 to find practical solutions to this so-called farmer-lion conflict; no easy task when the fence separating farmland from Etosha is porous, allowing for easy movement of predators onto the adjacent farms.

Vermin or so-called ‘problem animals’ are regularly trapped by communal and free-hold (commercial) farmers throughout Namibia. Small-stock farmers (sheep & goats) trap large numbers of Jackal & Caracal annually and in an attempt to protect their larger livestock from Leopard, Lion, Cheetah & Hyaena, farmers will set gin-traps at carcasses or in well-used pathways.

In some cases, rural community members trap or snare animals for food. The use of hunting rifles to shoot antelope for food is only permitted on private land, where certain animals such as kudu & oryx, may be shot without a Permit (other species require special permits). Hunting for food on communal farmland may only take place once the Conservancy Management Plan has been approved and then only undertaken by Conservancy-registered hunters, allowing for certain species to be shot and in clearly designated areas.

In many cases, when livestock is caught by a predator, the ‘culprit’ has eaten its fill and does not return to the carcass – it’s the other harmless animals attracted to the carcass by the scent or to scavenge, that are caught (warthog, vultures, honey badgers, etc). Thus, the success-rate of catching the culprit using gin-traps is debatable, but often the only means to eradicate the predator, albeit short-term. Snares are easily constructed using steel wire and have a similar effect.

Various livestock protection methods have been tried and tested by Africat and the Communal Carnivore Conservation project (CCCP) is now in place with expertise and support, offering improved protection from predators, especially lion: Solar-powered electric fencing (right): This is the most effective yet most expensive method, keeping warthog from digging holes under fences thereby reducing the chances of lions from entering farms. Despite its efficacy, even electric fences must be patrolled and maintained.

At times, lions kill livestock on farmland adjacent to Etosha and then the farmers set gin-traps or shoot at these predators, in the hope of driving them off their property. Once predator movement is noted, cattle should be kept in the kraals at night (right). Through donor support, Africat assists communal farmers with the upgrading and erection of strong kraals (below).

When Africat is called to assist with this HWC, the original carcass has often been removed completely or stripped of meat by the farmers, thus reducing our chances of attracting the lions back to this carcass for immobilisation to remove and / or to collar the individuals. Our only option is, with assistance from the Etosha Wardens, to drag the carcass remains from the kill-site back into the Park, in the hope that the lions will follow this scent and return to where they came from. Africat has initiated the Etosha Trans-boundary Lion Project (right) whereby certain individuals found on adjacent farmland will be fitted with GPS Collars, enabling us to monitor their movement and in so doing, identifying weak sections of the Etosha boundary fence as well as to assist farmers improve on their livestock protection methods.

The first African Lion Working Group (ALWG) Conference to be held in Namibia (cont from page 1)

The 2 days of Conference brought to our attention the precarious situation in those African countries where lions still occur, bearing in mind that lion numbers have dropped from approx. 200 000 in the 70’s to below 50 000 to date: lion populations in some countries have dropped so low with little hope of recovery UNLESS the respective governments put into place renewed policy & regulation and take the conservation of their lion populations seriously; in others, populations seem stable but increasing threats such as illegal hunting practices, over-utilisation of trophy-size animals, lack of capacity to control and regulate quotas and most frightening of all, the increase in the Lion Bone Trade, Canned Lion Hunting and uncontrolled Captive Breeding.

On a positive note, a number of conservationists reported the increasing success rate of Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation programmes as well as a clear indication by communities of their commitment to conserving their lion populations as well as ideal habitat – often linked to the positive effect of tourism.

Namibia was hailed as one of the ‘success stories’ on the African Continent, with the ever-developing Communal Conservancies and their contribution to conservation of wildlife, an example worth emulating.

The Farmer-Lion Conflict, however, needs serious attention and NGOs such as Africat were commended for their work; HOWEVER, the urgency of increased support for such conservation initiatives is apparent.

Sincere thanks as well to Namibia’s Ministry of Environment and Tourism for their encouraging messages of support and long-term commitment to lion conservation.
Economic Downturn Affects AfriCat

The John Wolfe Legacy

A legacy left to the AfriCat Foundation by Mr John Wolfe has enabled the Organisation to make a significant contribution to the cost of developing a 55000-acre private nature reserve - a joint venture with Okonjima and private donors. This donation has expanded and accelerated AfriCat’s Rehabilitation Programme, enabling more cheetah, leopard, wild dog, spotted & brown hyaena to live and hunt in a vast natural wilderness area. In many cases, these animals return to their natural habitat where they can once again contribute to the growth of the wild populations and the long-term survival of some of these endangered species.

During his lifetime, Mr Wolfe visited many wildlife sanctuaries throughout the world and travelled to Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa on safari. Sadly, he never got to visit the AfriCat Foundation, although he had been planning a trip to Namibia. His legacy expressed his great empathy with cats and AfriCat will ensure that this passion is reflected in what it is able to achieve with his generous bequest.

How YOU can help AfriCat

The major bequest to AfriCat Foundation is from Mr John Wolfe, a South African who passed away in September 2009. Although he had been planning a trip to Namibia, he never got to visit the AfriCat Foundation, where his passion for wildlife conservation is reflected in what it is able to achieve with his generous bequest. The bequest is a major contribution to the cost of developing a 55000-acre private nature reserve - a joint venture with Okonjima and private donors. This donation has expanded and accelerated AfriCat’s Rehabilitation Programme, enabling more cheetah, leopard, wild dog, spotted & brown hyaena to live and hunt in a vast natural wilderness area. In many cases, these animals return to their natural habitat where they can once again contribute to the growth of the wild populations and the long-term survival of some of these endangered species.

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GIVING STATISTICS by Pete Hanssen, AfriCat America

A widely-held perception is that corporations and foundations are the biggest sources to tap for grants and donations. The reality is that four out of five or 80 percent of philanthropic dollars are contributed by individuals and bequests. That rises to 88 percent if you include family foundation giving. Corporations and foundations are easier to target. Their contribution of 5 percent and 14 percent respectively was 19 percent of the total philanthropic dollars in 2011. Individuals are more of a challenge to reach and solicit, but are by far the largest philanthropic resource. Fundraising strategies for parks need to consider all sources and how best to connect park needs with all potential donor sources and their motivations for giving.

According to Giving USA, a report compiled annually by the American Association of Fundraising Counsel, figures on American philanthropy in 2011 showed that:

- Americans gave more than $298.42 billion in 2011 to their favorite causes despite the economic conditions. Total giving was up 4 percent from $286.91 billion in 2010. This slight increase is reflective of recovering economic confidence.

- The greatest portion of charitable giving, $217.79 billion, was given by individuals or household donors. Gifts from individuals represented 73 percent of all contributed dollars, similar to figures for 2010.

- Charitable bequests, which are made by individuals, totaled $24.41 billion or 8 percent of total giving. Charitable bequests rose an estimated 12.2 percent. The sum of gifts by individuals and charitable bequests is $242.2 billion or 81 percent of total giving.

- Foundations gave $41.67 billion, accounting for 14 percent of all philanthropy in the USA. Individual, bequest and estimated family foundation giving combined were approximately $262.61 billion or 88 percent of total giving.

- Corporate giving, which is tied to corporate profits, held steady in 2011 compared with 2010, totaling $14.55 billion (a 0.1 percent decline in current dollars). Corporate giving accounted for 5 percent of all charitable giving. (Corporations do invest additional advertising dollars in cause-related marketing as a business expense.)

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- Giving by foundations increased 1.8 percent to an estimated $41.67 billion in 2011. However, adjusted for inflation, giving by foundations declined 1.3 percent in 2011.

FUND-RAISING PROJECTS 2012-2013

Tractor: for transporting materials, maintaining roads, creating firebreaks; approx. N$ 260 000.00 (US$ 30 000.00)

Brush Cutter: for large-scale grass cutting and clearing of smaller bush; this would open up more area within the enclosures. Amount needed for both: approx. N$ 43 000.00 (US$ 5 000.00)

Camping Equipment for the Environmental Education Programme: Tents, Mattresses, Sleeping bags, Educational Materials, etc. approx. N$ 50 000.00 (US$ 6 000.00)

Livestock Protection Kraals (pens): one kraal to hold approx. 300 cattle N$ 40 000.00 (US$ 4 650.00)

Lion GPS Satellite Collar: each N$ 25 000.00 (US$ 3 000.00)
Environmental Education is the key

Adult Education (continued from ‘Highlights of 2012,’ page 1…)

Further, we have started making weekly, evening Adult Education classes available for all staff. We are currently teaching English, Basic Mathematics and Computer Literacy. We felt that these three subjects are the most useful life-skills for our valuable colleagues and their families. We also hope that by attending these classes, parents set a good example for their children, enabling them to assist with homework. We have also expanded education topics to one-off lessons and presentations on topical issues such as global overpopulation, conservation challenges and astronomy.

At the same time, we constantly reassess our approach and lesson topics so as to offer the MOST EFFECTIVE and FAR-REACHING courses, which would contribute most significantly to our ultimate aim, SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION!

As such, we are pursuing implementing three possible, bold initiatives:

a) Establishing a curriculum and Ministry of Education accreditation for a Namibian Guide’s Diploma;

b) An Environmental Education practical module for Namibia’s trainee teachers, and

c) A ‘Gap Year’ programme for Namibian students and trainee farmers, from all walks of life, who are on the brink of commencing their careers, so that we can hopefully guide them towards a practical, hands-on and balanced environmental and conservation-minded approach.

The Communal Carnivore Conservation Programme (CCCP)

The ‘Lion Guardians’ of the Ehirovipuka Conservancy (in the Otjiherero language, ‘Ehirovipuka’ means wildlife)

“The thank you for coming to help us save our lions”…..with these words as greeting, I first met German Muzuma and Titus Turitjo (left), the AfriCat-Okorusu CCCP “Lion Guardians’ of Ehirovipuka, a 1 975 km2 communal conservancy bordering western Etosha.

Upon introducing the Human-Wildlife Conflict Programme to the traditional leaders and conservancy members of this far-reaching farming community, I was intrigued by their vision and concern for the conservation of their wildlife, especially that of the lion. It occurred to me that, despite their age-old, cattle-farming culture, these Herero farmers – cum – conservationists were genuinely seeking solutions to the conflict between humans and predators.

From the off-set, German & Titus were my designated ‘guardians’, soon to become the first-ever AfriCat ‘Lion Guardians’, a simple yet effective way of convincing the communal farmers of the outback that, in order to reduce their livestock losses, they should take up the traditions of old … to once again herd their cattle & sheep, bringing them home to a strong ‘kraal’ (pen) at night.

Since March 2012, German & Titus have taught me how best to convince the elders as well as the youth that by working together, much can be achieved and solutions to seemingly hopeless situations can be found. The AfriCat ‘Lion Guardian’ Programme is in its initial stages but the positive impact on a number of farming communities is tangible: in order to identify immediate needs, meetings are arranged with villagers experiencing conflict with lions, herdsmen are encouraged to move their livestock away from conflict areas, priority communities have been earmarked for new ‘kraals’ and the urgency is apparent for research & monitoring of carnivore populations, especially the lion.

Wanda and I have watched AfriCat start and grow from the USA, and have always desired to be part of the movement. As family, we are honoured to be able to be agents in the USA, with our intimate knowledge of the problems of a current generation trying to think for future generations. Peter & Wanda Hanssen (AfriCat America)
One signal found one week after rescue… just days after the lions’ release, Sydney & Tammy, joined by Etosha Wardens Emanuel & Herman, set out along the Park boundary and were surprised to pick up a signal from one of the VHF Transmitters, without any positive sightings. They worked day and night to locate and repair his fence breaks. One of the aspects of the AfriCat Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) Mitigation programme is to establish an early-warning system whereby farmers can be alerted to their movement, allowing them sufficient time to effectively protect their livestock from predation.

One month later… the same farmer reported seeing at least 2 lions on his property, one of which proved to be one of the 3 collared lions! By the 3rd week, they & Tammy, once again, returned to the very same waterhole to find a number of fresh lion tracks as well as the rotten cow-carcass close-by, which had been used by the farmer to attract Spotted Hyena. Just before dark, Etosha Wardens Emanuel and a Polytect Student joined us for the long night ahead – our strategy, to lure these lions off the farm, back into Etosha, before sunrise!

The dusk-light was fading fast when the signal was picked up… to find this young male lion climbing up the side of a hill, approximately 60 m away from the AfriCat vehicle. Shots were fired into the air to frighten him off, but he did not seem at all perturbed. Once darkness descended, the putrid carcass was dragged across the flattened Etosha fence (at the original elephant break, the suspected entry hole), and droppings, about 10 minutes later, were dropped about 200 m into the Park. After about 45 minutes, ‘green eyes’ were sighted at the fencing crossing! However, the wind suddenly turned and they moved off, turning back into the farm.

Slightly disillusioned but determined to attract them out through the hole in the Etosha fence, we drove along the road, halting at a local pub with stories of his Namibian cat-adventures!

We were saddened to hear of Jimmy’s passing on 21 March 2012, just short of his 90th birthday. We were surprised to hear that Jimmy had bequeathed his house in Scotland to the AfriCat Foundation, as a legacy in his will. We are eternally grateful for Jimmy’s thoughtfulness and we strive to ensure that his memory is cherished. We still feel his presence – rest in peace Jimmy!}

Throughout the years: at AfriCat North, he sponsored the necessary inventory. He also went out of his way to support the Carnivore Conservation Programme (CCCP) was established and has shown that the OKORUSU – AFRICAT Communal Carnivore Conservation Unit (CCCP) post-rescue Lion monitoring. The rescue of 3 young male lions from a livestock farm adjacent to the Etoha NP on 21 March 2012, took place just eleven months after the AfriCat –OKorusu Carnivore Conservation Programme (CCCP) was established and has shown that co-operation between farmers, AfriCat and Etosha Wardens can result in a mutually beneficial outcome.

The OKORUSU – AFRICAT Carnivore Conservation Unit (CCCP) post-rescue Lion monitoring.

**Jago**

Jim (“Wee Jimmy”) Maltman, was born on 31st March 1922. Jimmy, from Allon, Clackmannanshire, in Scotland, was a long-time, passionate supporter of the AfriCat Foundation. He visited Namibia many times and his stays at Okonjima, Kavita and AfriCat got longer and longer with each visit.

Jimmy loved going along on carnivore rescue missions and he accompanied AfriCat on many whist stays at Okonjima. He was equally happy, even at an advanced age, to fly in AfriCat’s cloth-heated Maule plane, as he was driving 10 hours to collect a single cat from a faraway farm.

Jimmy made generous donations to AfriCat over the years: at AfriCat North, he sponsored a Toyota Hi-lux pick-up and ensured that the Education Centre classroom was fitted with the necessary equipment. He also facilitated the re-skinning of AfriCat’s Maule plane and donated a Toyota Land Cruiser (which now bears his name). It gave Jimmy great pleasure to drive/fly in “his” vehicles whenever he visited and he reaped to Reg in stories of his days in the RAF, but equally absorbed everything he heard about AfriCat’s work – we can only imagine how he entertained everyone he met with stories of his days in the RAF, but equally absorbed everything he heard about AfriCat’s work – we can only imagine how he entertained everyone he met with stories of his days in the RAF, but equally absorbed everything he heard about AfriCat’s work – we can only imagine how he entertained everyone he met with stories of his days in the RAF, but equally absorbed everything he heard about AfriCat’s work – we can only imagine how he entertained everyone he met with stories of his days in the RAF, but equally absorbed everything he heard about AfriCat’s work – we can only imagine how he entertained everyone he met with stories of his days in the RAF, but equally absorbed everything he heard about AfriCat’s work – we can only imagine 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The AfriCat Foundation publishes a quarterly, digital newsletter as well as a printed version such as this one.
As a cost saving measure and in order to reach as wide an audience as possible, we prefer, however, to send out the newsletters electronically.
Should you wish to continue receiving our printed newsletter, and you are a current AfriCat supporter / donor please complete the form below and return it to us or email to africat@mweb.com.na.
To be able to receive the quarterly digital newsletter – you do not have to be a current sponsor or donor.

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