

Cheetah update

June 2013

Dear reader,

Hereby I send you a short update to inform you about the most recent activities of the Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe. As you will read, during the past months, we have predominantly been working on our questionnaire based cheetah survey and have managed to cover quite some ground. It is very encouraging to see that on top of our questionnaires we continue to receive cheetah sightings and pictures. It seems like the cheetahs are back on the Zimbabwe map.

I hope you will enjoy reading about our latest adventures.

Best wishes,

Esther

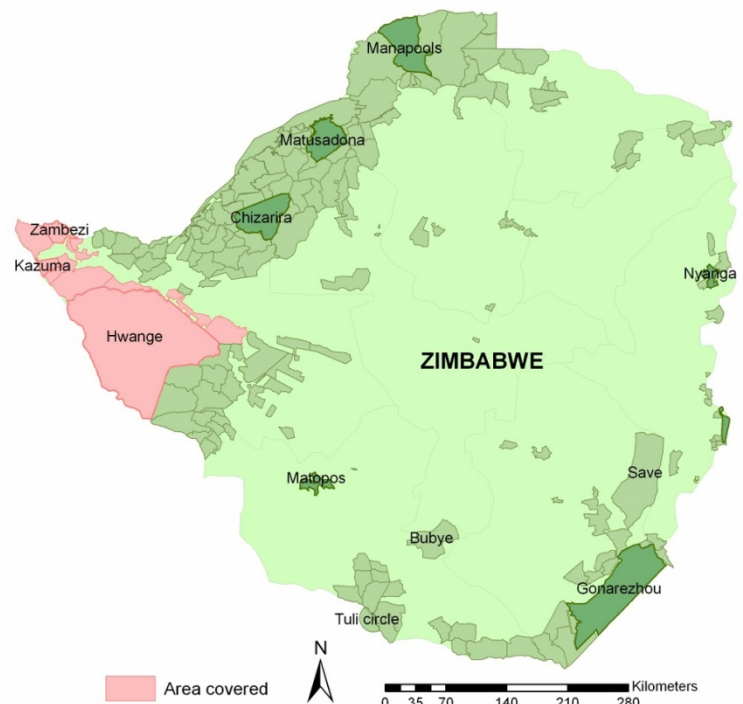
Finding the cheetahs in and around Hwange National Park

Hwange National Park is the largest protected wildlife area in Zimbabwe and therefore one of the main areas of focus for our cheetah population survey. Hwange is surrounded by several safari areas which are designated for photographic and hunting safaris. Over the past weeks we have travelled through these areas (see map) to find out more about cheetahs.

In each area we set up camp and interviewed people who have knowledge about what is happening on the ground, for example national parks rangers, area managers and ecologists, safari guides, hunters, trackers and forestry commission staff. We have driven more than 4300 km's and have interviewed 190 people to find out whether cheetahs occur in the respective areas and what conservation challenges the cheetahs are likely to face. It is exciting to hear that cheetahs were seen in most of the areas we covered, sometimes once a year sometimes every month. In none of the areas human-cheetah conflict seemed to be an issue. With the exception of one case in a village close to Hwange National Park several years ago, there were no reports of cheetahs killing livestock in communal areas. People were generally happy to see a cheetah and more often than not would like to have more cheetahs in their area as they realized this might bring in additional benefits through tourism.



An interview in the communal areas around the Matetsi safari area



Along our way we have collected numerous cheetah sightings and hundreds of photo's that we will add to our sighting and picture ID data base. Although we still need to have a close look, the pictures have so far helped us to identify another four cheetahs in Hwange National Park, bringing the total of identified animals in this areas to an encouraging 22 adult cheetahs. After four weeks of camping we are now back in Victoria Falls to restock before we continue our trip towards Chizarira, Matusadona and Manapools. We are looking forward to continuing our field work!

Sighting highlight



You will have to search for it, but the tiny dot in the picture is definitely a cheetah! Although this might not be the most beautiful cheetah picture ever it was our personal sighting highlight. For the first time after setting up Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe 18 months ago, we have managed to see a cheetah in the wild. I can't even begin to explain how chuffed we, and our excited student, were to see this animal. It happened to be a male which we have known in our data base for more than a year, HNP0018.

Cheetah education

Just before we started our field trip we were asked to tell the children of the conservation club of the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust more about the cheetahs. We gave a short presentation cheetahs and engaged the children in some games in which they had to guess which sound was made by a cheetah, and what the differences are between cheetahs, leopards and servals (the three spotted cats of Zimbabwe).



Cheetah Conservation Project Zimbabwe

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