



## PROJECT CHEETAH

### Mission Fact Sheet

16-17 September 2022

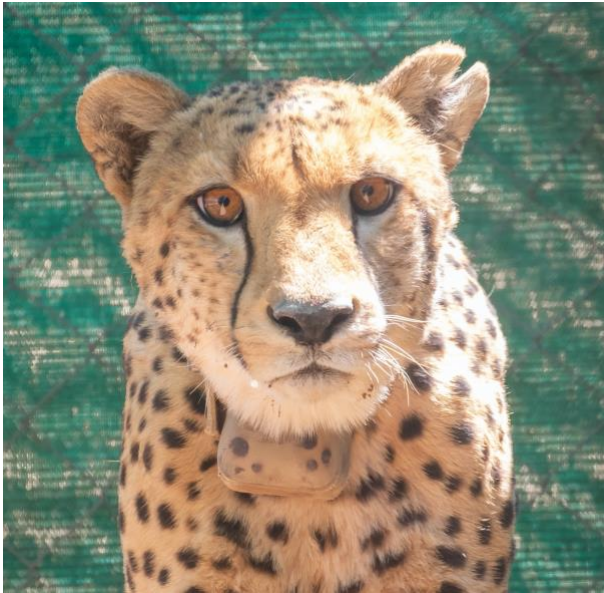
On Friday, 16 September, a modified passenger B747 Jumbo Jet will take off from Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek, Namibia, heading for India. On board, eight Namibian wild cheetahs, five females and three males, the founders of a new population. A country that declared the species extinct in 1952, India has made a commitment to return cheetahs to several locations within the nation, the first being Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. There, facilities for the animals have been developed, staff has been trained, and larger predators have moved away. India is ready for cheetah introduction.

[Project Cheetah](#) was approved by the Supreme Court of India in January of 2020 as a pilot programme to reintroduce the species to India. The concept was first put forth in 2009 by Indian conservationists, with Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) Drs Laurie Marker, Bruce Brewer and Stephen J. O'Brien visiting India for consultative meetings with the government the same year. At the invitation of the Indian government, Dr Marker has returned to India several times over the past 12 years to conduct site assessments and draft plans for the introduction. On 20 July, the [Republic of Namibia and India signed Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) around the conservation of cheetah. The MoU includes Namibia's participation in Project Cheetah, with the government agreeing to donate the first eight individuals to launch the programme.

The aircraft carrying the cheetahs on their historic transcontinental mission is flying overnight so the animals will travel during the coolest hours of the day, arriving in Jaipur, India, on the morning of Saturday, 17 September. From Jaipur, the cheetahs will be transferred by helicopter to Kuno National Park, where they will be welcomed by a delegation led by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to Union Cabinet Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change; and Labour and Employment, [Dr Bhupender Yadav](#), "Project Cheetah will bring in resources to restore neglected habitats that in turn will conserve their biodiversity, harness their ecosystem services and their ability to sequester carbon to their maximum potential. The local communities also stand to gain enormously as ecotourism generated due to the curiosity and concern for the cheetah will give a boost to livelihood options for them and help improve living conditions".

The transcontinental mission marks the first time a wild southern African cheetah will be introduced in India, or in Asia, or on any another continent. The cheetahs on this flight are not just the founders of a new population, but explorers and goodwill ambassadors for an entire species. The mission has been designated as a "Flagged Expedition" by [The Explorers Club](#), an American-based international multidisciplinary professional society with the goal of promoting scientific exploration. CCF Founder and Executive Director, Dr Laurie Marker, and Captain Hamish Harding, Chairman of Action Aviation, which arranged the customised Boeing 747-400 aircraft for the mission, both club members, will be carrying Explorers Club Flag number 118 on the mission. The flag will be archived at club headquarters in New York City along with documentation detailing the scientific expedition.

## THE NAMIBIAN CHEETAHS/Three Males



1. Male/5.5 years-old



2. Male/5.5 years-old

Two males are brothers that have been living wild on CCF's 58,000-ha private reserve near Otjiwarongo, Namibia, since at least July 2021, when CCF staff first noticed their tracks around the Centre. Male cubs from the same litter stay together for life and form coalitions to hunt.



3. Male/4.5 years-old

3. A male born at Erindi Private Game Reserve in March 2018. His mother was also born at Erindi Reserve, and her mother is a cheetah that CCF returned to the wild at Erindi several years before. This cheetah a second-generation, wild-born cub to a rehabilitated female, proof of CCF's reintroduction success in Namibia.

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## THE NAMIBIAN CHEETAHS/Five Females



1. Female/2 years-old



2. Female/3-4 years-old



3. Female/2.5 years-old

1. Female found with her brother at a waterhole near the city of Gobabis in south-eastern Namibia. Both very skinny and malnourished. CCF believes their mother had died in a veld fire a few weeks prior. This cheetah has been living at the CCF Centre since September 2020.

2. Female wild female captured in a trap cage on CCF's neighbouring farm in July 2022, which is owned by a prominent Namibian businessman. She was released on CCF property, but was again caught on the same neighbouring farm two months later.

3. Female born at Erindi Private Game Reserve in April 2020. Her mother was in CCF's cheetah rehabilitation programme and had been successfully returned to the wild a little more than two years ago.



4. Female/5 years-old



5. Female/5 years-old

4. Female cheetah found on a farm near Gobabis, Namibia, in late 2017 by some of the farm workers. She was skinny and malnourished. The workers nursed her back to health. In January 2018, CCF staff learned about the animal and moved her to the CCF Centre.

5. CCF staff picked up this female from a farm located in the north-western part of Namibia close to the village of Kamanjab in February 2019. Since arriving, she has become best friends with female #4, and the two are typically always found together in their enclosure.

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## **MISSION TEAM/India and Namibia**

Eight officials and experts will oversee the Namibian cheetahs during the mission.

### **Government of India**

1. H.E. Mr Prashant Agrawal, High Commissioner of India to Namibia
2. Dr Jhala Yadvendradev, Chief Scientist for Project Cheetah and Deal of Wildlife Institute of India
3. Dr Sanath Krishna Muliya, Veterinarian, Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change Government of India
4. Mr Anish Gupta, OSD, CBIC, Dept of Revenue, Ministry of Finance (Customs Officer)

### **Cheetah Conservation Fund**

1. Dr Laurie Marker, CCF Founder and Executive Director
2. Eli Walker, CCF Conservation Biologist and Cheetah Specialist
3. Barthelemy Batalli, CCF Conservation Release Programme and Data Manager
4. Dr Ana Basto, CCF Veterinarian

## **THE AIRCRAFT**

The Boeing 747 "Jumbo Jet" aircraft that is taking the eight cheetahs to India is a B747-400 passenger jet. The jet cabin has been modified to allow cages to be secured in the main cabin of the aircraft but will still allow vets to have full access to the cats during the flight. The aircraft is an ultra-long range jet capable of flying up to 16 hours and so can fly directly from Namibia to India without a stop to refuel, an important consideration for the well-being of the cheetahs.

The aircraft was sourced by [Action Aviation](#), a large aircraft brokerage company, and the logistics of the flight were personally managed by Captain Hamish Harding, Chairman of Action Aviation, a friend of Dr Laurie Marker and a fellow member of The Explorers Club, an American-based international multidisciplinary professional society with the goal of promoting scientific exploration. The club was founded in New York City in 1904, and serves as a meeting point for explorers and scientists worldwide.

The Explorers Club has designated this important animal conservation mission as a "Flagged Expedition" and Dr Laurie Marker and Hamish Harding will be carrying Explorers Club Flag number 118 on the first flight of cheetahs.

The aircraft is owned by Aquiline International Corp. from the United Arab Emirates, who undertake worldwide charter operations of their aircraft fleet. Quite by chance, the nose section of this Boeing 747 was recently painted with the face of a wild feline.

### **MEDIA NOTES:**

**Interviews, photos and video footage are available upon request**

**Please contact Susan Yannetti @+12027167756 or [susan@cheetah.org](mailto:susan@cheetah.org) for more information**

**Donations to support CCF's cheetah conservation work can be made online at <https://cheetah.org/donate/>**

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