

AFRICAT 2011 & BEYOND –  
OUR NEW AND REVISED STRATEGY

[www.africat.org](http://www.africat.org)



Let's go back to BEFORE the inception of The AfriCat Foundation in 1992...

The Hanssen family (Val and Rose Hanssen were well-known cattle ranchers; 1950 to 1992) had proven that the only way to manage livestock farming in prime carnivore country, was to adopt methods of keeping young calves (first 3 months) out of the wild at night and protecting small stock, such as sheep and goats, with herdsman and guard dogs. BUT, whatever you do, **DO NOT REMOVE THE PREDATORS FROM THEIR TERRITORIES (home-ranges)**, for this upsets the balance and the result - a substantial increase in carnivores in these vacant territories!

AfriCat – '**A FREE CAT**' - was therefore founded to raise funds with which to go out and share our successful farming methods with Namibia's farmers. If successful, 25% of the world's Cheetah population would continue to thrive in Namibia.

**But instead, eighteen years on and AfriCat boasts the largest 'Rescue and Release' programme of its kind.**

- **Have an acceptable percentage of farmers adopted our methods?**
- **Does the average farmer tolerate carnivores on his land?**

**Sadly, even after all these years of hard work we have to say, NO!**

Here are some interesting statistics: There are approximately 2 500 cheetahs and 3 500 leopards in Namibia and we have on average collected 50 cats per year. We have therefore only dealt with 0.8% of the wild population per annum in our rescue and release programme. Remember, this programme was only a by-product of our initial plan to help the farmer deal with carnivore conflict! There are approximately 7 000 commercial farmers in our country and

we've only been able to deal with an average of 18 farmers per year. Therefore, only 0.26% of the farming community have called us for help and all four 'Namibian-based carnivore organisations' have only managed to deal with about 1% of the farming community on an annual basis.

**This is WHY**, if we wish to be part of the long term survival of carnivores on Namibian Farmland, we need to revise our strategy every few years.

**Firstly, despite the proposed changes, we would like to reassure all of AfriCat's supporters, especially those who have sponsored the Welfare side of the project, that all is well.** Over the past 2 decades, the Rescue and Release Programme developed as a result of our relationship with the farming community; the rescue of Cheetahs & Leopards from farmland is also undertaken by the other three large carnivore organisations in Namibia and they have given us their word that they will take over where we have left off. This will allow us to put all our funds, time and efforts into our new way forward.

**The Welfare, in turn, was a by-product of the Rescue and Release Programme.** We currently hold 21 Cheetahs and 6 Leopards in our care that are fit and wild enough to be part of our Rehabilitation Project; there are, however, 48 cheetahs, 4 leopards, 3 caracal and 13 lions (including those welfare lion at AfriCat North) - too old or tame to go back into the wild. These individuals are going to live out their lives under the expert care of the AfriCat team and continue to be "ambassadors" for their wild counter-parts.



## RESCUE & RELEASE:

Our Rescue & Release programme has been *put on hold* and not **simply** 'stopped'.

AfriCat and other registered carnivore organisations have unfortunately become the dumping ground for carnivores accused of killing livestock. We have '*saved*' their lives, but '*removed*' them from their territories, thereby failing in our primary objective, which we had set out to achieve back in 1992....not to remove the predators from their home ranges.

We have rescued and saved the lives of more than a thousand animals from farmland, of which 85% have been released back onto commercial farmland but this time into new territories, belonging to others!

In their new 'territories' they need to either fight for their new home or run the 'gauntlet' of the farmers' traps and guns, back to their former territory.

We are therefore uncertain as to how many of the released carnivores survive this re-location beyond one year!

Once funds are available, carnivores will be released back onto farm-land ONLY when we can link this release to a research project including a group of neighbouring farms, hereby creating a larger 'SAFE' area for the newly released carnivores; a researcher will be based in this area and the released individuals will be collared. This will enable AfriCat to monitor their post-release movements and adaptability.

In this way, AfriCat will be able to establish the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of their Rescue & Release, Rehabilitation and Relocation Programmes.



## EDUCATION IS KEY:

<http://www.okonjima.com/content/Education>

[http://www.okonjima.com/content/The\\_Perivoli\\_-\\_Okonjima\\_Country\\_School](http://www.okonjima.com/content/The_Perivoli_-_Okonjima_Country_School)

[http://www.okonjima.com/content/AfriCat\\_North\\_Environment\\_Educational\\_Centre](http://www.okonjima.com/content/AfriCat_North_Environment_Educational_Centre)

[http://www.okonjima.com/content/The\\_WSPA\\_-\\_AfriCat\\_Environmental\\_Education\\_Centre](http://www.okonjima.com/content/The_WSPA_-_AfriCat_Environmental_Education_Centre)

[http://www.africat.org/programme\\_environmental\\_education.html](http://www.africat.org/programme_environmental_education.html)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION in the broad sense of the word and not species specific - CARNIVORES are only one link in the environmental chain. Only this concept, exposed to THE NEXT GENERATION who hold the future of Namibia's farmland in their hands, can and will make the difference.

So, when you come to Africa again and hear the words "Environmental Education to the next Generation" drifting through the bushveld, it will be the chorus to our new AfriCat theme song...the emphasis on Environmental Education, intertwined in all the other AfriCat projects, will have the greatest impact on the future of wild carnivores in Namibia.

Conservation is complex: when wild animals compete with humans the solutions are not straight forward. As we learn more, we need to evolve. We are confident that the steps we are taking in 2011 move the cause of the conservation of large carnivores and their habitat forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

AfriCat started out with a mission statement to "keep wild cats wild", hence 'A free Cat'. Concentrating on Adult and Youth Education, initiating wild Cheetah Research including the help of farmers and evolving the Rehabilitation Project to such an extent that it becomes a worldwide model for Reintroduction, *are all in keeping with that early statement.*

As the Founder of AfriCat, I need to thank **ALL AFRICAT SUPPORTERS** for helping us to get this far.

**BUT, now we need you more than ever!** Please grab a friend, get them involved and let's hold hands to ensure the success of our new focus on a BETTER future for our favourite family, **THE CARNIVORES!**

**Wayne Hanssen**

