

Black-footed cat Research Project Namibia

miershooptier · klein gekolde kat · Schwarzfusskatze · #Nu#aibeb · !koirus · *Felis nigripes*

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The Black-footed cat Research Project Namibia was initiated in 2012 by Martina Küsters, with the aim to: 1) collect distribution data of black-footed cats (bfc) throughout Namibia, especially on farmland and protected areas; 2) educate & raise awareness for this little known wild cat species; 3) investigate & identify threats and to establish its conservation status; 4) find strongholds for its conservation and finally 5) to study the distribution, biology and ecology of this species in Namibia. I gained extensive experience with bfcs the field technician for the Black-footed Cat Working Group (BFCWG) from 2014-2018 and in 2020, we finally captured and radio-collared the first bfcs in Namibia! This rare species of wild cat should be seen as a flagship species of our unique arid southern Namibia. Large parts of the species' distribution range falls within private farmland, therefore landowner efforts and co-operation are important to conserve the species regionally.

This project is a collaborative effort between the BFCWG, the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the Ministry of Environment, Forestry & Tourism.

The monitoring of the radio-collared bfcs includes finding the signals and physically locating the study animals and manually record its GPS position, as the cats are only fitted with a 42g VHF collar. Ndele Shipala (field technician and prospective Master's student) has monitored the study animals with dedication and determination since February.

Then, at the beginning of April, 'Prima', one of the four female bfcs, went missing and Shipala could not locate the signal from the surrounding mountains. Similarly, 'Kara', another female could not be found in May 2020.

I called on Dr Ortwin Aschenborn, veterinarian and pilot, to please assist us to find the missing female bfcs via aerial telemetry tracking to determine their location and/ or their fate. Without question, Ortwin committed to assist us. After some delays due to lock-down restrictions, we flew south to Grünau, via Keetmanshoop to search for the signals on 28 May 2020. We did successfully find all the study animals, especially to locate and record 'Prima's' new location.

[On behalf of the BFCWG, NUST and the Black-footed Cat Research Project](#)

'We would like to sincerely THANK Paul Maritz and Ortwin for use of their Bushcat V5-UKB to locate our study animals'



The **Bushcat V5-UKB** and the bfc field vehicle on the Gondwana Canyon Lodge landing strip, west of Grünau, southern Namibia, with Ortwin, Martina & Shipala l.t.r.).



Ndele Shipala listening for signals from a mountain in the study area.



The study area on the farmland, south of Grünau. The terrain is relatively flat, except for isolated koppies, making telemetry tracking a challenge over larger areas. The Gamkab River is visible in mid-ground.



A camera trap video of 'Prima', one the female bfcs that went missing beginning of April 2020 (<https://www.facebook.com/berylwa/videos/10221447086749303/>). **We located her with the aid of the dedicated pilot Ortwin and the Bushcat V5-UKB.**



Ortwin & Shipala re-fuelling at Keetmanshoop airport.



View of the study area from inside the aircraft. Aerial tracking was successful in finding the missing study animals.

We really appreciate all the assistance, effort, support and contribution from all our sponsors to black-footed cat research in Namibia !!

Sincerely,

Martina Küsters, Ndele Shipala, Dr Morgan Hauptfleisch, Dr Alex Sliwa and the rest of the BFCWG

