

WARRIOR PROFILE

About Me:

Following short stints in the army and aviation I had a long career in education. I was managing a schoolboy rugby tour to South Africa in 2002 and happened to read a magazine article describing Laurie Marker's work with guard dogs to protect livestock from predators. I had long been interested in cheetahs and determined to visit CCF in Namibia. The next year I did, and I arranged with Laurie to return to CCF in order to train two local education officers. In the few months I spent at CCF my job expanded to include cheetah care and several other responsibilities, including writing reports and articles. Since then I have returned to CCF each year to fill in for staff on leave. I will be back at CCF for my sixth stay in late February. My other job is writing, mostly travel stories but I am also beginning to focus more on wildlife conservation.

Capturing the Experience:

Dusty, Sandy and Blondi were for some years our "demonstration cats". Most mornings they would put on a display for visitors, who never failed to be amazed by the cheetah's amazing acceleration and speed. Even though the enclosure and the track (something like a greyhound track with the cats chasing a piece of cloth being propelled by an electric motor) did not allow the cats to reach their top speed, they still loved to put on bursts of speed - with the certainty of a meaty snack if they caught the lure. The "girls" - two orphaned sisters and Dusty, who grew up with them, are in retirement now, but I still have a soft spot for Dusty. She is a small and very pretty cat, a little aloof, but to watch her run was a real treat. By far the fastest of the trio, she had superb balance and agility. Today she doesn't run very often, but every time I see her I think of the many times she wowed the spectators with the ease and grace of her sprints. I have a lot of affection for many of our cats, especially the ones I have known from their days as cubs, but Dusty remains my favorite: in her skill as a runner she exemplifies what makes the cheetah so special.

Snack time for Dusty!



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