

Update from the field: Black-footed Cat Working Group

South Africa



April 2026, Nanti Strydom, Field Technician

Introducing Nanti Strydom as the new field technician for monitoring black-footed cats on Benfontein Nature Reserve, Kimberley.



I have been privileged to live my dream and work in the field of conservation for over two decades. During this time, I have worn many hats - from field ranger conducting patrols, game capture and anti-poaching operations in iconic landscapes like Mokala and Table Mountain National Parks, to field guide educating visitors about the wonders of the African bush to managing human-wildlife conflict as the Damage Causing Animal Control Specialist at the Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism for nearly a decade. Most recently, I brought my extensive knowledge to the Jane Goodall Institute South Africa, as Primate Care Manager, overseeing animal welfare, enrichment programs and facility operations while championing chimpanzee conservation and public education.

Whether patrolling the veld, consulting with veterinarians on animal care, or engaging communities through environmental education, I embody the spirit of modern conservation - where science, compassion, and advocacy meet to create a lasting impact on the natural world.

It has always been a dream of mine to be part of a research project and make a valuable contribution to conservation and finally it is coming true. It is an honour and a privilege to be part of the team. I believe that we have much more to learn about these feisty, elusive cats and this research would only be possible through your continuous support and believing that everyone can make a difference no matter how small you think it is.



Notes from the field:

These are notes from the field by the Black-footed Cat Working Group (BFCWG) technician at the Benfontein Nature Reserve study site near Kimberley, South Africa. Black-footed Cats *Felis nigripes* (hereafter BFCs) are fitted with radio collars and monitored as part of a long-term study on the ecology of this little felid.

I would like to introduce you to the three collared BFCs that we currently monitor on Benfontein.

Ina is a little female, and she was the first cat to be captured on the 17th of March 2026. She was also the smallest of the three BFCs, weighing only 1.1 kg.

Tutu, a male, was captured second, and he weighed 1.22 kg; therefore, the name Tutu (Two-two) was captured on the 18th of March 2026.

The third BFC we caught is Ryan, a male named after the South African athlete, Ryan Sandes, because he was running like an athlete. He was the biggest of the three BFCs at 1.63kg and was caught on the 28th of March 2026. He is still giving me the run-around by moving across a very large area.



We also managed to collar 2 BFCs at Khoisan Karoo Conservancy that are monitored by PC Ferreira and Ricky Ellis.

Khoi is a female named after the area and weighed 1.21 kg. The next day, we almost stepped on her while tracking her as she was hiding in the shrubs.

Brutus is an adult male weighing in at 2.03kg. The pink colour of the nose and the tattered ears tell us that he has been around the block a few times.



I am in the process of habituating the cats to enable us to collect detailed behavioural observations. Unfortunately, we have had a lot of rainy weather and the field work is impacted, but hopefully I can continue soon.

Hopefully, my next update will be filled with stunning photos of our three BFCs from Benfontein, as well as a progress report featuring some fascinating observations.



Kind regards from the field

Nanti Strydom