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The Cape Leopard Trust Newsletter

April 2007

Hi This is Jaci van Niekerk, the operations manager in training, and Sarah Smith (aka Dassie Girl) taking a load off Quinton's shoulders and filling you in with the latest news from the Cape Leopard Trust. **We have added a trivia question with a prize worth R4600 – test your tracking skills to find it.**

A Spot-acular Event

On the 22nd of March, a very excited, yet nervous Cape Leopard Trust team descended on the wonderful venue, **La Med**, in Clifton to do final preparations for our annual fundraising event. This stunning venue was sponsored by La Med, along with assistance from all their staff and managers. Thanks must go to this great team for their support and brilliant service. **Capestorm** were also on hand with their guys to help during the course of the day, as well as brainstorming prior the event. Every year they are as brilliant as ever. The organizing of the event was done by none other than **Ilana Wetzler** (of Serotonin Productions) – trust me, you will see her name come up often in the future. Her unbelievable talent and unsurpassed energy during 4 months of organizing resulted in a hugely successful event, with beautiful music by the **Like Honey** girls, despite the rainy, cold weather.

The fundraising auction was conducted by **Auction Alliance's Joey Burke** – who can lure the last note out of any man's wallet (especially if his wife/partner is close-by). With the support of a wonderful crowd, Joey managed to raise a whopping R250 000 for the Trust. We are truly indebted to him & Auction Alliance for their never-ending support for our project. Thank You!

To make matters even more amazing: before the auction even kicked off, two incredible announcements were made. Firstly, a massive (literally in size & amount) cheque of R50 000 was presented to the Cape Leopard Trust from **Deutsche Bank**.

Immediately after the handing over of this cheque, one of our main sponsors, **Leopards Leap Wines**, presented the Trust with a donation of R100 000!! Leopards Leap is an amazing supporter of the project, and has been since the Trust's inception. This contribution is a result of a percentage profit from each bottle of Leopards Leap wine sold going towards our work – so if you want to support us, drink lots of their wine, which, by the way, is made “by happy people”.

Thanks must go to all the donors and sponsors on the night. All auction material, prizes and gifts were sponsored – all by amazing people. Thank You!

Media Alert

The SA environmental series, **50/50**, will be doing a follow-up on our project, produced by **Bart Smithers**. Please keep your eyes peeled for this – it should be screened before the end of the month

Johan Recapture Success!

Our research in the Cederberg has been action packed since the fundraising event. On Saturday, March 31st Willem was planning to finally take a full weekend off, relax and get his hair cut while Quinton checked the cage traps by motorbike and on foot. Of course, plans change quickly and given the reason this time, Willem was rather happy to come back to work when Quinton returned with some exciting news.

For the last 5 months we have been actively trying to recapture Johan to replace the dead battery on his collar. This involved setting two traps on some of his favorite paths and going to check them twice a day. Just checking the Leeuvlak cage over this period meant we walked over 1000 kilometers to and from the trap and drove more than 4000 kilometers over some of the worst 4x4 roads imaginable. After all of this work you can picture Quinton's excitement as he approached the trap with its doors down, meaning something must be in the cage. The disappointment of finding an empty trap after a dassie has set it off and walked through the bars of the trap doors is unimaginable. This had happened quite often over the past few months, so Quinton was not very hopeful when he arrived at the Leeuvlak trap and saw the doors were down. He snuck around the edge of the cage to see what he had captured only to see the rosette pattern of massive Johan lying against the side – dead calm, almost as if to say – “Come on! Where have you been, I have been waiting several hours for my Ketamine injection and new ‘bling’ collar!”

After a very quick sprint out of the kloof and back to the house on the motorbike, Quinton phoned vet, **Dr Andre Van der Merwe** and Willem to give them both the news. Neither thought twice about sacrificing a day off and quickly the team was assembled. The four of us then hastily made it down the kloof once more to dart Johan in the same location he had been trapped the first time, on the 23rd Feb 2006.

The darting procedure went well and we found that Johan is in better condition than ever. He weighed in at a hefty (for the Cape) 48kg. After a very efficient swap of the collars we hurried to a cliff above to watch the impressive Johan awake as good as new, although possibly with a slight hang over.

He's a Daddy Again

It is known that Johan, our very narcissistic and frequently photographed leopard is very popular with the ladies. We know he is the father of F6's cub Katherina, as well as her latest 15 month old Matjiesrivier cub. He is also the sire of F5's cub, "Ololo". However, two new faces (and sets of paw prints) were recently spotted in the Cederberg. F5 now has 2 cubs (also fathered by Johan). We will be following the progress of F5 and her cubs through increased camera traps and tracking in that area, so expect some updates soon.

Houdini – A Typical Difficult Male

We continually learn more about leopards and ways to improve our project: Houdini can be credited with much of this. First he revealed the need for a locking mechanism on trap doors and then came the lessons on night captures. Now Houdini has shown very clearly that the Anatolian dogs work brilliantly to keep leopards away, however, they have some limitations.

The flock of sheep at Driehoek had been split into two with one half guarded by Tabs, the Anatolian dog (sponsored by **Margaret Baran**) and another unprotected across the valley. Information from his GPS collar shows that, on the night of February 16th, Houdini approached the flock where Tabs stood guard and then turned around and headed to the flock which was not protected, where he proceeded to kill 12 sheep. While this is a terrible situation, we now have learned that farmers must keep their flocks together in order to allow for the Anatolian dogs to prove effective leopard deterrents. More recent news is that his GPS collar battery has once again gone flat long before it should have. This is terribly frustrating, as Quinton is desperately trying to obtain uninterrupted data for 1 year in order to observe any potential differences in seasonal movement of these leopards. So we have to capture him AGAIN!

4th Sponsored Anatolian Puppy Finds a Farm – Sponsor: Deb Jugan (USA)

On that note of Anatolian dog success, a 4th dog has been sponsored. The pup was brought to **Josua Visser's** farm on the 29th of March to begin his working life at the age of 6 weeks. Holding this cute puppy in the back of Komkommer (our research vehicle) while he got a tad sick from Quinton's driving made it hard to imagine him as a big protective dog. However in a short time he will consider himself one of the flock and the sheep should be safe under his watchful eyes.

Colin

It saddens us to inform you that on the night of March 25th Colin, our 5th collared male leopard sponsored by **Lorraine Ludman** from Dubai, died.

A farmer on the edge of the study area and the boundary of Colin's territory had suffered stock losses due to predation by feral dogs and had deployed gin traps as a defensive reaction. Colin, patrolling the edge of his territory, was caught in one of these traps.

Gin traps are an indiscriminate trapping method that often results in the death of many animals, including antelope and other predators. The use of these traps, can in fact, often lead to an increase in livestock depredation due to the loss of natural prey through these unselective removals.

On the morning of March 24th Quinton, **Rika du Plessis**, and Dr. Andre Van der Merwe assembled near Clan William in an attempt to save Colin's life. However, Colin had undergone serious trauma and despite the best possible treatment, passed away the following night.

This tragedy is something that the Cape Leopard Trust has always feared because of the continued use of these traps which are banned in many countries due to their debilitating and indiscriminate nature. However, at this time we do not believe the call for the outright banning of gin traps in South Africa is likely to be effectively implemented unless alternative solutions are first put in place. Hopefully these alternative solutions such as the use of Anatolian shepherd dogs by farmers will avoid the need for indiscriminate trapping methods in the future.

The Cederberg Conservancy Taking Groundbreaking Steps

Incidentally, on the same day Colin was caught in the gin trap, the farmers of the Cederberg Conservancy were making significant progress to ensure that unsought after removals of their wildlife does not happen within this conservancy area. It was announced that within the conservancy, a wilderness area that covers 171000ha (100000ha of which is privately owned farm land) have agreed to ban any use of gin traps as well as hunting.

This ground breaking agreement was made in collaboration with the Cape Leopard Trust and Cape Nature and is, as far as we know, the first voluntary initiative of this kind by farmers in South Africa.

Rand Merchant Bank Fund

RMB are the Cape Leopard Trusts' biggest sponsor. They have continued to support our project since we started, increasing the value of their sponsorship on an annual basis. At the end of last year, RMB donated R150 000 to our project. This phenomenal contribution is helping us take the project to new levels.

BushmansKloof Nature Reserve

Once again, Bushmanskloof have made a fantastic contribution to our project. Another R60 000 donation just received will prove to be invaluable to the work we are doing. This and a luxury weekend for two auctioned off at the event provides fantastic evidence of eco-tourism doing the right thing. I have done a couple of presentations at Bushmanskloof to rangers as well as guests about the work we are conducting in the Cederberg, and must thank the staff for their amazing hospitality and interest in the project which they often share with their guests.

Bateleurs

How does one put a price to the incredible service and assistance provided by this incredible conservation organization. **Johan Ferreira** and **Jock Kannemeyer** have spent a great deal of their time over the past 4 months flying me to track our collared leopards in the Cederberg. On the 31st of January, Jock flew me up to the Cederberg in his helicopter when we captured and collared our first female, F6. Soon after this, Johan & I specifically went out to track F6 to see how she was doing. The flight began with us tracking M9 & Colin – easy work for us. Then the challenge began – F6 – right in the

middle of Johan's range. Previous flights showed how difficult it is to track leopards in this rugged terrain. Well, nothing has changed, F6 was found, but in a terrible area to get a GPS download. When our fuel load was low, we eventually gave up and headed home, disappointed that we had not accomplished what we set out to do. A week later, an adamant Johan & I tried again. This time, 5 minutes after getting into her area, we got F6's download. It seemed too easy, but it was amazing!

Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust adopted leopards

A major sponsor of our project, the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust attended our fundraising event with a serious intention of supporting us – in a big way! Three leopards, F4, F5 & M9 were adopted on the night – R87 000 later! Post adoption – M9, likened to a “naughty boy” killed a sheep on the same farm where we caught him. Is this a problem leopard? The fact is, that this is a wild animal, doing what he is designed to do. There is no differentiation as to whether it is a sheep or klipspringer he decides to kill. The difference is, that if the sheep are well protected, this predator will not have the opportunity to kill them. The good news is that we have found a sponsor for an Anatolian Shepherd dog, which will hopefully protect this farmer's livestock in the future.

The Trailer – cage trap transportation

When Rand Merchant Bank members, **Anton du Preez & Jacques Groenewald** heard that we were in dire need of a trailer to transport our large leopard cage traps, they immediately approached us with a proposal to have a special heavy duty trailer custom built for the job. They sponsored this trailer in their personal capacity, a R13 000, heavy duty workhorse. Brand new 4x4 tyres were sponsored by **SupaQuick** in Paarl. Needless to say, since we have received the trailer, we have put it to very good use, transporting up to 3 cages, sponsored by **Flexipave**, in this rough and unforgiving terrain.

Deutsche Bank joining our list of wonderful sponsors

As mentioned above – this was a memorable occasion during the event – something very unexpected & special. The support from Deutsche Bank, providing unconditional funding to the tune of R50 000, will prove to be very valuable for the work we are doing.

Leopard Trivia Challenge for a two rider team entry to the 180° Cederberg Mountain Bike Experience worth R4600.00.

The Question is:

What is the name “Gin Trap” derived from?

Our Bonus Question for this month's newsletter is:

What is the air speed velocity of an African swallow?

If you think you know the answer, email Quinton at capeleopard@hixnet.co.za with the answer, your name, phone number, and address.

The first person to respond correctly will receive the incredible prize donated by **180°**. The bonus prize is a generous bow from the Cape Leopard Trust team for having supporters who love Monty Python, and a Cape Leopard Trust t-shirt.

T-Shirts for sale

Cape Leopard Trust t-shirts made by the amazing **Capestorm** outdoor clothing company are now available by order from us, or from Capestorm, Wynberg branch (45 Lester rd, Wynberg); tel: 021 761 2021. **The cost is R160.**

A Special Thanks must go to **ALL** of our supporters for having the faith in our ability to make a difference with this project. We will continue to do our very best and put all our effort into work that is crucial to our precious environment. If we have neglected to thank any person who should have been included in this newsletter – PLEASE let us know so we can include you in our next newsletter.

Kindest regards

Quinton Martins
Project Manager

Event Donors:

Africa Geographic; Auction Alliance; Avalon Spring Spa Resort; Bakkrans Nature Reserve; Bushmanskloof; Capestorm; Cederberg Wines; Dawie Fourie; Enviropaedia; Gallery 909; Gerald Hinde; Gravity Adventures; La Med; Lega D'oro; Leopard's Leap; Natasha de Wororin; Resolution Colour; Sean Caulfield; Travelers Rest; Vanessa Cowling; Woolworths

Project Sponsors:

Sponsors (R400 000 plus):

Rand Merchant Bank

Sponsors (R100 000 – R400 000):

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Eco Aire - Peter Turnbull
Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
Leopards Leap – Historic Wines
Polaris Capital

Sponsors (R50 000 - R100 000):

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Deutsche Bank
Engel & Volkers
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Camera Trap Sponsors:

Birding Africa; Boland Eco-4's; Hooper Family; Ian Michler; Jessie Middelman; Land Cruiser Club of SA; Lehr Family; Louise Littlewood – The African Collection; Mountain Club of SA; Paul & Kim Woulfe; Paul & Lindsay Middelman; Peggy Whitson ; Ubuntu Trust

Leopard Adoptions:

"Johan" - Leopards Leap Wines/Africa Geographic
"Lisa" - Leopards Leap Wines/Africa Geographic
"Ouma Maaitjie" - Leopards Leap Wines/Africa Geographic
"Houdini" - Eco Aire/Peter Turnbull
"Max" - Oelz Family
"Oom Arrie" - Engel & Volkers
F6 - "Pantereus" foundation

Anatolian Shepherd Dog sponsorship

Margaret Baran - sponsored "Tabs" working at Driehoek (Cederberg)
Peter Braat - sponsored Sheba to Ampie Albertyn in Botriver.
Margaret Baran – sponsored “Jumbo” to Joubert van der merwe at Biedouw farm (Biedouw Valley).
Deb Jugan - sponsored “ dog to Josua Visser at Oudam.

Donors

Avalon Springs; Melissa Baird; Cederberg Conservancy; Cederberg Wines; Cheetah Outreach; Clara Anna Fontein; Gate-7; Gerald Hinde; Guy Hayward; Harley Davidson (Cape Town); Haw & Inglis (Pty); Ian Michler; Louis Kienle; Photo Connection; Picto; MunYaWana Leopard Project; Neil Jowell; RCS; Rotary Club – Clarement; Sandown Motor Holdings; Sean Caulfield; Steve Tugwell;!Khwa