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The Cape Leopard Trust Newsletter

June 2007

Dear Cape Leopard Trust supporters, it is our pleasure to once again fill you in on all the latest news and developments on our project. We hope you enjoy reading it. Please remember to contact us if you have any questions concerning the project or these stunning felines.

Cederberg Conservancy and other Cederberg project supporters:

Four years of studying leopards in the Cederberg makes this a good time to reflect on a vital element of the project - The Cederberg Conservancy. The conservancy is comprised of privately owned farm land & land managed by Cape Nature (CN), with a total extent of 171 000ha. It has played a significant supporting role in ensuring our study animals (i.e. all leopards in the area) remain unharmed. Conflict situations have occurred, but are dealt with not by the landowner himself, but a leopard committee involving the Cape Leopard Trust, CN & several conservancy members. The protocol followed is strict and does not allow for irresponsible actions to be taken. We have endeavoured to incorporate other areas into our research, with varying success. **Karukareb, Travellers Rest and Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve** have been very supportive of our work - the latter also being a major funder of our project. Many other farmers see our work as a threat to their being able to take matters into their own hands, or have CN deal with it for them. If we are to work on their properties, compensation and other negotiations are expected from us. This is unacceptable to the Trust, as irresponsible farming practices will always lead to high risk situations & ultimately conflict situations where leopards are responsible for depredation of livestock. CN are the authorised body to deal with these situations – whereas the Trust is there in a research and solution providing capacity. CN are fully aware of the report & genetic research done on leopards in the Cederberg, demonstrating that these leopards differ from leopards elsewhere and represent at least a distinct subpopulation. This should ensure very strict measures in dealing with so-called “problem animal” situations in future.

We will be concentrating our efforts in the Cederberg Conservancy and any other areas where farmers/landowners are open to our research approach and methodology. We

intend using this information to help implement various management strategies elsewhere in a proven and effective manner.

Grave Note

It is quite shocking to comprehend, but there is a distinct possibility that “Johan”, our most well known study animal, adopted by **Leopards Leap & Africa Geographic**, has been killed. We recaptured him just over 2 months ago, finding him in excellent health. After putting a new collar on, we set out looking for him 3 weeks later to try and download his GPS data. There has been no signal from his collar for 2 months despite flying and hiking into his favourite areas where we have not even seen his tracks. There is a possibility that someone trapped him & on seeing the collar, buried both “Johan” and the collar. His range was so huge, that he often wandered way beyond the borders of the Cederberg Conservancy. We appeal to any person who can provide information on the death of this leopard and the whereabouts of his collar. From an ecological perspective – we are now left with a massive, **81 400ha** vacuum, where no other adult male leopard that we know of has set foot in for the past three and a half years.



Quinton's darting escapade

In the second week of May this year, Quinton & Gerrie Camacho (Mpumalanga Tourism & Parks Agency), were invited to collect biopsy samples of leopards in the Sabi Sands Reserve. Both Gerrie and Quinton are committee members of the South African Leopard Forum (SALF). Aims of the SALF are, through communication between leopard researchers, conservationists and land owners, to ensure the future conservation of leopards in SA.

Aims of the Darting Project

The Cape Leopard Trust, SALF and Prof. Conrad Matthee (Stellenbosch University) are working together to continue with the leopard conservation genetic work initiated by Nicole Martins. The aim is to obtain an even larger sample size of leopard DNA throughout its range in SA. The results of this study will; (a) provide us with a better understanding of whether there is sufficient genetic diversity within particular populations of leopards in SA; (b) illustrate whether there is in fact gene flow between so-called contiguous populations or whether external factors, such as land-use, may be creating isolated or 'island populations' of leopards within their range; (c) provide a detailed genetic comparison between northern leopards and the smaller, isolated leopards living in the mountains of the Western Cape; and (d) use these DNA samples to look at

relatedness amongst leopards within the Sabi Sands Reserve, which would prove to be of interest to tourists, as well as field rangers, providing them with a better understanding of their subjects.

Results

Incredibly, 9 different leopards were successfully darted for biopsy samples – in 9 game drives! A couple of the males we darted were real beasts – weighing in the 90kg range. Twice the weight of our biggest males here in the Cederberg & almost 3 times the mass of many of the males we have captured.



Those relaxed Sabi Sands Cats!!

Acknowledgements

Thanks to: the Sabi Sands Reserve – ecologist Jonathan Swart for making arrangements for us to conduct the darting operation; Savanna Lodge – Paddy Hagglesworth (camp manager) for facilitating all our darting expeditions, ensuring we were well fed & had great accommodation; rangers Greg & Patrick & our tracker Julius for all their time and patience escorting us in the bush; Greg for such impeccable reversing skills while being charged by a massive elephant cow; Inyathi Lodge – George & Colin for coming out to collect us when no other rangers were free and all the rangers of Exeter, Dulini, Idube, Ulusaba, Inyathi and Savanna for putting up with our darting antics and the leopards of the Sabi Sands for putting up with a pain in the butt.

Willem's trip May 14th – 17th

Our field assistant, Willem Titus, attended a workshop in Cape Town along with other Cederbergers involved in conservation.

Here are his thoughts:

I arrived at Porterville at 11:00 AM on Monday May 14th. We started with The Greater Cederberg Biodiversity Corridor and we learned about how animals can move from one place to another. After lunch we carried on with case studies. We talked about building corridors and partnerships in the GCBC as well as how the GCBC works with local communities.

The GCBC would like to thank all the landowners who participated in making the area-wide planning process a success. I think that it's a good idea to work together on the GCBC project.

The next day we went to Kirstenbosch National Botanical Gardens and heard about The Cape Flats Nature partnership project.

For me it was interesting to learn from each other and hear about their experiences.

We looked at sites in the City of Cape Town's Biodiversity Network. It was nice to hear that they get community partnerships involved in working together. The conservators link conservation and community development - enabling local leadership of conservation action.

Cape Flats Nature is now working with the city to integrate this partnership. Many case studies were conducted through the telling of stories which illustrated some of the challenges and questions being faced around urban conservation partnerships. The stories were told by community members and representatives from the Cape Flats Nature project.

I think it was great to learn what others are doing to make things happen. We went on field trip to the Wolfgat Nature Reserve and Macassar Dunes. On our way home on Thursday we visited the Two Oceans Aquarium – definitely a highlight! I really enjoyed the trip; it was nice to see what other people are doing for development and getting the local community involved.

All that I can say is - we must look forward to learning.

Quinton's Research – things to come

I have been invited to present at the Felid Biology & Conservation Conference that will be held from the 17 - 21 September 2007 at University of Oxford. This is quite a daunting prospect – what with 300 delegates from all over the world attending! However, it will be a wonderful opportunity to convey information on the project to scientists working with wild cats worldwide.

Culinary Cars

We are very happy to announce that we have taken ownership of a third vehicle – “Boontjie” is a moss-green Mitsubishi Club Cab 4x4 with enough room for skinny Willem in the back “seat” along with all our tracking gear - as well as a cage on the rear. No doubt Frikkadel (Suzuki) will welcome the respite from these challenging roads. Many thanks must go to Gavin and Paul from **Blue Route Auto** in Dieprivier for finding this well-cared-for vehicle and taking care of all the paperwork.

News Flash!

As mentioned in our April Newsletter, **Leopards Leap Wines** have been incredible ongoing supporters of the Trust. Their contribution comes at a vital time, as it has been decided by the Trust to accept the wonderful offer of a



vehicle sponsorship by Leopards Leap. Essentially, our current vehicle, Komkommer (the Landy) has had enough work in the field & is opting to spend more time in the workshop, recuperating. This vehicle, sponsored by **Rand Merchant Bank** and **Leopards Leap Wines**, will be traded in towards a new **Toyota Land Cruiser 70 series station wagon** (the Rolls Royce of reliable off-road vehicles). **Market Toyota** are supporting us as a co-sponsor. Leopards Leap have ensured that the vehicle will be fully covered and paid for for the next **THREE YEARS!** Now that Komkommer is no longer with us, Frikkadel & Boontjie will need a mate – the Land Cruiser, which we will be getting in the next month or so, may be named **Koeksister**. **More about this in our next newsletter...**

Leopards

M9 – now fondly known as “Trompie” (adopted by: Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust)

What can I say – a whole page could be devoted to this animal and its antics of the past 2 months... And I'm pretty sure farmer Sakkie Nieuwoudt would like to add a few (unprintable) words of his own.

“Trompie” – comes from the Afrikaans TV show “Trompie en die boksom bende” about a teenage trouble maker and his gang.

On the 11th of April we were called out to the farm Grootkloof to assess a leopard kill right outside farmer Nieuwoudt's kraal. Due to the pushy goat majority the 1 sheep lamb was kept in an outer pen. Trompie saw his chance and leaped over the fence to grab the lamb. We set a cage – baited with the remains of the sheep – and waited..... for 3 days. It seems that Trompie doesn't like us to sleep in on Saturdays. There he was – growling and snarling. We set him free without darting him, thinking it may act as a deterrent. But it wasn't long till we discovered that he began spending more time at Grootkloof. He may even have helped himself to a goose, but caused a lot more damage when he ventured into late Colin's territory (If you recall, Colin was killed outside the Cederberg Conservancy after being caught in a gintrap) and killed a year-old heifer. Again a cage was set and sure as nuts on the following Saturday he was inside it. This time we tranquilized him with vet, Dr Andre van der Merwe standing by. He was moved to the far reaches of his range (still within his territory) and while we watched him move down the mountainside we secretly hoped it would be the last for a while!

The CLT has sponsored an Anatolian pup called “Boesman” for the Nieuwoudts.

M10

A new male was caught and collared on **Traveller's Rest** in the Pakhuis Pass area on the 1st of May. A weighty young adult male of 39kg, first photographed by camera trap at the next door Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve almost a year before. Dr Strauss & his mom were on hand to witness this event – our sixth male leopard we have been able to capture & collar. One little glitch is that we are having difficulty in downloading the GPS points when needed. The GPS points are still being stored on the collar, which is the important thing, but there is an error in communication. Traps will be reset in this area to recapture M10, as well as the female in his area.

Female (leopards) wanted!

We are trying our best to catch more females in order to have an adequate sample size for future statistical analyses. GPS data from our very precious (and sole-collared girl) F6 interestingly shows that she strictly limits her wanderings to river beds and kloofs. Her total range spans over more than 100 square kilometres.

So far we have, however, succeeded in trapping (and releasing) several porcupines, a grysbok, a caracal, African wildcat, honey badger and a young baboon which relentlessly clung to the door – making it pretty hard for me to set him free!

Katherina (F8)

Carol and Rex Harland, from the UK have been visiting the project for several years now. Using their base in Scarborough, they have come up to track leopard in the area with me several times. At home in England, they have been working hard at raising funds for our project in their local village – many times this has involved great sacrifice on their part – having to drink copious amounts of wonderful Leopards Leap wines at dinners they use to raise funds at.

At our fund raising event, Carole twisted Rex's arm (somewhat harder than usual), and they returned home as the new adopting couple of "Katherina", our elusive young daughter of F6. We have been trying our utmost to capture and collar her, but have had no success. We have recaptured the males on a regular basis, but the one occasion when we caught her in January last year seems to have been enough of an ordeal.

Sponsorship and support

Polaris Capital

The Cape Leopard Trust would like to thank Polaris Capital for their generous ongoing support of our project. The Polaris Foundation has donated R100 000 to the Trust this year. This support is unbelievable. Thank you.

Bushmans Kloof Wilderness Reserve

It was with a wide grin that I set off to the gorgeous reserve of Bushman's Kloof on May 6th to give a short talk to staff and guests as well as collect a cheque to the value of R60 000. This is the third year in succession that Bushman's Kloof have contributed towards our work and we are truly grateful for this tremendous support.

Bateleurs

Helicopter pilot **Jock Kannemeyer** and fixed wing pilot **Johan Ferreira** have once again been assisting us in monitoring our leopard population from the air. This substantial contribution from the **Bateleurs** and the incredible amount of time and effort put in to this project by these pilots is nothing less than Amazing! Please visit the bateleurs website if you have a chance: www.bateleurs.org

Sponsorship and support required

Website

The Cape Leopard Trust requires the services of a professional website design company to change the face of this often stagnant site. It would be amazing if someone out there can assist in the sponsoring of the creation & managing of a new and more effective site. As the Trust has grown, we have more and more interest in the project – the website is the easiest way for the public to gain access to what work we are doing. At the moment Sarah (dassie girl) & I do the work on the site – hence a distinct lack of changes.

Perfume – Ladies & Gentlemen

This is an appeal for any high quality fragrances (ladies & gents) for the use in trapping leopards in the Cederberg. If there is a bottle of some fragrance you have grown tired of – please pass this on to us. We don't mind how small the quantity is. The better fragrances use natural bases which seem to attract leopards.

50/50 Update May 14th Bart Smithers

Bart & the ever-popular environmental TV programme 50/50 did a fine job of updating the CLT's progress. Bart has been following the project's progress for quite sometime now. However, that is not all he has been up to. Recently Bart was awarded the prestigious Brigitte Bardot award for Best Film or Television Production at the Genesis Awards – he was flown over to the USA to accept this award in Hollywood. Well done Bart!

Talks: Worcester and Citrusdal

On May 2nd we set off to Worcester to deliver a talk about the CLT to welcoming and enthusiastic members of the birding club as well as other interested landowners and farmers. It was well attended and unfortunately we ran out of time and couldn't answer all the questions! One game farmer posed an interesting question – how does he ensure his valuable antelope don't **all** become leopard fodder? Well, obviously our usual recommendations such as corralling, shepherding and Anatolian dogs wouldn't be worth an iota in his case. So – for the moment we suggest stocking up on less valuable "bokkies"/small prey in order to supplement the prey-base. This topic is being debated widely around the country as more and more farmers switch from livestock to game.

The following evening we addressed a group of people in the tourism industry at the museum in Citrusdal. The snacks and wine were superb and it was good to see a display of gintraps in their rightful place – as part of a historical exhibition!

Cage doors, Mike

Mike from FlexiPave in Kuilsrivier has kindly adjusted some of our cage traps for us. These traps have been working wonders in our study site, and fine tuning them after all our capture experiences, will make them even better.

Project Donors

Ian Michler generously donated his fees to the CLT for a talk given on May 31st.

RAM have been kind enough to provide the Trust **Montrail** and **Nikawax** equipment at their cost price. Hiking in these mountains often results in a pair of high quality boots only lasting 4 – 6 months. Having this equipment at a much reduced price is extremely helpful. Please visit their website for more information: www.rammountain.co.za or www.adventure.co.za



Newsletter Prize winners

Andre Ferreira was the winner of the 180 Degrees mountain bike race package for two worth R4600. Congratulations! I hope to see you at the race & hope you enjoy it thoroughly. It is a very well attended and organised event!

Dr Michael Brett-Crowther (from France) wins the t-shirt for the bonus question regarding the speed of a swallow. The answer was in fact a reference to the Monty Python film “The Holy Grail” & was actually a question to the question: First it was “African or European swallow?” and then “laden or unladen?”. Sorry, we must be getting rather bored out in the mountains.



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 or www.capestorm.co.za.

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

Sponsors and Event Donors

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):

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Sponsors (R100 000 – R400 000):

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Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
Leopards Leap – Historic Wines
Polaris Capital

Sponsors (R50 000 - R100 000):

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Capestorm
Deutsche Bank
Engel & Volkers
Rufford Small Grant
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University of Bristol

Sponsors ((R10 000 - R50 000)

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Jennie van Malsen Birthday Fund
Jock Kannemeyer – BJK Industries
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Stellenbosch University
Two Oceans Aquarium

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