

Project Update: July 2007

On the 15th December 2005, Jannie Nieuwoudt (chairman of the Cederberg Conservancy), several of his employees and I, carried a 2m long, very heavy leopard cage traps a couple of kilometers over some exceptionally rocky terrain, in order to capture M2. I knew very little of this male leopards' movements, other than the records from our camera traps and spoor. It appeared he was the territorial male bordering "Johan's" territory on the Southern & Western side.

Little did I know, that it would take one and a half years, and more than 200 trap nights before I finally managed to capture this elusive male leopard - the 8th leopard we have managed to collar since the inception of the project in the Cederberg. The cage trap was situated along the Groot River near the mountain lodge, Mount Ceder. It was Thomas, from Mount Ceder that assisted us in a fantastic way by monitoring the trap for us from the lodge. A VHF transmitter was attached to the cage & a signal was checked twice a day to see if the trap had been triggered. Willem & I would then monitor the cage by foot every second or third day to see whether there were tracks in the area. Luckily, besides a baboon & klipspringer (released unharmed), there was little "by catch" at this trap.

"Oom Arrie" (named after a wonderful gentleman managing the game reserve Bakkrans in the Cederberg), weighed a very healthy, and unusually large, 44kg. When captured, he had a big round tummy - most likely from eating a small antelope from the area. He has been collared and released at Mount Ceder (at the cage) and will be monitored over the following 14 months.