

Project Update: October 2006

I have some amazing news - Fantastic NEWS!! I have managed to capture and collar our Fourth leopard in the Cederberg on Friday. An adult male weighing 32kg. What a stunning animal!

It was quite a crazy week that led up to this. Rika du Plessis (Cape Nature & trusty CLT supporter), Willem & I set the trap on Tuesday in Boskloof on the western side of the Cederberg. This beautiful property, Karukareb Wilderness Reserve, is linked to the Cederberg wilderness area. The trap was set in a prime leopard area - and as per usual - we did not use any bait. We have almost collared all the adult, territorial males that could possibly occur in the 2000 km² study area.

On Thursday, after a brilliant and exciting leopard tracking flight with Rooibos tea farmer & Bateleur member Johan Ferreira, I went to set a camera trap in the area where our cage was set. I was horrified to discover that a female leopard had walked into the trap & managed to jump out before the doors had closed. These females have been eluding me for FAR TOO LONG!

On Friday morning I was out hiking on Jannie Niewoudt's farm in the Breekrans when I was summoned from a distance by Jannie, " Daar is 'n luiperd in die hok!" (There is a leopard in the cage). Gut wrenching stuff. The sensation, after all the effort put into this project, to get this form of "pay-back"...is indescribable. I called our vet, Dr Andre van der Merwe for his assistance. He cancelled all his appointments & raced out to Karukareb at the same time as Rika, Johan Ferreira & I. The darting & collaring procedure went exceptionally well. Rika is a brilliant assistant in these circumstances & Andre a superb vet. This time it was Johan Ferreira's time to come along for the ride - after all the flights he has taken me on...It was a great day. A day I really wanted to share with all of you!