

Project Update: January 2012

As the wet season began in late 2011, the Zambian Carnivore Programme has spent the past 3 months purchasing camera traps and accessories, introducing the study to the local safari community, and working with the Zambia Wildlife Authority's (ZAWA) South Luangwa Area Management Unit (SLAMU) Ecology Staff on the project design and logistics of the survey within South Luangwa National Park. The involvement of ZAWA is a fundamental aspect of this study and ZCP has held meetings and continues dialogue with SLAMU regarding their management priorities for leopards and how survey would best benefit the management of the park. Such management questions could look at the effects of park borders where leopard trophy harvesting and illegal snaring occur, which areas in the park offer high leopard densities, and which variables best explain leopard density and distribution. In addition the photos obtained from this survey will form the foundation for long-term photographic monitoring of leopards via ZCP and SLAMU research in order to learn more about the dynamics of the population and give rise to additional research questions worthy of further investigation. This collaboration will ensure the study's results are effective in advising the current management and conservation priorities in the park. During the remainder of the wet season prior to the survey ZCP teams will be working not only on the survey design but also, given that occupancy modeling of other large predators, prey species, and humans will be concurrently conducted as part of other ZCP initiatives, ensuring that resources and equipment from these other studies are leveraged as best as possible to ensure maximum coverage and evaluation of leopard dynamics in SLNP.