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The Cape Leopard Trust Newsletter

September 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. This month's newsletter is a little short due to my workload and visit to the UK - so I have only mentioned some of the exciting events of the past couple of months.

The Cape Leopard Trust Board of Trustees – from Quinton:

Suffice it to say, that the Trust would not be where it is today without the invaluable assistance, guidance and mentorship I have received from the Board of Trustees while running the project. I don't think our supporters really know how much time and effort is freely given from this amazing group of people. I feel very privileged to say that our chairman, **Dr Andrew Baxter**, and fellow trustees, **Johan van der Westhuizen**, **Prof. Christopher Henshilwood**, **Louis Liebenberg**, **Peter Lloyd** and **Dr Ian McCallum** are all an inspiration to me, and I know that the project is safe with their sound guidance. This is just to say thanks for all they have done! Thanks must also go to my mom and brother, who have always been such an incredible pillar of support to me.

Leopard news:

We have had an extraordinary 2 months since our last newsletter. More news on all the leopards will be provided in an in-depth report at the end of this year. But for now...

Johan – our “main man” has been found

I got an unexpected surprise on a recent leopard tracking flight sponsored by the [Bateleurs](#) in order to download GPS data on the female F6 and new male M2. While tracking both M2 & F6 using VHF radio frequencies (before getting into position to download data) - we suddenly got a partial UHF signal and managed to download some of the GPS fixes from Johan's collar as well. It turns out all 3 leopards were within 1km of each other. We tried Johan's VHF frequency - but got no signal at all – making me realise why we have not been able to find him all this time. The data we downloaded are

amazing; he has extended his range from 814 km² to 1140 km². It would be impossible to find him without VHF tracking, but the chances of getting a download must be 1 000 000 to 1 against it. Amazing! We are still trying to capture him to remove the collar and send it back for examination.

Information from both Johan's collar as well as M9 ("Trompie"), shows that the removal of a leopard from an area – whether it be natural death, relocation/translocation or being killed, will more than likely result in the space or vacuum left by that animal to be filled by a dispersal or neighbouring leopard. In our area, M9 has taken over M8's (Colin) range after he was killed, and Johan has extended his range into a neighbouring leopard's area over the past few months. We are unsure of what has happened to the resident male leopard in this area, but one could surmise that he is no longer there.

This means it does not help farmers by removing leopards from their properties. In fact, removing an animal can cause more damage.

Removals result in a vacant territories being opened - this leads to (i) infanticide of cubs in the territory; (ii) fights between resident animals; (iii) ongoing depredation of livestock by immigrant animal(s) and (iv) the interference in natural selection of the fittest - for any dispersal leopard taking over this new vacant territory without going through "due process", may in fact be a carrier of weaker genetic stock, affecting an already small and vulnerable population.

The area where the leopard is moved to: (i) infanticide of resident cubs; (ii) fights with resident leopards - possibly resulting in death of one or more; (iii) possibility that the animal does not/cannot remain in the area, forcing it to disperse, possibly resulting in more farmer-conflict situations.

Thus, "saving" one individual may cause the death of several more.

Leopard captures:

We have captured 3 leopards in the past 2 months, two of which have been collared. This great trapping success has boosted the data we have for the project.

M2 – “Oom Arrie”:

On the 17th July, 18 months after first setting a trap to capture M2, the elusive male leopard bordering Johan's territory in the Cederberg, we finally managed to capture him along the Groot River at [Mount Ceder](#). Willem and I were ecstatic, as we had begun to lose hope that we would ever capture this leopard. We have since tracked him while flying with the [Bateleurs](#), and discovered that his range is so large that he in fact moves way beyond the boundaries of my “official” study area, right into the Koue Bokkeveld. His range is not as big as Johan's yet, but we only have 6 weeks of data from his GPS collar supplied by [Vectronic Aerospace](#).

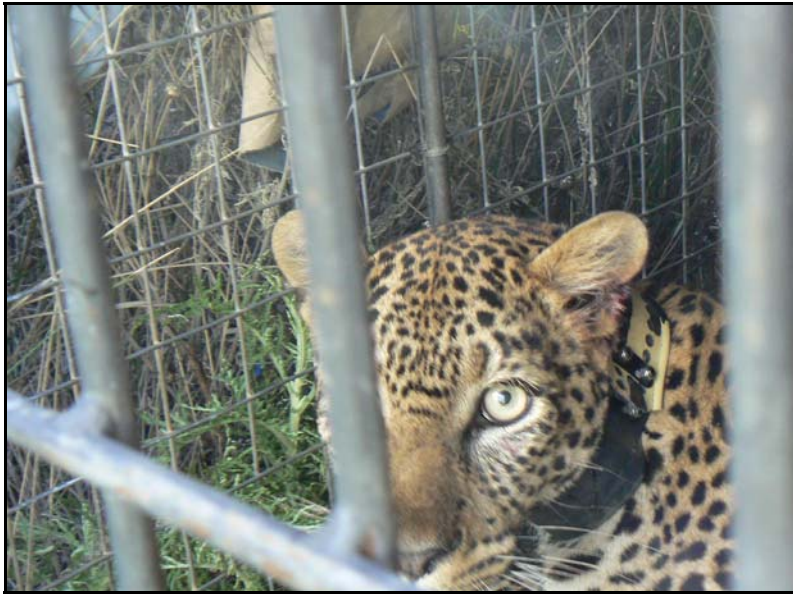
JM1:

On the 22nd July, not even a week later, I had been out to check a cage trap at Uilsgat in the Cederberg Wilderness area near Driehoek, feeling decidedly sick and not too enthused by an early morning trip in the cold to check an almost certainly empty cage trap. Suddenly, on seeing the cage triggered and the doors down, I peeked excitedly through my newly sponsored **Leica** binoculars – there in the cage, staring at me, were 2 stunning cat's eyes belonging to none other than a leopard. No longer feeling ill, I raced back to make arrangements to dart the animal. Vet, Dr Andre van der Merwe was once again on hand to assist with the darting procedure, which has become quite perfected over 19 Cape Leopard Trust leopard captures (in 2 years). We believed the animal to be a young female, until removed from the cage, where we noticed the out-of-proportion, large paws and other physiological attributes known only to occur on males. It turns out it was a very young male leopard, aged 6-10months. All along we had been trying to capture his mother, but ended up getting him first. We were unable to collar this 18.5 kg cat, but we have a tissue sample for DNA analysis and are still trying to capture and collar his mother, M10.

News Flash: F-10, has been adopted by U.K. based moving advertising media specialists, [Motamedia](#). They have launched a brilliant advertising campaign in Europe. Not only are they registered as a Carbon Neutral company, but they intend finding other ways and means to support our leopard research work. With an ad campaign called “get spotted” and a newly found and adopted leopardess called “Spot”, I don't think they can go wrong.

F- 9 – “Amber”

Excitement does not stop here – on the 1st September (Spring Day), I had been out the whole morning checking traps, having captured a mongoose (who decided he did not like the cage, and left before I go there) and a porcupine, I only got home mid-morning. Written in the dirt on the back of our vehicle's window was: “Daar's 'n luiperd in die hok!” (there is a leopard in the cage). Well, everyone was waiting for me, the vet, Andre, was on his way & I had to pack up and head to [Bushmanskloof Wilderness Reserve](#), where last year, we had caught and collared Kooitjie (M7). This time, it was even more amazing – a beautiful, 18kg adult female was captured and collared on the reserve – the second collared female for the study. **Ian & Elizabeth Graham**, regular visitors to this reserve had already “adopted” the first female to be caught on the reserve ages ago – their wish was finally granted, and she has now been named “Amber”. In a months time we will do a GPS download to see where she roams – most certainly beyond the boundaries of the reserve, seeing as leopards have such large home ranges in these mountains of the Cape. Thanks must go to **Aneri Vlok** and all the Bushmanskloof rangers for their time and effort in monitoring this cage trap for us. Well Done!



AMBER

New Projects

We are setting up a new project in the Swartberg-Gouritz area in October, based on the success we have had in the Cederberg and working in the [Cederberg Conservancy](#). The CLT team will head out in the beginning of the month to set up infra-red camera traps, as well as leopard cage traps. We will establish what the most suitable survey size would be for a leopard density study using photograph mark-recapture techniques we have used in the Cederberg over the past 3 years. We will, at the same time, try capture and collar leopards in this area with GPS collars in order to, amongst other things, estimate leopard home range sizes in these wild mountains. Genetic studies, broad ecological data gathering, community work and working with farmers to alleviate stock loss problems will be some of the other elements of this project. More news on this project will be available later in the year. We wish to thank **Cape Nature** for their fantastic effort in assisting us in getting this project going.

Bateleurs:

We must once again thank the bateleurs, and their amazing pilots, Johan Ferreira and Jock Kannemeyer for their ongoing support of our project. The most recent flight with Johan was one of the most exciting flights I have had. Both Johan & I could not believe our luck when we managed to get downloads for 3 leopards all within 1 km of each other. I look forward to getting back from the UK to head out once again to get GPS downloads of our collared leopards.

Vehicle news:

Leopards Leap wines, Rand Merchant Bank and Market Toyota/Toyota SA has

arranged the sponsorship of a brand new **Toyota Land Cruiser 70** series for our project. We have had the vehicle for 2 weeks now, and can testify to the fact that this is indeed a beast of an off-road vehicle! It handles brilliantly on tar, but is especially at home on the dirt tracks in the mountains. We have named her, **Witblits**.



EcoAire:

Peter Turnbull has continued his phenomenal support of our work by providing yet more fuel sponsorship to us. Both our Suzuki jeep (Frikkadel) and the new Toyota Land Cruiser (Witblits) have their fuel fully sponsored by EcoAire.

Leica

Some of you might recall that Leica binoculars have played quite a special role in my life working in the bush. During the first year of this leopard research project (before the Trust was registered) I had basically sold everything I had to fund my work – except my Leica 10x32 binoculars. I have always seen these as the most important tool in my field kit. Just recently, I had a huge surprise, when

Leica, based in Cape Town (Tudor Photographic), offered me sponsorship of a new pair of Leica 10x42 Ultravid binoculars. I almost need say no more – these are the Rolls Royce of optics. Now we are just waiting for one of our collared leopardesses to have cubs so that I can sit way up on a mountain ridge and observe these gorgeous cats through these awesome binoculars.



Perfume

Thanks to all the generous donations of perfume for our leopard captures and camera trap study. It is amazing to see the generosity of the public as well as the diversity in fragrance's used. Thank you!

Things to come...

Research

I am on my way to Bristol University for a week (leaving today) as well as to the Felid Biology & Conservation Conference that will be held from the 17 - 21 September 2007 at University of Oxford. Presenting to 300 delegates from all over the world is quite a daunting prospect! However, it will be a wonderful opportunity to convey information on the project to scientists working with wild cats worldwide.

180 Degree Cederberg Mountain bike challenge

Please check out www.180.co.za for more information on this awesome mountain biking event in the Cederberg. 180 is a big supporter of conservation, and is in the process of promoting and supporting our work.

Sponsorship and support

Project Donors

Jacques Slabber



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

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Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust
Leopards Leap Wines
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Sponsors ((R10 000 - R50 000)

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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