



ESTABLISHED 1926

LONDOLZI

LEOPARD QUARTERLY

MARCH 2007

Dear all our Londolozi Leopard supporters

It has been more than a year since most of you have had any news on how the Leopards are all doing. Londolozi is going through some very exciting changes but as they say, a Leopard never changes its spots but every day something new and exciting happens in this magnificent place.

To put a word to the world of the spotted cats for 2006, UNBELIEVABLE is what comes to mind. The years prior to this proved incredibly challenging for all the Leopards. Due to the creation of a vacuum in territories the area was opened up to many young male Leopards arriving to try and establish their own ranges. Most of the females during this time had their territories covered by more than a single male and this created a time when cubs were constantly killed by rivals that had not sired them.

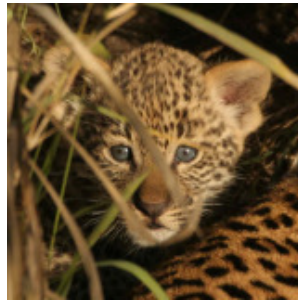
Three of these up and coming males that caused so much chaos in the past have finally proven that they are here to stay. Camp Pan, Lex's (Short Tail) and Mhangene Male all fathered cubs during the past year. More importantly, they have managed to keep almost all of these youngsters safe from rivals. 2006 showed that this era of terror for cubs has come to an end for the time being. Although 2 cubs were killed by male Leopards, cub survival rates increased from 0% to 65% during the year! This is certainly something to celebrate at Londolozi.

Mxabene Female sadly lost one of her cubs when he was 7 months. This was the shier of the youngsters and although he is greatly missed, the incident has left phenomenal data that may help protect other Leopards in the future.

THE LOSS OF MXABENE FEMALES CUB

We headed out before sunrise to try and locate Mxabene Female and the cubs. As the sun rose the bolder of the cubs was spotted stalking a herd of Impala out in the open. The shier male was no where to be seen but we were certain that he was not far away. Suddenly an adult Leopard was spotted descending from a near by Marula tree. Thinking that this was the mother, we headed into the bush to have a closer look. The cat was so well hidden it took a rather long time before we managed to relocate the animal. The carnivore was in an intense stalk and we only had a side view through the bushes as the cat sat completely focused on something that we had no visual of. The situation began with silenced anticipation and excitement until the Leopard turned for a second to look at us. It was only at that moment that we realized that the creature we were watching was not the mother of the cubs. As the dispersal male glanced our direction desperate cries began from just ahead. It was the shy cub that had also realized

that the male was there. He bolted for his life and when he realized that he was not able to get away, he rolled over submissively. It was all over in seconds.



The remaining youngster has tripled in size since the death of his brother. Mxabene Female has had to hunt with little rest in between to feed him and this may not have been possible if there had been another mouth to feed. Nature works in mysterious ways.

Vomba Female has proven to be an amazing mother. She has managed to raise her male and female cubs to 13 months of age and both are faring extremely well although the male is a little wary of game drives.

Sunset Bend Female has also raised her surviving male cub to 15 months of age and up until recently they were still viewed together feeding on kills that she had made. It is not certain if he is still completely dependent on her but the real challenge in his life will be the up and coming times when he has to hunt for himself and try establish his own territory.

Nottens Female was found at a den site where she was hiding 2 small cubs. Not long after this first sighting it appeared as if a juvenile Martial Eagle had captured the one. The second youngster, a female that is now 10 months old, was seen making her first kill in March. She managed to subdue a Francolin which she spent a great deal of time playing with before she finally plucked and consumed her meal!

Dudley River Bank Female gave birth to 2 male cubs that are approaching 6 months of age. They are being led by their mother to kills and the youngsters have reached the 'inquisitive' phase of their life inspecting game drive vehicles as they approach to enjoy the action of the youngsters.

Xidulu Female managed to keep 1 cub of her very first litter well hidden and although we have had no viewing of this youngster our neighbors have reported that all is well.

Ravenscourt Female, sibling to Xidulu Female had her first litter at the same time as her sister. She has also managed to raise on of the two and he has provided some very exciting viewing. At just 10 months of age he managed to capture his first adult Impala but he spent the afternoon playing with it as if he did not know what to do with his first kill!

Trogon Female (Vomba Young Female) is still proving very elusive. We have very little viewing of her and it seems that only if a male is around to chase her out into the open, we get no viewing at all. She is approaching the age when she will come into her first estrus cycle and perhaps this will aid in the habituation process.

3/4 Female has certainly brought the greatest surprise ever! After an entire year of mating and no signs of cubs it was thought that (possibly due to the cyst on her belly) may not have

cubs again. In February Judas and the other trackers noticed that she was lactating and they soon discovered her den site with a single tiny male cub well hidden!

Due to the passing on of **Zeta** in early 2006, a vacuum was created in territories of the females in the North. A very beautiful female that is completely accustomed to vehicles appears to be filling the gap. At this stage she is simply known as **4/4 North Female** and we are still trying to find the origins of her family lineage.

RESEARCH NEWS

With huge thanks to Nigel and Jacqui Green the scat freezer chest is in and it is filling up with scats very quickly! From scats we are hoping to do prey analysis, stress analysis and genetic tests without having to interfere with the Leopards at all.

Great thanks to Guy Balme from the Munyawana Leopard Project who has left us with 2 camera traps so that we can survey not only Leopards but other creatures in areas that are inaccessible.

John Powers, who is a leading figure in Leopard Research visited Londolozi and spent his time sharing ideas about Leopard projects. He also left great amounts of valuable information that is proving very helpful. Thank you John!

We are hoping that Gerrie Camacho from the South African Leopard Forum will visit us in the near future. Any data that is locked up in Londolozi can hopefully benefit those creatures living in unprotected areas.

The Leopard Research web site is almost up and running. In the next few months you will be able to see how all the spotted cats are faring.

<http://www.leopardresearch.com>

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

In the future we are hoping to have an informal photographic competition so if you have any Leopard pictures that you would like to share with us please send them in.



*The photo chosen for the first Leopard Quarterly was taken by **Eli** who was photographing a mother warthog emerging from her burrow with piglets. He managed to photograph each warthog as it came out and the picture of the last piglet had a Leopard as well!! We had no idea that the Leopard was there, he must have been patiently waiting for hours for the warthogs to emerge!*

Thank you John and Dana for the wonderful idea of the Leopard Quarterly, I do hope we manage to keep it up in the future.

Please send us any ideas or questions that you all might have.

Kindest Regards and best wishes to you all
Natasha, Judas, the Leopards and the Londolosi Team.