



Erindi Game Reserve

2009

# THE PERFECT CANDIDATE...



In mid 2008 the Erindi team was devastated to find that one of the young project male Leopards had been fatally injured by a warthog. This young male was not only very important to the project because he was habituated to the vehicles as he grew up with them but also because he was sponsored the very first GPS collar from Freddie Hertzberg.

This left the GPS collar available for another male Leopard and it was discovered that Microlight female's cub was definitely a male from tracks . By October he would be independent reaching almost 2 years of age. This would make him the perfect candidate for the GPS collar as he was only ever viewed as a cub from the microlight. The GPS col-

lar would ensure that his movements be accurately recorded and he could be followed for a 2 year period without causing him stress if he chose not to accept the presence of the research vehicle.

Setting of cage traps during October was religious and one evening close to Erindi Old Traders Camp a 6 month old Leopard was spotted. This youngster was completely accepting of the game viewers and we immediately set traps to try and capture the cubs mother. Traps were set with long distance opening mechanisms and 2 traps were set beside each other. This was in case the cub was captured, her calling would

attract her mother and the hope was that we would capture mum in the 2nd trap. The trap with the cub could then be opened from a long way off to release the cub without any darting as the little Leopard was far too young for capture or a collar.

Three days after the traps were set, one trap was closed and inside was a Leopard...not the cub, not the mother but a sub-adult male Leopard...the perfect candidate!



*Young male Leopard captured and fitted with the first GPS collar.*

## THANK YOU TO ALL SPONSORS...

As the second year of the Global Leopard Project nears its end we would like to show eternal gratitude to those that make this work possible!

To **ERINDI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE**, Mr **Gert Joubert** and **Paul Joubert**, there are no

words to **THANK YOU** enough for allowing the Leopard Project to thrive.

To all sponsors and members from during the year, your contributions have made the year a success...**THANK YOU**.

And to all our new spon-

sors **namely Keith & Vlasta Ross-Jones/DIGITAL DARK ROOM, ESRI and iTV Anglia**, you all make the world turn for the Leopards and **THANK YOU** is just not enough!

**THANKS TO ALL!**

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### PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS...

- K & V Ross Jones/DIGITAL DARK ROOM: Computer training, website, Cybertrackers, digital cameras, computers & equipment.
- ITV ANGLIA: HDV Video Camera, tapes & batteries.
- ESRI: ArcView 3.3
- ERINDI PRIVATE GAME RESERVE: Home of the GLP.

## AMAZING GPS COLLARS

For the Global Leopard Project to forward itself in the field of research, GPS collars have become an absolute necessity. The collars that have already been sponsored to the Leopards by Freddie Hertzberg and Derek & Karen Jones have proven to be absolutely amazing!

The first collar was fitted to a young male Leopard in late October 2009 and the data that the collar fed back has been indispensable.

Firstly the GPS collars are small and light weight which is very important for Leopards as they are such ðbalancedö creatures, climbing trees etc. The collars weigh 250g and this is acceptable for a Leopard weighing 50-70kg. Collars are used instead of implants as Leopards do not stay within the reserve boundaries and if cats are found outside of Erindi



*Male Leopard 5, the first of the project Leopards to be fitted with a GPS collar.*

people can see the collar easily and report the animal.

The GPS collars from Followit are like computers! Collars are programmed to take 3 or 4 GPS points per day and these positions can be remotely downloaded

from a short distance away from the collar. Collars can also be ðropped-off without re-capture of a Leopard.

The collars take a variety of valuable data including movement, temperature and we are able to locate the Leopards by VHF as well.

The GPS points taken by this young male Leopards collar allowed the research vehicle to continue to locate and gather data on other cats with normal VHF collars while the GPS collar did all this work automatically.

The GPS collars will allow more Leopards to be part of the project as 1 research vehicle is not able to locate & take this many positions on numerous cats daily. All the Leopards in the study area must be followed to understand the population dynamics.

## PHANTOM TREE FEMALE

By the end of September we had almost completely lost touch with Phantom Tree Female. When her daughter Honey-thorn Female went independent, she appeared to give Hone the core of her territory inside the reserve and Phantom is only located when she is on the mountains on the farm north of Erindi Game reserve.

Her VHF collar also reached the end of its 2 year battery life and due to the fact

that she has not been in the reserve, we have not been able to change her collar.

Interestingly however, is that she was concentrating her movements on the same Inselberg north of the reserve up until this point.

We hit a huge stroke of luck when the ITV Anglia film crew visited as they

organized a chopper for 4 hours for us to try and locate Phantom. We headed straight to her territory and it was not long before we picked up signal from her collar...still working! And then there she was, looking absolutely fantastic and healthy! She headed into a cave on the hill...new den?

*"Thanks to ITV Anglia who organized a chopper, we have located Phantom Tree Female"*

## XINKOVANYANA FEMALE

During October Xinkovanyana Female was still calling as if she was in estrus again and on the hunt for a male. During this time her tolerance of the research vehicle lessened for some strange reason. She would not allow us to approach closely enough to get visuals on most occasions and thus we took location data without trying to see her or cause her to change her natural behavior by moving away constantly. We took the opportunity to spend time quietly with

her when she was stationary at kills and even then we noted strange behavior. While feeding on an impala kill, she constantly called in between eating sessions.

This seemed strange as she would simply give her position away to other predators. Towards the end of November and all through



*Yana marking territory among rocks of an Inselberg.*

December she changed again. She began spending all her time on various koppies marking territory and she even claimed a hill that was formerly out of her range. Hope is that she has been searching for a den for new cubs...

## HONEY-THORN FEMALE

In early October Honey-thorn Female, although independent and hunting for herself, was still very much a cub at heart! She continued to cause chaos with guest vehicles as she was so inquisitive that she would always approach to within centimeters! On odd occasions she would even put a paw on the railing of a game viewer to have a look at the guests inside! A true close encounter with a wild cat! This meant that to ensure that nothing went wrong the research vehicle was always with Honey when game viewers went in to see her. On one occasion she approached a game viewer and I moved the research vehicle between her and the guests. A bean bag used for photography fell out of the research vehicle and Honey proceeded to pick it up and play with it! She was so gentle that she

left neither a tooth mark nor a scratch when she finally abandoned her toy!

Within weeks Honey grew into an adult...she suddenly began marking territory for the first time ever and she wondered into uncharted areas to establish herself. Then, at less than 2 years of age she experienced her first estrus cycle. She found her voice and although she started slowly she quickly developed an amazing leopard call.

She developed her call almost daily over a 3 week period before a

male finally responded to her. It was a serious challenge to get visual of the mating cats as the female follows the male and he was not very accepting of the vehicle. On the first night the research vehicle had a good enough visual of the male to enable future identification. Although the cats paired for 3 days, it did not appear that the mating was successful and Honey did not seem to know what to do with the male once she had found him! She followed him as he moved in is territory, almost onto a neighboring farm...



*Honey with a scratch on her nose from her first mating.*

## NEW MALE

The new male leopard that was fitted with the first GPS collar of the project suddenly started showing behavior that had us all incredibly excited...the positions taken by the new collar indicated that there was an excellent chance that this young cat was the independent cub of Microlight Female! This made him even more than the PERFECT CANDIDATE for the GPS collar as we saw him as a 3 month old from the den site

when flying in the microlight. We have excellent data on his exact age and having the chance to follow this young male who was born in the centre of the protected reserve would be a huge step towards understanding the dispersal behavior male leopards. Even more exciting was that shortly

*"The young male that was fitted with a GPS collar appeared to be the independent cub of Microlight Female"*

after collaring this young male allowed us to view him! One afternoon we located the male and excitingly noted that he had killed a warthog and hoisted it in a tree. I downloaded the positions from his collar and I was devastated to see that the last point was a mortality, no movement. The collar had come off..

## "HOUDINI"

In 2007 a male Leopard was captured in a cage trap and by the time the vet arrived to dart him...he was gone! The escape artist! In early 2008 we identified the tracks of what we believed to be the same male. We managed to identify his territorial boundary and we set traps to try and capture him to fit a collar. Again the male eluded us, his tracks went into the trap and the trap was closed but there was no Leopard inside. Since this happened we have followed

the tracks of what we believe to be the same male and numerous traps have been set for him. He no longer looks into the traps, he simply walks straight past them when they are set!

While ITV Anglia was filming, their prime target was this huge male that they gave the name Houdini to. Traps were set on his territorial boundary, scent from the carcass and from a female leopard was spread around the area

and we set up a calling station with the calls of a female in estrus. At a water point close to the trap, the elusive male appeared one night and the film crew managed to get phenomenal film footage of him having a drink of water! How exciting to finally get a glimpse of this elusive cat! He was mating with a female and as the 2 approached the water the female bolted due to the presence of lions. Houdini watched the lions as he drank but showed no fear!

## MEETING GOALS OF COMMUNICATION...

Although very small and still building itself up, the Global Leopard Project has 3 main goals that it wishes to reach.

The first is to **formulate a habituation plan** to allow us to gather data through direct observations and to create an alternative use for the species in a country where hunting is presently the main use.

The second is to **contribute to the global understanding of Leopards through research**. We aim to gather data and make it available to help ensure that leopards are better understood and to ensure their place on the planet in the future. This we fulfill daily through capture, collaring and gathering of data through direct observations. We hope that the data will ensure better understanding of the species to aid in sustainable utilization and reduction in live-



itv remote cameras found new Leopards

stock conflict.

The third is **education and communication about Leopards**. Due to the fact that the species is so difficult to see, it is important that people worldwide have the opportunity to be part of the lives of individual cats as it helps draw people closer to them. This goal we fulfill through ecotourism, presentations about the project Leopards to guests, the web-

site, magazine articles and other forms of media.

Erindi Private Game Reserve and the Leopards were fortunate enough to be visited by both BBC and ITV Studios at the end of 2009. BBC made a children's documentary about wildlife called "Deadly 60" in which Honey featured to help educate children about Leopards.

ITV Anglia with Ray Mears filmed "Survival Leopards" with the GLP and not only will they help get the story of the Leopard Project to the world but they contributed hugely to the daily research on Erindi. They managed to film "Houdini" and this was the first time that we saw this particular male Leopard. With their fantastic remote camera set ups they also filmed another young male Leopard for us to identify.

## UNIDENTIFIED & UNCOLLARED LEOPARDS

The young male captured on remote camera by ITV opened our eyes to the Leopard dynamics on Erindi Game Reserve. There seem to be more young Leopards in the area than were previously expected. In the area where the young male was filmed we expected only to find signs of Erindi Male who went missing in June 2009. Without editing it was rather difficult to get identification from the young Leopard

filmed but he did not seem to be Erindi Male. He was perhaps another dispersal male that we have not yet identified.

Thus we have discovered that to capture every Leopard is a mammoth task but perhaps through a camera trap survey we will be able to get a more accurate idea of individual Leopards moving in the study area.

We have still had no luck capturing Caldera Female. She is a vital link in the territorial puzzle and even more so because her 7 month old daughter (Topaz

Female) is so accepting of vehicles. We do hope to have good news in the near future!

*"Due to new unknown Leopards on Erindi we have discovered a need to carry out a camera trap survey"*

## WALKING WITH LEOPARDS

It has been very interesting to note the change in behavior of all the Leopards during different phases of their lives and walking with Honey-thorn Female has been a great indicator of development in a young Leopard. Honey initiated the walking idea one afternoon when the research vehicle had a flat tire. She was a long distance away when we disembarked to change the flat but the noise must have aroused her curiosity. She approached to within a few meters and

my harsh voice did not deter her curiosity. There after she gave a different reaction to humans on foot every time she was walked. She was completely relaxed when resting in the day and when we approached she sat up to look then simply lay



*Honey backing off her charge while we were walking her. Phenomenal camouflage!  
Photo: Dr Diane Ashton*

down to rest again. When Honey came into estrus and we walked her she watched us from 20m then flattened her ears and gave a zigzagging warning charge to let us know that we were not welcome! On our most recent walk, she ignored us completely!

# SUMMARY OF TWO YEARS AT ERINDI

## MICROLIGHT FEMALE (F01)

03/2007: Microlight Female captured and collared

09/2007: Microlight Female re-captured & new collar fitted

3/2008: Microlight Female cub born (Huges Male)

5/2009: Microlight Female re-captured/collar removed & implant fitted. Unable to locate.

## PHANTOM TREE FEMALE (F02)

09/2007: Captured and collared (Pregnant)

12/2007: 2 cubs born (Commiphora Male & Honey-thorn Female)

## GUINEA FEMALE (F03)

1/2008: Captured and collared

## XINKOVANYANA FEMALE (F04)

9/2008: Captured & collared/male cub

(Erindi male)

## HONEY-THORN FEMALE (F05)

6/2009: Captured & collared



*My Xmas wish is that 2010 brings better luck with research on male leopards!*

## GERH MALE (M01)

1/2008: Captured & collared

5/2009: DEAD (Injured by leopard?)

## JAKKALS DRAAI MALE (M02)

2/2008: Captured & collared

12/2008: COLLAR STOPPED WORKING

## COMMIPHORA MALE (M03)

5/2009: Captured and collared

7/2009: DEAD (Injured by warthog)

## ERINDI MALE (M04)

5/2009: Captured and implant fitted

6/2009: MISSING. Unable to locate implant.

## NEW MALE (M05)

10/2009: Captured & collared (GPS)

11/2009: COLLAR DROPPED-OFF

# GOALS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD...

**CAMERA TRAP SURVEY:** It has been noted that there is a great need for a camera trap survey on Erindi Game reserve as not all Leopards are easy to capture in cage traps. To get a better understanding of the leopard dynamics on the reserve we need to do a census and this will greatly benefit more than just the Leopard research.

**Black Rhino** visit the water points regularly and to combine a Black rhino cen-

sus with a Leopard census would provide valuable data on both species. We have 24 waterholes on Erindi and this gives rise to a need for 48 remote camera traps.

*"To combine a Leopard survey with a Black rhino survey would provide valuable data on both species"*

**GPS COLLARS:** To ensure that data is accurate and to allow us to capture liter-

ally all the Leopards on the reserve we need GPS collars for as many cats as possible. This will also ensure that we cause as little change to natural Leopard behavior as possible as not all Leopards accept the research vehicles. To begin study of the mountain areas of the reserve, these collars are vital.

# PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

This months photographic competition is won not by the photographer but by the photographed!

Almost every morning en route to check cage traps for Leopards this Black rhino bull blocked my path!

Slowly he became more relaxed with the presence of the vehicle bypassing him so regularly. He eventually got to the point where he would not move...in fact he would often ōshadowö the vehi-

cle while he was browsing which prevented me getting past!

Thus this wonderful viewing rhino has been naturally identified by the wrinkles on his nose and he has been named ōOtjizireö which is the local Hereo word for shadow!

He has helped inspire the Black rhino survey on the reserve and he is providing spectacular sightings for guests.





## GLOBAL LEOPARD PROJECT

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The mission of the Global Leopard Project is to internationalize the plight of the leopard through communication and research.

We are dedicated to the gathering and sharing of data from wild leopard populations to aid in improving understanding of leopards as individuals and ultimately in the future holistically as a species.

We aim to improve awareness of the leopard through ecotourism and media, to contribute towards reduction of livestock/wildlife conflict and to help ensure that utilization of leopards occurs in a sustainable manner.

The Global Leopard Project is based at Erindi Private Game Reserve in the Central Western region of Namibia near Omaruru, truly one of the most amazing conservation areas on earth...

## GLP SPONSORS, MEMBERS & FUTURE GOALS

### FIELD SPONSORS

~ ERINDI GAME RESERVE: Home of the Global Leopard Project and the leopards.

~ CATCHCO AFRICA/DR DOUW GROBLER: Capture and training.

~ THE DIGITAL DARKROOM: V. & K. Ross-Jones: Camera, computer & data recording equipment.

~ ESRI: ArcView 3.3

~ ITV ANGLIA: HDV Video Camera

### ONGOING SPONSORS

~ ERINDI GAME RESERVE: Monthly donation, accommodation, vehicle, fuel, capture and tracking equipment.

~ PULSE AFRICA: A contribution from every booking made with Pulse Africa is put towards the GLP.

### PLATINUM GLOBE MEMBERS

NS 50 000-00+

~ FLORISSA KEISEL: 2007

~ V. & K. ROSS-JONES: 2006, 2009

### GOLD GLOBE MEMBERS

NS 30 000-00+

~ Rick & Lindy Dekker: 2007

### SPONSOR A LEOPARD/GPS COLLAR

~ FREDDIE HERTZBERG: GPS Collar

~ KAREN BUCHANAN & DEREK JONES: GPS Collar for Erindi Male

~ BEV LEWIS & ANDRZEJ JANDZIOL: GPS Collar downloading equipment

### TULLIANA FIELD MEMBERS

NS 1 500-00

~ Dr Andrzej Jandziol & Dr Bev Lewis

We are currently trying to raise funding to improve and expand the research work on Erindi Game Reserve and to begin aiding farms that have conflict with leopards. In order to do this we are currently working towards acquiring the following equipment:

~ DIGITAL CAMERA TRAPS

+/- US\$ 500-00 EACH

~ GPS COLLARS

p 2 500-00 EACH

### FOUNDERS OF THE GLP

N. de Woronin

Dr Douw Grobler

W. Pearson

Ruan Cloete

G.P. Britz

Pieters Horaseb

Reinhardt Ngarinombe

Erindi Private Game Reserve

There are daily running costs that we are able to fund through guest experiences and leopard viewing trips at Erindi Private Game Reserve.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to know more about the project or the Leopard Experience trips.

