

THE GLOBAL LEOPARD PROJECT ERINDI NEWSLETTER 7

Natasha de Woronin

September/October

2008

FEMALE LEOPARD NUMBER FOUR!



Sarah (the first student to be part of Namibian Wildlife Projects),
Ruan, Jakkals, Natasha and the **new female leopard**.

September was an incredibly busy month but news is short as October was dedicated to exams! The Namibian Lion Strategy workshop was held in Windhoek and it was fantastic that part of the Erindi field team was able to participate.

With all the going on in the month we managed to keep up the leopard capture and on the 19th of September (3 days after a trap was set for a female with cubs in the area) we had a stroke of luck.

“She growled at me as I quietly stalked over a nearby rise to check the cage trap. I decided not to linger but on first impression I thought it was a female and this was very exciting news! In fact every leopard that becomes part of the project is very exciting!”

It was a little challenging to work out from only the growling and poor visual that the leopard was definitely a female for the purpose of the darting but everything went very smoothly. The estimation on her weight was 31kg and once weighed we were pleased that we were so close, she was 31.7kg! We noted that she had definitely suckled cubs but was not lactating at the time of capture.

After 2 hours and collection of all important information on the leopard, she began to slowly awaken. She did not attempt to move away from the vehicle and this gives me hope that we will get viewing of her in the future.

Although there are only 2 males tagged for the project so far, the females are forming a very interesting distribution map pattern and ideally we would like to know all the female territories. With this information we can start comparing the Erindi leopard territory dynamics with those in the Mpumalanga area.

“Internationalize the plight of the Leopard”



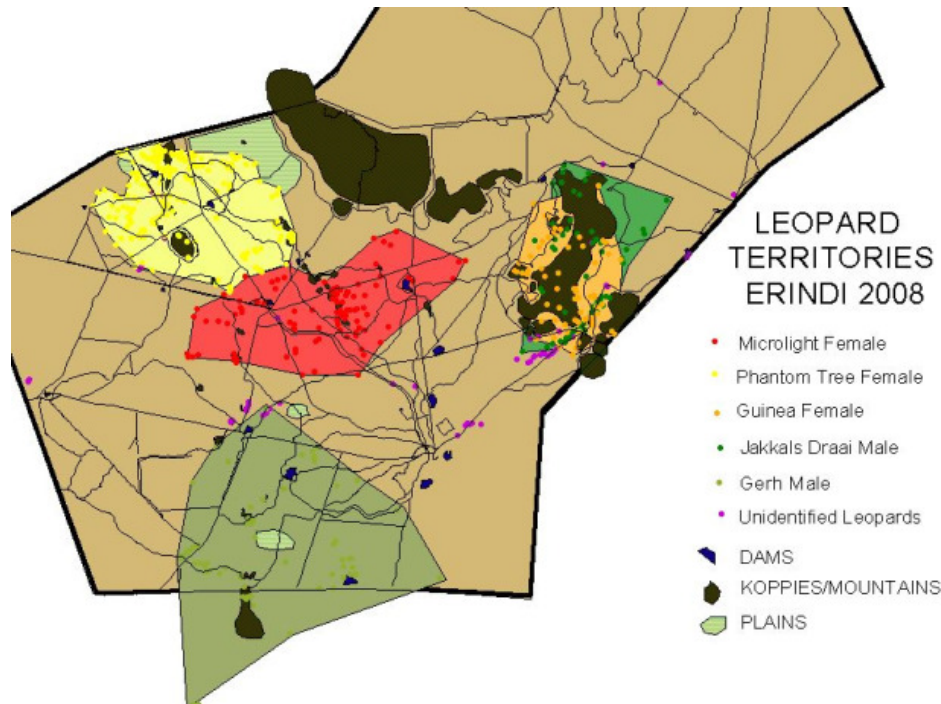
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Natasha de Woronin

<http://www.globalleopard.com>

tasha@globalleopard.com

LEOPARDS OF THE ERINDI LEOPARD PROJECT



A MAP SHOWING THE TERRITORIES AND THE HOME RANGE (Gerh Male) OF THE LEOPARDS OF THE GLOBAL LEOPARD PROJECT AT ERINDI OVER A 1 YEAR PERIOD, SEPTEMBER 2007-SEPTEMBER 2008

FEMALE LEOPARDS

1) MICROLIGHT FEMALE

Microlight Female has spent almost all of her time on the range of koppies where the cub was born. Interestingly she has not move the cub to another area, she has only moved the youngster to different parts of the same range. From the territory map it is easy to see the area where she concentrates her time and every morning and evening she is at the den site area to tend to the cub. During dark hours she heads out to hunt but she never moves very far from this core area.

2) PHANTOM TREE FEMALE (TASH)

Phantom Tree Female has marked the time of gemsbuck *Oryx gazella* calving for the season. She has been hunting in the open plains of Erindi and all her kills noted for the month were those of gemsbuck calves.

She was located with just the female cub and a kill late one September morning. The cub allowed us to approach within 15m, she simply continued to play with her food! When she did decide that she had been looked at enough, she showed her impressive strength for her small size! She picked up the carcass and hauled it over rocks twice as large as she was and hid beside her mother in a shady thicket.

Very excitingly this leopard with both cubs was spotted by a Carlo on game drive with guests late one morning. The female sat watching the vehicle while the cubs continued to play long enough for every one to get a photographic memory!

Unusual behaviour noted during the past months was the fact that very often only one cub was spotted with Phantom Tree Female. For almost 3 weeks the male cub was not viewed and we feared that something had happened to this youngster. Ruan spotted both cubs with the female from the microlight and we then confirmed from the ground that both cubs were absolutely fine! Shortly thereafter the little female cub seemed to disappear and only the young male was spotted with his mother for over a week! We will be watching this behaviour more closely in the future to see exactly what the cubs do and how they become separated for such long periods.

3) GUINEA FEMALE

Always on the mountain!! Guinea Female is still a true “berg tier” but she was spotted late one morning by a bus full of excited Erindi guests leaving the reserve! She was heading down the road and she slipped quietly into the koppies but only after everyone had a fabulous viewing to round off their great Erindi safari experience!

4) NEW FEMALE



THE NEW FEMALE LEOPARD AWAKENING AFTER CAPTURE AND TAGGING.

After having tagged the new female leopard we gave her a day to relax before heading out to see how she was getting along. It was just before sunset and I followed the beeps with the telemetry tracking equipment. There was still a fair amount of daylight so I was as sensitive as possible as most of the leopards are a little shyer during day time. I was quite stricken when I realised ahead of me was a leopard sitting watching the vehicle very carefully! It was apparent very quickly that the leopard was a youngster and what wonderful news that the new female has a cub! The inquisitive youngster was noted to be about 8 months of age and certainly acted this way! The little leopard watched the vehicle move very carefully for a few moments and when the engine was switched off the cat began to stalk towards the car to get a closer look! The game of cat and mouse (leopard and vehicle!) continued through the night, each time the cub lost interest and the engine was started the leopard came to get a closer look! The New Female also showed great interest in the new object and came out to inspect the vehicle a few times and possibly to see that the cub was safe.

It was wonderful to note that she had a kill as well and that the capture and tagging process had not hindered her movements too much.

The female has allowed us brief day time viewing and great hope is held with her as she seems to be unbelievably accepting of the vehicle. Hopefully with sensitive work, game drives will have the opportunity to spend magical hours with this new leopard and her youngster.



THE FIRST SIGHTING OF THE NEW FEMALE'S YOUNGSTER.

MALE LEOPARDS

1) GERH MALE

The young male of Erindi that lives on Gert Schwarting's farm! This leopard truly appears to be searching for a place to settle and it will be very interesting to see how it takes him to establish a territory and how far away from where he was first spotted. Unfortunately he moves further and further from Erindi every month and he spends less and less time within the reserve boundary. The only viewing we are able to get of him is from the microlight and Ruan gets great sightings very regularly. He seems to have accepted the noisy "bird" overhead and he was spotted stalking warthog on Gert's property during September. The great news here is that he is selecting natural prey rather than attempting to catch livestock but young leopards could try a paw at anything so we try and watch his movements as carefully as possible.

From the microlight on morning we pinpointed his exact position and to our astonishment a female leopard ran out of the thicket where we had Gerh Male's signal! We followed the female for a distance from the air and we do wonder if this is the same female that was captured in September. It seems that although leopards are noted to be solitary they do seem have a great deal of relations with others that share the same territory.

2) JAKKALS DRAAI MALE

The only territorial male of the project at this stage is slowly showing the extent of his territory. He ranges over a far smaller area than Gerh Male and due to his habit of remaining on the mountains we are not certain yet what the new data is indicating. He has been located outside of his known territory boundary and in time we will hopefully be able to tell if this is his actual territory or if he is extending the territory that we knew up until this point. So much to learn, so little time!

UNIDENTIFIED LEOPARDS

GLOBAL LEOPARD PROJECT

Natasha de Woronin

<http://www.globalleopard.com>

tasha@globalleopard.com

+ 264 (0)81 355 5728

PULSE AFRICA

<http://www.pulseafrica.co.za>

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ERINDI GAME RESERVE

P.O. Box 40551, Ausspannplatz,

Windhoek, Namibia

<http://www.erindi.com>

erindi@iafrica.com.na

There have been numerous fantastic sightings of leopards that have not been identified as yet. Gerhard had a phenomenal viewing of a smallish leopard very close to the Old Traders Camp. The leopard crossed the road ahead of his vehicle and then ascended into a tree to pose!

Dave, who has been camping at on of the dams for almost 6 months has had a few great viewings of unknown leopards. He disturbed a leopard hunting kudu very close to his tent, both the cat and the kudu fled at high speed! Later signs of kudu fur in the area indicated that perhaps the leopard had a successful hunt despite the intrusion from Dave taking a walk!

Warren of the Global Leopard Project working with the Triosphere film crew was sitting at Dave's Camp beside the dam one morning when a splash into the water nearby caught his and Dave's attention. A leopard had chase or startled an impala that found refuge by leaping into the dam! The leopard was spotted fleeing the scene!

NAMIBIAN WILDLIFE PROJECTS

A great new venture has begun at Erindi Game Reserve. Namibian Wildlife Projects is an experience "behind the scenes" on the reserve. This allows anyone interested to become part of the working team of conservationists involved on the reserve. Have the opportunity to be part of the long hours of animal location and habituation, lions, honey badger, brown hyena, spotted hyena, leopard, python and others. Be part of the capture and get involved in every day reserve happenings such as checking the rehabilitation centre and reserve fences! Accommodation is simple and you'll find that you really get to become part of the Erindi family!

Sarah visited Namibia from Germany in September and was the first of the Namibian Wildlife Projects "students". While she on the reserve she was able to take part in Dr Douw Grobler's capture and Ruan Cloete kept her busy with every day conservation activities. Sarah was also blessed to be at Erindi for the capture of the new female leopard, a well deserved experience as she spent weeks putting effort into set up cage traps and checking these twice a day!



To contact Namibian Wildlife Projects:

Dr Douw Grobler	catchco@catchco.co.za
JJ van Altena	
Ruan Cloete	ruan@erindi.com.na
Natasha de Woronin	tasha@globalleopard.com

GLOBALLEOPARDPROJECT

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<http://www.globalleopard.com>

tasha@globalleopard.com

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PULSE AFRICA

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SPONSOR A LEOPARD

The Global Leopard Project is slowly growing and we have found that there is a great deal of equipment that we need to make this project work. We would love it if you would help us by sponsoring a leopard that you would like to help. For information on the individuals cats and their needs, please contact us via e-mail and we will make sure that you get personal information on your sponsored leopard.

SPONSOR A CAMERA TRAP

Alternatively, sponsor a camera trap to help us keep track of the cats and record other creatures that reside on Erindi Game Reserve. We will send all the photographs to you so that you can see what happens every day while people are not watching!

SUPPORTERS OF THE GLOBAL LEOPARD PROJECT

- **Erindi Game Reserve:** Home of the project and the leopards
- **Pulse Africa:** A contribution from every booking made with Pulse Africa is put towards the GLP.
- **Catchco Africa Dr Douw Grobler:** Capture, equipment and constant support
- **Londoloz Private Game Reserve Rangers:** Ongoing data capture
- **Florissa Keisel:** £5 000-00 (data capture equipment)
- **Rick and Lindy Dekker:** Photographic equipment, binoculars, literature & support
- **Vlasta and Keith Ross-Jones:** Ongoing funds and support
- **Warren Pearson and Juanita:** Inspiration & GLP logo
- **Heidi-Lee Stockenström:** GLP logo and motivation