

THE FIRST CUBS...

When the leopard project began at Erindi Private Game Reserve in late 2007, Phantom Tree Female was captured and Dr Douw Grobler was ecstatic to note that she had 2 very small fetuses developing...

It was more than 4 months later when we thought the cubs may not have survived (as this was the leopards first ever litter), that she finally took them to a kill and we had the chance to get our first glimpse!

The cubs indicated unusual behavior from the start. We were certain that the youngsters were a male and a female but the little male seemed weaker from the beginning! The

female cub was bolder and with leopards this is unusual. It is usually the male that is stronger and braver and for a time we thought that the female may have been hiding some vital parts!

As the cubs grew, for unknown reasons, only one youngster at a time would be with Phantom at kills and for a long period we feared that the shy male cub had disappeared.

During the early part of 2009 we were incredibly pleased to find the male cub with Phantom Tree Female on a large kudu kill!

A few days later while following the mother, we spotted the little female leopard also looking fantastic!

The little female was

certainly not hiding anything but she is still the more confident of the youngsters.

These 2 are reaching the age when their mother will leave them and as we see them as the future of Erindi's leopard viewing, we need to tag them as soon as possible.



Both of Phantom's cubs are strong and looking fantastic!

LONDON MARATHON FOR LEOPARDS!

During 2008 we started with the Global Leopard Project "Leopard Experiences" at Erindi Private Game Reserve. When the project began we often spent more than 230 hours per month in the field trying to locate leopards but less than 40

hours was spent actually viewing the cats. By the end of the year, less than 90 hours of field work gave us about 60 hours of actual direct viewing of the leopards!

During the early part of 2008 Andrzej and Beverly from England joined the

project for a night out. Sadly they did not even get a glimpse of a leopard but Bev decided to raise funds for the GLP by running the London Marathon in April 2008!

BEV, WE WISH YOU ALL THE BEST AND THANK YOU SO

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Summary of 2008:

- During 2008 6 wild leopards were captured and fitted with VHF tracking collars.
- 4 female leopards and 2 male leopards became part of the research.
- 2 Females accepted the research vehicle and they gave rise to the next generation of Erindi leopards. The cubs: 1 female (Honey-thorn Female) and 2 males (Erindi Male and Commiphora Male)

MICROLIGHT FEMALE

Microlight Female has not changed or given in one inch to her dislike of vehicles! She will still not let a noisy engine within a few hundred meters of her and we very rarely attempt to get close with a Land Rover as this surely disturbs her natural behavior.

The main objective of work with Microlight Female is to follow her movements from a distance and to walk with her as she is very accepting of people on foot.

The rains of 2008 were fantastic for the Erindi landscape but the grass rose to incredible heights early in the year. This made tracking Microlight Female very difficult as she became impossible to

see! We were working on the fact that she had given birth to at least 1 cub and that the youngster would be with her when ever she had a kill. Female leopards are unbelievably protective of their cubs and this meant that we could not get too close to her while we tracked her on foot.

She has been amazing though and allowed us within 50-100m of the den where the cub was kept while we walked.

On many occasions we were within 30m of her while walking and this gave rise to a few questions. Her behavior of staying in one place for 3-4 days indicated that she probably had a kill. Calculation of the birth time of the cub indicated that the cub should have been

with her on these kills yet she allowed us to walk very close to her and she neither warned us with a growl nor moved away. The main question is whether the cub is still with her...

Hopefully we will find out in the near future by either a viewing of the cub from the microlight (when the grass dies back a little) or from tracks or signs.

Until this time, we remain extra sensitive towards her and we walk with her with certain caution.

Within the next few month, Microlight Female will need a collar replacement and we hope to get a GPS collar for her to reduce the impact of locating her daily with the vehicles as she still moves so far from us when we approach her in this way.

PHANTOM TREE FEMALE

Phantom Tree Female has been an amazing and unusual leopard to work with. She accepted the research vehicle soon after she was fitted with a tracking collar but it has been interesting to not her daily "moods". There are nights when she is completely accepting of the vehicle and times when she will not allow us to even get a glimpse of her! Her daughter has a different disposition how ever. She tends to react the same

way to the vehicle regardless of the day. It is the youngsters that will be the heart of ecotourism when they grow up as their behavior towards vehicles remains constant and they are not scared easily like the habituated adults such a Phantom Tree Female. Following of cubs seems to be the key to habituation.

Phantom Tree's offspring will follow her name to make it easy in the future to determine relatedness of leopards. Any cubs that Phantom raises will be named after trees as she is.

"Leopards are representatives of wild places that have vanished in many areas...long may they live"

In the next few months the young leopards will start becoming more independent and Phantom will be alone again.

GUINEA FEMALE

Although we had no sightings of Guinea Female early in 2009, GPS positions are gathered almost daily giving us good information on her territory. Interestingly, we can determine a great deal about a leopards behavior from simply gathering this sort of position data each day.

We are very excited to note that Guinea Female returns to exactly the same place

every day and it has been noted the she is in this spot almost every morning and evening. Returning to the same place twice a day is very often a strong indicator that the leopard has cubs!

She must suckle youngsters regularly and most females will return to feed small cubs at sunrise and sunset! There is a strong possibility that Guinea Female is returning to the same place to

a hidden den site and we will try and get to her as often as possible to see if this is in fact the case! Often noted is the fact that females will move cubs regularly to new den sites while they are small and we hope to get a glimpse of this female in the moving act!

We will let every one know if we are lucky enough to find cubs hidden, hopefully by the next newsletter!

XINKOVANYANA FEMALE

During the first months in 2009 Yana Female was found on 6 different kills. This has provided spectacular viewing for both game drive vehicles and Leopard Experiences with the research vehicle.

Due to the incredibly thick impenetrable bush, the only chance that game drive vehicles have of seeing a leopard at this stage is if the cat makes a kill and remains in one place for a few days feeding.

Yana Female has a male youngster (Erindi Male) which she takes to her kills so that he can feed and this increases the chances for our guests to see a leopard (although in the wild there

are no guarantees!). During January and February 2009 there were 115 guests who were lucky enough to get viewing of one of these incredible creatures and it was Yana Female and Erindi Male that provided most of the viewing!

This is incredible as Yana is the newest leopard on the project yet she has been the most accepting towards noisy



Yana Female showing her youngster stalking moves .

engines and chatty people.

Leopards rarely move or hunt with their cubs but on occasion when a female is with her youngster she will initiate a hunt giving a youngster a few hunting guidelines. Yana has been noted to be an exceptionally experienced hunter and we spend a great deal of time with her watching to see whether she teaches her young male about the necessary skills.

As yet we have seen nothing but we have noted 2 very interesting facts. The first is that she is a 'specialized' warthog hunter and the second is that she has never been seen to hoist a kill into a tree...will her young male adopt these 2 tactics or will he form his own skills altogether?

HONEY-THORN FEMALE

Honey-thorn Female is the daughter of Phantom Tree Female and she was born in early 2008. The naming system for young leopards on the project is according to the subject after which the mother is named. Phantom Tree's cubs will all be named after trees as she is.

We were ecstatic to find Honey-thorn Female fit and well and almost a year old in early 2009. She has a similar disposition to her mother and she is

unbelievably accepting of the research vehicle. When we located her with her mother she continually approached the research vehicle in an inquisitive fashion!



We have noted with a few young leopards in the past that if they are a

little fearful of something they will approach it while hissing as if to 'overcome' the fear & test the danger. Honey-thorn did this with us a few times until she realized that there was nothing to be scared of. Through this process she has become very comfortable with human presence.

GER MALE

Ger Male was just leaving his mother when we fitted him with a VHF collar in January 2008. This would make him about 3 years old in early 2009 and he has a long way to go before he establishes a territory of his own. He is a vital part of the project as we do not know how long it takes a male to establish territory or how far he will establish himself from where he was born.

This leopard moves unbelievable distances out of Erindi Game Reserve and we struggle to find him every day even from the microlight.

Due to this, the plan for Ger Male is that we re-capture him and fit him with a GPS/Satellite collar so that we can track him during these vital years.

Ger Male is still at the age where he is learning to hunt and when ever he can he will thief kills from other animals.

We located Yana Female and Erindi Male on a kill in a dry river bed when we suddenly realized that Ger Male had arrived on the scene! Yana Female stayed at the kill with her youngster for a short time before she led him away from the kill abandoning it for Ger Male to finish! We did not note any aggression between the leopards and this fact will be better understood when we analyze the genetics of each cat and we can determine if there is relatedness

ERINDI MALE

We have big plans for this little leopard as we have so much to learn about young males and Erindi Male is unbelievably accepting of the vehicle! We have already gathered some phenomenal data on him and we have discovered how different he is to his mother. One would expect that young leopards learn from their mother and follow the same pattern regarding certain behavior but this youngster often does the opposite!

If Erindi's mother (Yana Female) makes a kill, she hides it in a thicket and as yet she has never been seen to hoist a kill into a tree. In late 2008 he was found with what appeared to be his first kill, a blue wildebeest calf. This kill he put huge effort into hoisting into a large *Acacia* tree. In early 2009 Erindi Male was found making a further 2 kills. He

first managed to subdue a tiny Impala lamb and again he displayed the same hoisting behavior. He put incredible effort into trying to hoist his prize into various trees and he finally got the carcass onto a low fallen dead tree. He then lay on the ground below the hanging kill and played with his food for a long time. He would not let Yana Female near the impala kill, he guarded it and she decided not to argue with him!

A short while later while following the 2 cats, Erindi Male managed to kill a Red-billed francolin. This bird is not much of a meal but again his first reaction was to get his meal as high into a tree as possible! He was unable to find a comfortable spot to sit and eat so he

eventually descended to the ground to feed after he tried madly to catch an



Erindi Male is growing fast and he is already starting to hunt.

COMMIPHORA MALE

Commiphora Male is the sibling of Honey-thorn Female from the same litter. He is unbelievably different to his mother (Phantom Tree Female) and his sibling in that he has been the most shy of the vehicle. Strangely, Phantom was rarely seen with both cubs at kills and on various occasions we thought that this little male had not survived. In early 2009 he put his brave socks on how ever and he started allowing us to really view

him with the vehicle! Phantom Tree Female killed a large kudu cow at the base of an Inselberg and only Commiphora Male was at the kill with her. For the first time he allowed us to start the vehicle engine and move around him without him trying to move away. He did approach the vehicle on a few occasions but his

comfort distance from a car is far greater than his sister. We are not sure why he is less accepting of us, perhaps it is just his nature and this would

"Every leopard has an individual personality and even 2 cubs from the same litter behave very differently"

indicate just how different individual leopards are.

Or perhaps it is because he grew up with a more dominant sibling...will we ever know?

JAKKALS DRAAI MALE

Very sadly Jakkals Draai Male's radio collar went dead at the end of 2008 and we have had no sign of him since. Due to the fact that he is a "berg tier" (a leopard that lives on mountains and does not descend to flat ground very often) it would be difficult in general to find his tracks unless we walked the base of the mountain daily.

We did get almost a full year of GPS

points from him how ever and this has proven very valuable as this was the only collared territorial male on the project. We noted that his territory was the same size as Guinea Female which is very small for a male leopard. Past studies have shown that a male leopard territory should be approximately 3 times larger than a female's territory but we do not yet know why his area is so small. Interestingly, we noted at the end of 2008 that this male was beginning to

expand his territory along the mountains & we would still like to follow up on this.

As with most of the leopards, we have discovered the huge need for GPS collars and as soon as we can we will try and re-capture Jakkals Draai Male hopefully to fit him with a GPS collar and if we are unable to get one we will most definitely remove the collar that he is still wearing.

UNIDENTIFIED LEOPARDS

In late 2008 we photographed a female leopard and her cub outside the Erindi boundary fence. This was the first sighting we had ever had of her and she has since been named "Nebula Female". Sightings of Nebula Female and her daughter did not end there and while on route to see one of the research leopards one evening, one of the guests on a game drive vehicle spotted the female cub on a koppie inside Erindi Game Reserve. This is exciting news as both leopards are very accepting of vehicles and we have plans to include her and her youngster into the project as soon as we have GPS collars available.

A short while later while searching for Yana Female we spotted Nebula Female's cub high in an *Acacia* tree.

Yana was harassing the youngster and the little leopard had found refuge high in the thorny branches of the tree! She showed no fear of the vehicle and for more than an hour she allowed us to watch her with the spot light and the red filter. When Yana finally moved away the cub descended from the tree and



An un-collared female leopard and her female cub.

much to all of our surprise she did not run away from the car! She slowly and cautiously moved past us in full view before she disappeared into the black of night! We sat in silence and absolute awe before we left the area. We decided not to try and peruse her as we may have scared her off with the noisy engine and she had been incredibly trusting of us up until that point.

We found tracks of a few unidentified male leopards early in the year and we have numerous plans to acquire new tracking collars to start including these cats in the project. Leopard territories are like a puzzle and each animal is a piece that needs to be filled in before we can get an idea of leopard ranges on Erindi Private Game Reserve.

GUESTS

Early in 2009 we were blessed to have numerous guests interested in the Global Leopard Project, many of whom were lucky enough to see a leopard up close and personal. We are beyond ecstatic that Freddie and Mari from Walvis Bay, who joined the Leopard Experience trip with 4 friends decided to sponsor the project the very first GPS/satellite collar!

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

We have not ordered the collars as yet due to the fact that we do not have the "prrrrrrrfect" one. It is vital that the GPS collar does not inhibit the cats movement in any way and this means that it needs to be as small as possible. It also needs to have the longest life possible and finding a collar

"During the first two month in 2009 - 115 guests were lucky enough to see leopard at Erindi"

that is small, light and lasts more than a few months is not easy! As soon as we either find ideal collar or design one we will order these and start fitting them to the young leopards first.

Thank you to everyone giving support!

TRAPPING

At the start of 2009 we began setting cage traps to capture and collar leopards for the research project. We use data from leopards already in the project to locate tracks in the field and then determine territorial boundaries (this prevents us from re-capturing a leopard already on the project). We set the traps on these boundaries and this allows us to 'target' specific individuals.

We determined the boundary of a

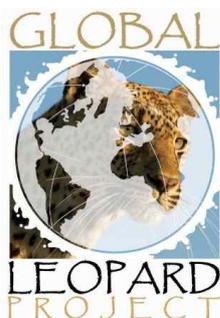
particular male early in the year and placed a trap ready to be set. That night the male walked right past the cage trap! A male takes approximately 3 weeks to cover his territorial boundary and 3 weeks later, to the day he again passed the trap & this time it was set...unfortunately although the trap did close he was not in it!! We struggled to determine if he had set it off



Tracks pass a cage trap

himself or if it was closed before he passed it...

Perhaps this was a good thing as one of the other collars suddenly stopped working and we have since decided to wait a little with capture until we have new more reliable collars and hopefully with the GPS timed tracking system to help us with the huge amount of work.



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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, truly one of the most amazing conservation areas on earth...

www.globalleopard.com
www.erindi.com

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.

ONGOING SPONSORS

~ ERINDI GAME RESERVE: Accommodation, vehicles, fuel, capture and tracking equipment.

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

PLATINUM GLOBE MEMBERS

N\$ 50 000-00+

~ FLORISSA KEISEL: 2007

GOLD GLOBE MEMBERS

N\$ 30 000-00+

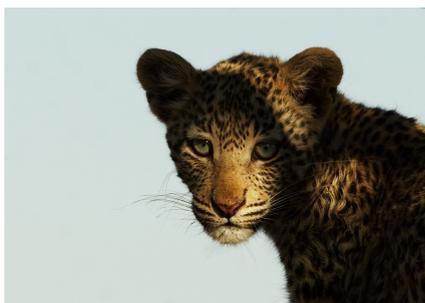
~ Vlasta & Keith Ross-Jones: 2006

~ Rick & Lindy Dekker: 2007

TULLIANA FIELD MEMBERS

N\$ 1 500-00

~ Dr Andrzej Jandziol & Dr Bev Lewis



Honey-thorn Female, one of the young leopards that we are raising funding for. We need a GPS collar so that we can follow her movements when her mother leaves her.

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

~ SATELLITE/GPS COLLARS

+/- US\$25 000-00 EACH

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.