



Robertson Corridor Leopard Project

December 2012 Update

Dear All,

I hope this update finds everyone well!

The November field work trip was very busy and there is lots to report. This was the first camera check of the project's 36 camera stations of Phase 2. During this trip, an additional 8 camera stations were installed and we'd like to thank Ismail Bhorat of Melozhori Game Reserve for his generous donation,

which made these new stations possible. These 8 new Phase 2 "Part II" camera stations cover the mountains above Ashton, more of the McGregor valley and the mountains further east of McGregor toward Stormsvlei. We want to welcome these new Landowners to the project!

Unfortunately, we must also report the theft of the two cameras from the Dassieshoek Nature Reserve station. While, Dassieshoek is a wonderful area for us to potentially find leopard, there are no immediate plans to return cameras to this location because of security concerns. Consequently, with the addition of the 8 stations and the loss of the Dassieshoek station, the project currently has a new total of 43 active stations across the region.

Now on to some exciting leopard news! As you all know, one of the things we were curious about was whether the leopards were crossing the Breede River. We all suspected that they were, but now we have photographic proof! The big male and female photographed together at the Rooiberg Mountain stations in early September have both been found on separate occasions at camera stations on the southern side of the river. The male was found on a station about 6km from Rooiberg Mountain and the female about 10km away.

The Phase 2 stations have also bridged the gap between the Robertson Corridor Project and Landmark's Greyton Mountains Project study areas! We were curious to see whether we would find the same leopards on the southern and northern slopes of the Riviersonderend mountain range, and we have! Results from the Greyton Project found 6 leopards between Genadendal and Riviersonderend and 2 of these leopards are now shared by both projects. One of these leopards was found about 10km east of Greyton and has now been seen as far east as the mountains surrounding Agterkliphoogte and as far west as the mountains above McGregor (about 25km from station to station as the crow flies). The second shared leopard was found in the mountains above Greyton and Genadendal and was seen in the mountains and veld that surround Agterkliphoogte. These are very exciting findings and we look forward to learning more about the movements of these leopards.

In total, 19 of the 35 remaining Phase 2 stations found leopard during this trip. After analyzing all the leopard photos, we believe we have identified 12 new leopards in addition to the 9 from the Phase 1 cameras bringing our total up to 21 individuals!

Many more Leopard Friendly Farm signboards have also been put up and its so gratifying to drive around the region and see the signs displayed so proudly. I took photos of some of them (see next page), though if you do not see your photo within the collage, please take a photo and email it to me. We would love to have a photo of each one!

The next camera check trip will be around the third week of January and many camera stations will be removed (those that were set up mid September that have been active for 4 months). Though, there will still be at least a dozen stations that will remain active for one or two more camera checks. I will be joined by Landmark Foundation's newest addition, Alessandra Benton, who will take over the camera checks while I am back in the United States. Though, I am happy to report that I plan to return to the Western Cape in the winter to pursue doing a PhD with Landmark and the data from the Robertson Corridor Project. So, it looks like you are stuck with me a while longer!

We would like to extend the invitation to attend the Project Information Session being held on January 30, 2013 at the Graham Beck Skills Centre (you should have received this email invitation on the 5th or 7th of December). I will present the initial research findings, introduce everyone to all the Phase 2 leopards and share future plans for the PhD and Robertson region.

I can't say this enough... the continued support, involvement and enthusiasm from the communities of the greater Robertson region are what makes all of this possible. The pride, respect and concern that so many of you have for the biodiversity on your farms and in your region is extraordinary. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to continue to work with and be a part of this wonderful community! Best wishes for the holiday season and we look forward to seeing you in the new year!

All the best,

Landmark Foundation's Leopard Team

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