



Spot Newsflash!

Dear Spot-Adopters,

24th June 2010

We can't quite believe it, but at least one of Spot's cubs are alive!

We tracked Spot on Thursday 10th June, and she was high in the mountain, but we could see from the GPS fixes that she had been on the road to Driehoek the previous night. We decided to investigate. To our astonishment we saw not only Spot's spoor, but the tracks of a much smaller leopard, with a shorter stride, right next to hers. In one place there were two sets of smaller tracks along with Spot's. The tracks were 4,5 – 5cm long, as opposed to Spot's 6,5 – 7cm tracks.



Just to make sure, we raced up to a pair of remote cameras that we had set on a ledge high up on the mountain. There were two photos of leopard, but neither of them good enough to be sure if it was the cub, though one was certainly small:



The two frustrating photos that didn't quite give us the evidence we were hoping for...



On the 19th June we tracked Spot again. She was at the base of the mountain across the valley from us and on the move. We sat in the icy wind peering through binoculars, scanning the landscape for signs of movement. It was nearly an hour later when Dawie, the farm manager from Driehoek, suddenly saw her. “She’s there, to the right of the square rock!” “Which square rock?” “Keep your eyes on her!” “Where is she?” “There!” “ I don’t know where you’re looking!” “Ohhhh, I can see her!” “WHERE?” “You see that big square rock, behind that there is a small tree, she’s just in front of the tree...” At last we could all see her. We watched as she moved along the base of the mountain. She snaked through the long grass then up into some thick bush. A Black Harrier spotted her and dipped low over her head repeatedly, dive-bombing her. This made it much easier for us to keep track of where Spot was. Quinton, all the while, had been trying to keep track of her through the tiny viewfinder of the camera, had managed to get a few video clips of her, although she was too far away for good footage. Interestingly, there were no cubs accompanying her.

On 22nd June, we decided to check the remote cameras once more. The battery was dead on the first camera we checked. No leopards. On the second camera, there were great photos of a Cape fox, but no leopards. We headed up the steep mountain slope again to check the cameras on the ledge. Hardly daring to hope, we checked the photos – leopard! It was Max. The next photo, “It’s the cub!” It is impossible to describe the joy and wonder we felt at seeing that photograph and the following two as well. Perhaps it is best to simply show you what we saw...





All our best,

The Cape Leopard Trust Team