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## Adopt-A-Spot Sponsors' Exclusive update on 'Spot'

August 2010

Dear Adopt-A-Spot Sponsor

Hoping that we would get some new photos of the cubs we delayed checking the camera trap until the last minute. We got photos, but the cub is just such a curious creature that in all the photos it has its face up against the camera! You can see that it still has that fluffy look that youngsters have.



At the same camera station as the infrared photo, we got this photograph of Spot's two favourite food items: klipspringer and dassie (Tafelberg is in the background).



Since the last newsflash we have tried several times to track Spot, in the hopes of seeing her and her cub and capturing something on film. We were very lucky and saw her several times for fleeting moments, although her cub was not with her. On one of these occasions, we had photojournalist Jurgen Vogt with us. Here is an extract from the article he wrote about the experience:

*“She’s close”, exclaims Quinton, “Quite low down on the slope on the opposite side of the valley. “Time to go leopard tracking”.*

*I stare warily at the beautiful desolate rocky tops of the peaks surrounding our hiding place. What an incredible location to find so much life, I think to myself. We have been in hiding for over an hour waiting patiently for the leopard to make her way past us. My camera is ready and my finger is twitching in the hope of getting my first glimpse and image of a Cape mountain leopard, but still no sign of movement other than the wind and the persistent alarm calls of the dassies that can obviously see what we can’t.*

*Into our second hour and Quinton makes the call to get another GPS location on her. It seems that she has remained about 420meters away from our position just out of site from us behind a rocky outcrop. There is no use going after her so we decide to wait a while longer. By this point our water has run out and I’m beginning to realize how hot this winter day has become as we bake up here on the dark rock*



*with no shade to crawl into. Once again I am amazed at the harsh environment and can’t imagine how tough the conditions would be in summer. Quinton explains that they monitor the leopards at all times of the year even through the hottest months.*

*An hour later the sun starts to set and our chances of seeing her are dwindling along with the source of our heat. We decide to hike out via the last location we had of her as we have concluded that she must have made a kill to keep her stationary for so long. Part of Quinton’s study is to see what kills she is making and gather data on the prey.*

*We walk slowly and alertly towards the location that she was a few hours ago but all is absolutely still, even the dassies seem to have lost interest in this direction. I lower my camera and start to think of the cold clear river flowing further down in the valley next to Quinton’s trusty Land Cruiser and how good that*

*water is going to taste. My daydreaming is shattered when Elizabeth exclaims, “There she is!” I turn*

*around at first stunned and then spurred into action. My eyes are frantically sweeping the slopes above us for a glimpse. In the last fading light I see the surreal form of this small amazing cat as she leaps up the cliff face above us. She is too quick for me to shoot an image but Quinton was ready and managed to fire off a few shots, capturing her leaping up a rock face before she disappeared.*

*Suddenly she is gone, and the valley returns to its peaceful silent state. As the adrenalin starts to subside we inspect the remains of a dassie that she had been feeding on. A quick few images and measurements and we start back for the Land Cruiser. We know she will return to her kill once we are gone as nothing gets wasted out here. We walk down in silence; no words are necessary. Quinton and Elizabeth share one loving look and smile at each other, as for me, I can't keep the grin off my face. "One fleeting glimpse, makes all our work worthwhile" says Quinton. How right he is.*

We are very pleased with our new Bushnell camera, sponsored by George van der Watt, who has recently bought property in Spot's area. We are yet to test the efficacy of the infrared at night, but are extremely impressed with the quality of the daytime photographs that it takes. This stunning photograph of Spot's mate, Max, (below) is testament to this.



*Max (M6) in all his glory*

Best wishes and our thanks,

The Cape Leopard Trust Team