

National Leopard Census Project

September 2017 – March 2019

Progress report August 2018

The recent IUCN Red Data List (2016) recategorised the conservation status of leopard globally, from *Near Threatened* to *Vulnerable*. This places greater significance on the need to better understand the status, population size and trends of the Namibian leopard population.



While the leopard has a broad geographical range in Namibia, from the Namib desert to the Zambezi woodlands, it is rarely seen. As a result, there is a limited amount of information available on which to base its conservation and management. As a result, a number of organisations are collaborating to carry out a National Leopard Census, including the Ministry of Environment & Tourism, the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia (LCMAN), NAPHA and the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE). Dr. Louisa Richmond-Coggan of LRC Wildlife Conservation is leading this research project, which aims to better understanding the population ecology and dynamics of leopard in Namibia. The project is supported by, and draws upon, a wide range of partners including academic researchers, environmental NGOs, the tourism sector, conservancies, private protected areas, farmers, and anyone with information on leopards, including sightings, photographs, distribution data and population trends. By being as inclusive as possible, it is hoped that the whole country

will be covered and that all available information will be captured to make the results of this leopard census as accurate as possible.

To conserve large carnivores such as the leopard, it is necessary to understand their abundance in human dominated landscapes, which is where the real conservation action is needed. The project covers both land inside and outside national parks and combines ecological methods and social science, in order to better understand the pressures on, and status of, the leopard population across Namibia.

The project uses remote camera traps to determine leopard densities in two key areas of Namibia, the Auas Mountains and freehold farmland east of Omaruru, over the course of two surveys. The first study was successfully conducted during the period of August to November 2017 in the Auas Mountains. The project deployed 50 dual camera trap locations across eleven farms, covering an area of 1,226 km². The cameras were placed alongside dry river beds, rocky valleys, game trails, water troughs and tracks, all environments preferred by leopards. Over the course of the two-month survey more than two million photographs were taken of a broad variety of species including leopard. The Omaruru survey began in late July 2018, using the same parameters across nine farms covering 1,200 km². Although the Omaruru survey is still very much in its infancy initial leopard captures have been encouraging with eight individual leopards already identified at just seven locations within the first four nights. This survey will continue to collect photographs until October.

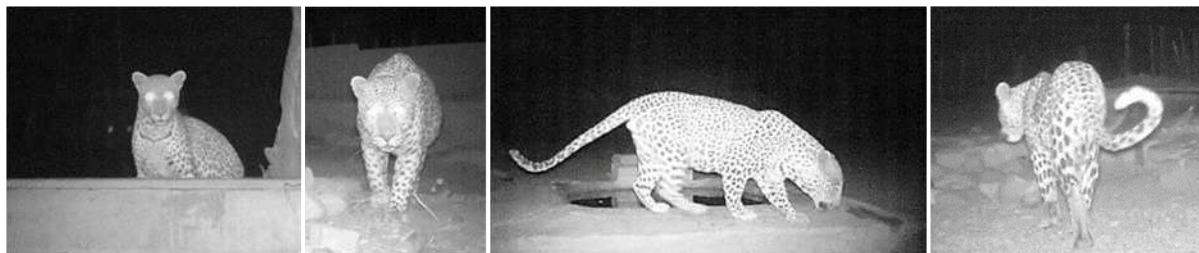


In addition to camera traps, a questionnaire is used to collect information on leopard and other carnivore presence and distribution, as well as information on livestock and game losses to leopard, and actions taken by farmers. This involves extensive travel across Namibia to attend farmer's and conservancy meetings to raise awareness of the project, to encourage the involvement of farmers and to obtain information from land

owners and custodians. With the permission of AGRA, the Windhoek Livestock and Namboer auctions and sales, and other agricultural events were visited to meet and engage landowners. To date 310 questionnaires of the target number of 400 have been collected.



The interest and response of the Namibian landowners has been overwhelmingly positive, and their support so far has been invaluable to the success of the project. Along with the questionnaires, landowners have also provided private camera trap photographs and sightings of leopard on their farms and surrounding areas. Over the next nine months the project continues to rely upon the input from more landowners until the final set of results will be analysed and published.



For more information on the project, or to contribute information on leopards in Namibia, please contact Dr. Louisa Richmond-Coggan on 081 2230610 or at louisa@lrcwildlifeconservation.com.

This project is supported by:

