



Quarterly Newsletter - September 2020, Volume 2

The Cape Leopard Trust (CLT) is a non-governmental organisation that strives to ensure the long-term survival of leopards, their prey and their habitat through scientific research, applied conservation and environmental education. One of their areas of interest is the threat of illegal wire snares, and their research has shown that this hunting method is a big problem in the greater Boland region and quite possibly also in the wider Western Cape. From June 2019 to June 2020, the CLT ran an official Snare Patrol Project to assess the prevalence of illegal snare-hunting on private properties bordering the four major provincial nature reserves (Limietberg, Jonkershoek, Hottentots-Holland and Kogelberg), collectively encompassing the majority of the Boland Mountain Complex (BMC).

The numbers:

A dedicated snare patrol officer carried out more than 215 patrols and covered a whopping 1400 km of mountainside on foot. During the survey period he removed a total of 673 illegal animal traps, of which 642 were snare traps. The vast majority of snares were made from wire, with discarded cable and nylon also featuring as snare materials. Most of the snares he uncovered were anchored to trees and fence posts, primarily along game trails and fence lines and in stands of alien and disturbed natural vegetation.

The bad news:

The CLT snare patrol project has confirmed that hunting with snares is a very real and prevalent problem in a region not traditionally associated with snaring. Some of the snares found were visibly old and rusted, highlighting the fact that the threat to animals remain in the undergrowth long after the person who set the trap has stopped checking it. Snaring as a hunting method is extremely indiscriminate in that the hunter cannot select for species, age or sex of animals caught.



Wire snare. Image supplied by CLT..

Animal welfare is of course a major concern since caught animals die a slow, painful death or can be left severely injured or maimed if they manage to escape. The species most commonly caught are porcupine and small antelope such as duiker and grysbok. This is particularly concerning since porcupine and small antelope form the staple of leopard diet in the BMC. Although predators are not targeted *per se*, they use the same habitat and paths as their prey and they themselves can also be ensnared.

The positive news:

Private property harbours a large proportion of biodiversity in South Africa. The willing participation of so many landowners and managers has been very encouraging. Many owners and managers were simply unaware that this practice has been going on unabated, but as soon as they learned about it, remedial measures were implemented. On properties where punitive measures are put in place and awareness is raised around the illegality and harmful effects of snaring, there appears to be a decline in snaring activity. The data gathered from the snare patrols can now be used to educate and inform landowners and managers on what materials to remove from the land and where to look for new snares. The CLT has also held a number of training workshops with various partners to build capacity within the local conservation field.



Information session on snaring.
Image supplied by CLT..

What now?

Wire snares is a concealed and deadly threat that is carefully hidden in the undergrowth and often almost invisible to animals until it's too late. More feet and eyes on the ground are needed – and anyone who spends time out in nature can easily assist by looking out for snares and removing them. Hikers, mountain bikers, casual strollers and people living on farms and smallholdings are requested to keep their eyes wide open for snares when out and about.



Wire snares collected. Image supplied by CLT..

What can the public do?

- ❖ While enjoying time out in nature, be on the lookout for illegal wire snares. Cut and disarm these snares and report them to the CLT – see online reporting tool below. Also report other suspicious activities like other types of traps & feral dogs.
- ❖ Members of conservancies, hiking clubs, MTB clubs, neighbourhood watches etc, can make concerted efforts to gather regularly for snare patrols on private properties (following due process for permission from the owner/manager), similar to community-driven alien clearing hacks

What can landowners and managers do?

- ❖ Forewarn all permanent and seasonal workers that snaring is illegal and will not be tolerated (include clause in contracts).
- ❖ All other contractors entering the property (i.e. wood cutters, trail builders, alien clearing teams etc.) should be made aware of zero tolerance towards snaring.
- ❖ Educate workforce about the negative aspects and impacts of snaring.
- ❖ Regular, visible patrols to find and remove snares.
- ❖ Limit/restrict access to material that can be used to make snares (i.e. discarded vineyard wire and pieces of cable).
- ❖ Share knowledge and create awareness about snaring activity among neighbours.
- ❖ Engage in conversation with the workforce to understand the underlying factors driving bushmeat hunting and snaring activity, and try to resolve those matters.

Cape Leopard Trust Snare Aware resources

- ❖ An **online snare reporting platform** for members of the public to upload their snare finds (at this time specifically focussed on the Western Cape) will contribute to our research. Take a picture of your find and report it to us via the online platform, found at app.capeleopard.org.za.
- ❖ A **downloadable information sheet** about snares, created in collaboration with CapeNature, for private landowners and any interested parties – found at bit.ly/CLTSnareAwareResources. A **short 2.5min video** about snares and what to look out for – found at bit.ly/CLTBeSnareAware



Wire snare at fence. Image supplied by CLT..

From Day Zero to...water...water...everywhere!!

It is not too long ago that 'Day Zero' loomed over the residents of Cape Town and surrounding areas. This crisis painted a dire picture of the city's future water resources. While the impact of a drought are not only largely limited to the agricultural sector, this was most concerning to farmers and the wider agriculture and tourism sector as this directly affected their income and livelihoods.



Theewaterskloof Dam in 2017. Image from City of Cape Town..

In 2018, however, we saw more rain in the Western Cape than the preceding years and the dam levels gradually increased (see table below). Dam levels reached close to 70% capacity compared to less than 10% in 2017. This was mainly due to a good rainfall season and behavioral interventions ignited by water restrictions. Looking at the table below all the six largest dams in the Western Cape show higher water levels compared to previous years due to current rainfall. The 2020 winter season has indeed brought a most extraordinary turn-around.

Water Stored in Major Dams (WCWSS)

Overall Percentage Full **96.4%**

Weekly Change **0.8%**

MAJOR DAMS (WCWSS)	STORAGE						
	CAPACITY	%	%	%	%	%	%
	MI	14 September 2020	Previous week	2019	2018	2017	2016
BERG RIVER	130 010	100.5	100.7	99.3	97.9	61.8	70.9
STEENBRAS LOWER	33 517	99.9	101.0	100.0	89.2	48.4	69.1
STEENBRAS UPPER	31 767	99.3	100.8	85.5	97.0	100.7	98.3
THEEWATERSKLOOF	480 188	95.6	94.7	72.2	52.0	28.8	52.9
VOËLVLEI	164 095	94.4	92.5	88.1	82.4	26.2	67.6
WEMMERSHOEK	58 644	95.4	94.2	90.8	90.0	43.7	70.4
TOTAL STORED	898 221	865 560	858 391	734 356	625 884	335 736	552 797
% STORAGE		96.4%	95.6%	81.8%	69.7%	37.4%	61.5%

Table shows the water levels stored in the six largest dams in Western Cape from 2016 until 2020, source: City of Cape Town.

Despite the negative impact associated with heavy rainfall such as flooding (which occurs mainly in the informal settlements), water is a fundamental human need and it is beneficial for crop production. Countless local farmers in the Western Cape who were dealt heavy blows by the drought are now hopefully recouping their losses as we indeed had a wonderful winter season this year. On the contrary, if water conservation efforts are not continuously implemented, the water crisis could persist. Therefore it is everyone's responsibility to adapt good behavioral interventions for saving water.

Baboon Management in the Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve

In July 2020 Human Wildlife Solutions (HWS) was appointed as the service provider for managing baboons for the next 3 years on behalf of the Overstrand Municipality. The Kogelberg Biosphere Reserve Company has been identified as a stakeholder to represent the community in the Baboon Management Programme for the area. The committee will address issues around baboon management and assist with information sharing and knowledge. Each person can do his bit to assist with baboon management.

Waste management

Use upright baboon-proof dustbins for your waste and secure baboon-proof bins to a wall or post so that baboons cannot knock the bin over. If the bins fall to the ground the lid will pop open, thus allowing access to the waste contained therein and creating a huge mess that you will have to clean up. On days when garbage is collected remember to release the bin so that it can be moved.



Baboon captured by camera trap in Kogelberg Nature Reserve. Image supplied by CLT.

Make sure bins are not over filled – if the lid can't close properly the bin is not baboon-proof. Do not place black bags full of garbage outside or next to baboon proof bins; if you need extra storage for your waste, contact the municipality for additional baboon proof bins. If your neighbours are not managing their waste properly, this will attract baboons into your area. Speak to your neighbours so that you are all working together towards reducing waste and do not attract baboons into your area.



Mom and baby captured by camera trap in Kogelberg Nature Reserve. Image supplied by CLT.

In your garden and Home

Keep dog food bowls inside the house, not in the garden. Do not feed birds in the garden – the baboons love the seeds and this will add to your garden's attraction for them. Use lockable bins for composting if you make your own compost and try to enclose the veggie garden and fruit trees in baboon-proof fencing. Use burglar bars with the bars not more than 8cm apart to keep smaller baboons out.

Groenlandberg Catchment Coordinator

Ryno Bezuidenhout has joined the Groenland Water Users Association's team in 15 July and will be working as Water Stewardship Coordinator. We spoke to Ryno to find out a bit more about the person who will be fighting for water security.

Tell us more about yourself?

I was born in George and soon after moved to Oudtshoorn. I grew up in the Little Karoo where I attended Agricultural High School Oakdale and matriculated in 1992. After school I did National Service for the South African Defence Force and completed my Junior Leadership Course in Oudtshoorn in 1993. After that I was deployed on the Mozambique border and formed part of an Anti-Poaching Reaction Force.

After that I joined the South African National Defence Force in 1995 and became an Environmental Manager for Defence Properties in the Western Cape.



Image supplied by Ryno Bezuidenhout..

How long have you been in Conservation and where did it all start?

I grew up loving nature and spend most of my school years studying South African snakes and kept and bred snakes from the age of ten. I did environmental work for the Department of Defence and later did private environmental consultation and alien clearing contracts in the Western Cape for various private landowners, municipalities and Government Departments. I was appointed as the National Field Manager by the Agricultural Research Council to plan and manage the invasive alien aerial surveys and mapping and also surveyed Lesotho and Swaziland. I did snake research with CapeNature and worked with the University of Bangor in Wales on the Dna classification of South African snakes. I also cofounded the Cape Reptile Institute and developed accredited snake identification and handling courses. Currently I am qualified in the implementation, development and auditing of ISO 14001 systems and are busy completing my National Diploma in Environmental Management.

What has been the most exciting part of your career?

Working anti-poaching operations in Limpopo and spending time in Limpopo. Also flying over the whole of South Africa twice in a helicopter doing surveys in areas like Kruger and St Lucia that one cannot usually get permission to fly over.

What inspires you?

Discovering new things, learning from nature and never to have a "similar day" experience in my work environment.

What do you see as the biggest threat to water security?

The fact that most people do not understand water dynamics and are negligent in water usage and looking after water health (quantity and quality) and our aquatic environment, riparians, wetlands and catchment areas. Invasive alien plant control is definitely the biggest threat to our water security and biodiversity.



Palmiet river. Image supplied by Corlie Hugo..

What projects of the Groenland Water Users Association excites you the most?

The Elgin Basin (Water Fund) project driven by The Nature Conservancy and working with WWF.

What vision do you have for your role as Coordinator?

To contribute to the efforts already made by all the other role-players in the area and implement an environmental module that can be followed by others in South Africa.

If anyone has any questions about the work you do or Groenland Water Users Association, where can they get in touch with you?

The Groenland WUA Offices is situated on the right hand side of Viljoenshoop Road, about 2 kilometres from the N2 national road. They can contact me:

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