



17th June 2014

Start

TRAGIC DEATH OF A LEOPARD ON THE ROAD IN NORTHERN LIMPOPO

Public holidays often see an increase in traffic on the roads, particularly visits to our national parks, and the recent weekend was no exception. Sadly, this public holiday one of our country's charismatic Big Five, a young female Leopard, was hit by a vehicle on the road in a recognised roadkill hotspot area.

Wendy Collinson, a field officer with the Endangered Wildlife Trust's, Wildlife and Transport Programme (EWT-WTP), was on hand the next morning to record this incident. Collinson, resides in northern Limpopo, where she has conducted intensive surveys of wildlife killed on the roads traversing the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area (GMTFCA). This area was recognised as an important area for conservation and cultural heritage when it was declared a World Heritage Site in 2003. Over a 120-day period in 2012, Collinson found 1121 roadkill carcasses. This did not account for animals that crawled off the road to die after being hit or were scavenged by predators.

The GMTFCA is rich in species diversity which makes it an upcoming top destination for wildlife enthusiasts. Currently, of the mammals occurring in the area, six are considered Endangered and 12 Vulnerable. Southern Africa is considered to have the highest reptile diversity in Africa and 25% of these reptiles occur in the GMTFCA. Of the 858 species of birds that occur in South Africa, at least 50% of them are found in the GMTFCA.

Mining, particularly diamond and coal mining, is the most significant contributor to the GDP of Limpopo Province with several areas in the GMTFCA currently being mined and many more earmarked for exploration. The prospect of heavy and increasing traffic by way of labour transportation and heavy vehicles is a cause for concern due to their potential impact on wildlife. In addition, with the GMTFCA having the potential to become a major tourist destination in southern Africa, tourist-borne traffic is likely to also increase. Collinson said, "I have huge concerns about the increase in roadkill numbers in this area, particularly with the increase in mining trucks on the road, and more visitors to the area to see the exceptional wildlife. A dead Leopard is something they really do not want to see."

From her surveys in 2012, Collinson identified a major roadkill hotspot on one section of the road in the GMTFCA – precisely where this young Leopard was hit. She found that on days when large trucks were using the road, roadkill numbers also increased. This presented the EWT with a perfect opportunity to implement a recognised mitigation measure that has been used effectively in other countries – the use of signage and roadside fencing to direct wildlife to cross the road through existing culverts. This mitigation measure will be implemented once funding is secured. Many species,

Physical Address: Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,
Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

Postal Address: Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** ewt@ewt.org.za **Web:** www.ewt.org.za

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.



including Leopard and Wild Dog are therefore still at risk from the potential threat of vehicle collisions.

On the back of Collinson's findings in Limpopo, the EWT has launched a new project to reduce the number of animals killed on roads inside national parks. Pilanesberg National Park in North West Province is the first park to support the initiative. Unfortunately park staff have already also reported a Leopard killed on the road in Pilanesberg earlier this year, and similar reports have also been received from other parks across the country. Due to their nocturnal behaviour, Leopards are vulnerable to roadkill both in and outside of protected areas. This, in tandem with other threats including loss of habitat and persecution, means that Leopards are very likely to be up-listed in the latest revision of the Red List of Mammals of South Africa, Lesotho and Swaziland due out in late 2014.

The EWT's Wildlife Roadkill Project is supported by Bridgestone SA and Arrow Bulk Logistics, with logistical support from Mopane Bush Lodge. For further information please contact Wendy Collinson on wendyc@ewt.org.za or Claire Patterson-Abrolat on clairep@ewt.org.za

End.

Contact: Wendy Collinson
 Project executant: Roadkill Research and Mitigation Project
 Endangered Wildlife Trust
 Tel: +27 11 372 3600
wendyc@ewt.org.za

Claire Patterson-Abrolat
 Manager: Wildlife & Transport Programme
 Endangered Wildlife Trust
 Tel: +27 11 372 3600
clairep@ewt.org.za

and

Nomonde Mxhalisa
 Communications Manager
 The Endangered Wildlife Trust
 Tel: +27 11 372 3600
nomondem@ewt.org.za

Physical Address: Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,
 Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

Postal Address: Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** ewt@ewt.org.za **Web:** www.ewt.org.za

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
 The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.



Physical Address: Building K2, Ardeer Road, Pinelands Office Park,
Modderfontein 1609, Gauteng, South Africa

Postal Address: Private Bag X 11, Modderfontein 1645, Gauteng, South Africa

Tel: +27 (0) 11 372 3600 **Fax:** +27 (0) 11 608 4682 **E-mail:** ewt@ewt.org.za **Web:** www.ewt.org.za

The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
The Endangered Wildlife Trust is US 501(c)(3) compliant under **US IRS Registration number:** EMP98-0586801.