

THE ALICE MCCOSH NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2018

KASIM RAFIQ LEOPARDS IN THE OKAVANGO DELTA

Kasim has spent several months in northern Botswana and several more months writing up his research. The aim of Kasim's project was threefold:

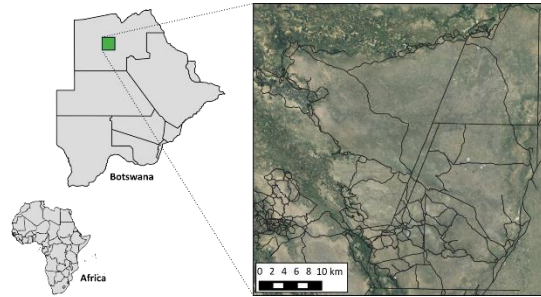
- i. To investigate leopard space-use and activity patterns;
- ii. To investigate direct encounters between leopards and other large African predators; and
- iii. To implement a pilot study of whether photographs taken by wildlife tourists could be used to aid wildlife monitoring.

What Kasim's results suggest is that leopard space-use and the times when they are active are not primarily shaped by predator avoidance.

Using radio collars Kasim found that encounters between leopards and other large African predators increased during periods of shared activity overlap but were relatively resilient to direct encounters.



GPS radio collar on a male leopard



The study area and its location within Africa and Botswana.

It appears leopards are able to coexist alongside competitors with minimal costs. Therefore, deterrents to manipulate leopard space-use are likely to be most effective if the deterrents are based on signals (acoustic or scent-based) from other leopards and not from other large predators.

The third aim of the project successfully concluded that when compared to more traditional monitoring methods the "tourist-photograph" method was successful in detecting the presence of the five large carnivore species within the Study area, provided robust density estimates and was the cheapest programme to implement. There is the real potential that tourist contributed data could be used to facilitate wildlife monitoring in protected areas.

[Applications](#) are now open for next year. The closing date is **30th November 2018** and the successful applicant(s) will be announced in early 2019.

SPECIES RECOVERY TRUST CONSERVATION OF THE FIELD GENTIAN

The Species Recovery Trust were awarded a grant last year to examine the status of the Field Gentian in the New Forest and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks.

Detailed ecological information from both areas has been collected, as well as an updated picture of how the populations fluctuate from year to year.

The New Forest project received a massive setback, when the heatwave this summer killed off every single population. One of the larger populations did then produce a small handful of plants at the end of September. These are being closely monitored to see whether they are able to set seed in the remaining days of Autumn.



Gentianella campestris

The heatwave had similar effects on several of the Pembrokeshire populations, although a handful of sites were not badly affected.

What this catastrophic event now allows is a chance to monitor the recovery of these sites, and ascertain what survival mechanisms the plants possess.

The Species Recovery Trust will provide a comprehensive report in 2019.

2018 AWARDS

The Alice McCosh Trust has made two awards:

Kelleigh Greene, The Open University – will study the *Ophrys apifera* species (bee orchids). She is attempting to answer the following questions:

- Is attracting one pollinator species better than attracting many pollinator species, in terms of pollination rates?
- If a pollinator is no longer required, as with the self-pollinating *Ophrys apifera*, will the attractive signals be lost?

Sarah Richdon, University of Bristol - will be investigating the genetic pedigree of the critically endangered Livingstone fruit bat (*Pteropus livingstonii*) in captive populations in zoos in Britain.

OTHER NEWS

A beautifully designed Christmas card is now available for purchase. Click [this link](#) to take you directly to the order form.

All costs associated with its production have been covered by a generous donor which means **100%** of what you pay goes directly to the Alice McCosh Trust.

And we still have a limited number of the original designs.

