



# Zuurberg Chamber Meeting

held at Schotia Safaris on 15 August 2019



**ZUURBERG CHAMBER  
BEDRYFSKAMER**

*by Zuurberg Chamber Committee*

*Schotia Safaris*

PRIVATE GAME RESERVE

A tranquil, relaxed feeling fills the soul as one drives past numerous game species at Schotia Safaris. The WRSA Zuurberg Chamber together with their guest speakers welcomed delegates as they arrived. The saloon and kerosene lamp aroma guaranteed a perfect African atmosphere.

Loodt Büchner (Chairman), welcomed all and introduced the first guest speaker – Prof Peet van der Merwe. His insightful talk on aspects that are important for the ecotourism industry and examples had everyone at the edge of their seats. Prof Van der Merwe further shed light on topics such as why people tend to travel and how one should sell an expectation.

Eardley Rudman (PHASA rep for Eastern Cape), explained that the organisation promotes sustainable utilization which includes conservation of natural resources, economic development and social development. He indicated that leopards need to be conserved and to ensure their sustainability, increase their value through utilisation. Loodt on behalf of the WRSA Zuurberg Chamber happily handed over R12 000 to assist PHASA with the national Leopard Research Project especially in the Zuurberg and Eastern cape area.



Prof Peet van der Merwe (Tourism Management and Economics NWU)



Eardley Rudman  
(PHASA rep for Eastern Cape)



Leanne Ray (Singatha)  
Leopard research project



Mariska Nel (Singatha)  
Leopard research project



Mariska Nel and Leanne Ray from Singatha Conservation Research Fund gave a presentation on their current leopard project in collaboration with PHASA, Conservation Research Fund and Rhino Connect. Mariska explained that over time they have realized the best way to do research is to work directly with the landowner who has numerous years of knowledge and experience in the field to assist with collecting valuable and accurate information. "They know their property the best and can save a researcher a lot of time and problems when starting a new project".

Leanne's current focus is on estimating Leopard densities on a property using trail cameras and testing different grid-placement methods – two cameras are used simultaneously to cover both sides of the leopard's path to ensure maximum coverage. These cameras are not directly positioned opposite each other as the flash could influence the other picture. She further emphasized that leopards were experiencing habitat loss and that illegal poaching is a cause for major concern.

A slight debate ensued around the fire pit afterwards around how to go about leopard conservation and utilisation. The enthusiasm towards the research project could be felt however stern, experienced voices cautioned how the data should be collected and used.

The 2016 ban on leopard trophy hunting was because here was not enough information with regards to the

leopard numbers. During 2018, only 7 hunting permits were issued for leopards, only in the Limpopo and Kwazulu-natal Provinces – six out of seven were utilised (males >7 years).

She concluded with the fact the 78% of the land is not protected and almost no information on leopards are gathered from these areas. The research design for the leopard project will require blocks of a minimum area of at least 10 000 hectares with 40 trail cameras – each positioned 2 kilometres apart. All quest speakers received well-deserved applause.

Gerhard Heyneke explained the voting process for the upcoming WRSA Zuurberg Chamber Committee. Congratulations to Melt Heyneke (Chairman), Paul Marais (Vice-Chairman), Loodt Büchner and Janene Ferreira elected as Zuurberg's Committee for the next two years.

After a quick question and answer session, delegates moved towards Schotia's Lapa. The crackling fires, laughter, colourful lights and guitar music echoed as one entered the Lapa area. A big thanks to Schotia Safaris for their warm and welcoming venue which provided an excellent atmosphere where a deliciously prepared dinner could be enjoyed by all!



*Thank you* Schotia Safaris