

MEDIA RELEASE - December 19, 2003**LEOPARD ATTACKS KNP RANGER**

A combination of quick thinking and effective training saved the life of a Kruger National Park section ranger after he was attacked by a leopard at around 17:00 yesterday afternoon (December 18, 2003).

After receiving reports that a possible problem leopard was in the vicinity of the staff accommodation complex near Malelane, Section Ranger Mr Bruce Leslie went to investigate with his rifle and dogs.

When he reached the approximate area where the leopard was last seen, Leslie saw his dog, which was ahead of him, freeze and look in the direction of the bush. He quickly got to that position and looked in that direction, only to look straight into the eyes of a leopard, only about 10 metres away from him.

At that instant, the leopard leapt towards him and he shoved his hand into the leopard's mouth to prevent it biting him further while firing his R1 rifle at the animal with his right hand. The leopard bit into the index finger of his left hand and clawed Leslie's legs with its hind paws before becoming limp.

"I realised then that I had probably killed the leopard," said a much-relieved Leslie from his hospital bed last night.

Leslie was then rushed to Nelspruit Medi Clinic, where he was admitted in a stable condition. Doctors from the hospital operated on his left hand this morning.

Meanwhile, the leopard's carcass was taken to Skukuza for a post mortem, which has revealed that the prime adult female had a broken jaw at the time of the attack and was not in a good condition.

"It was bitten by another animal, which broke its lower jaw bone and it had not eaten for at least four days because of this injury," said Dr Lin-Mari de Klerk, one of Skukuza's veterinary surgeons.

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