

Captive leopard tastes freedom

• TANJA BAUSE

AFTER a life of misery, the first of two leopards that were confiscated last year by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism from the farm Werda has been set free in the Namib-Naukluft Park.

Initially the cat was very unsure of what was happening, but when the gate of the transport cage opened and stayed open, life took on meaning again for this beautiful animal.

Eventually the male leopard slowly walked off, occasionally looking back at the team of researchers of N/a'an ku sê, headed by Florian Weise and Cila Venter. Then he disappeared down the riverbed.

Two days before his release, the leopard was fitted with a VHF collar by the carnivore research team at N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary with the help of Dr Ian Baines, a veterinarian from Windhoek.

From now on the leopard will be tracked on a regular basis. According

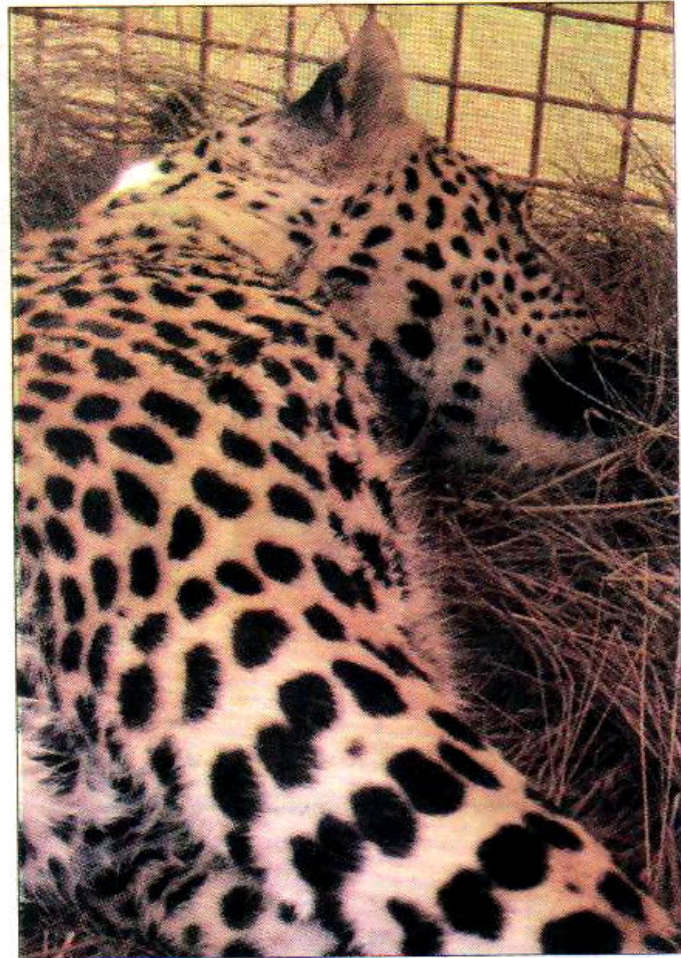
to Marlice and Rudie van Vuuren of N/a'an ku sê, this procedure will take place either from the ground or by air from a light aircraft.

The second leopard will be released on February 25 with a GPS collar sponsored by Bank Windhoek.

tanja@namibian.com.na

Left: DAZED AND CONFUSED ... The leopard just after his VHF collar was fitted.

Photos: Contributed



BORN FREE ... The leopard in his new home, the Namib-Naukluft Park.