

The Re-introduction of Klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) to Table Mountain

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Oreotragus
oreotragus

Due to an increased demand to supply food there was a steady increase in hunting



As a result the faunal diversity of Table Mountain and its surrounds was rapidly depleted.

**By 1799 the Bloubok
had been shot to
extinction.**



**By 1883 the last quagga
had died in captivity**

To make matters worse a pair of Himalayan tahrs escaped from their enclosure on the Groote Schuur Estate in the 1930's



They rapidly colonized the area and by the 1970's there was over 330 animals on the mountain.



The tahrs had harmful effects on the natural biodiversity of the mountain with reports of almost total destruction of vegetation in certain areas with secondary erosion problems

IUCN's Position Statement on the Translocation of Living Organisms

A re-introduction should only take place if:

- 1. The original causes of extinction has been removed -** over time people have become more conservation minded.
- 2. Habitat for the species must be satisfactory –** which includes removal of competitive alien species that have a negative effect on the environment – Himalayan Tahrs.

**This is especially true for areas of high
endemism such as the Cape floral
kingdom.**



3. The donor population should be sourced from the nearest appropriate genetic source - in the spirit of collaboration and co-operative governance Cape Nature offered to donate klipspringer from areas under their management, within the Western Cape.



**South African
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The captures took place in three separate localities within the Western Cape

- 1. Palmiet Nature reserve outside Paarl**
- 2. Grootwintershoek near Porterville**
- 3. Waterval Nature reserve outside Tulbagh**



The high mountains and nature of the antelope posed a number of problems:

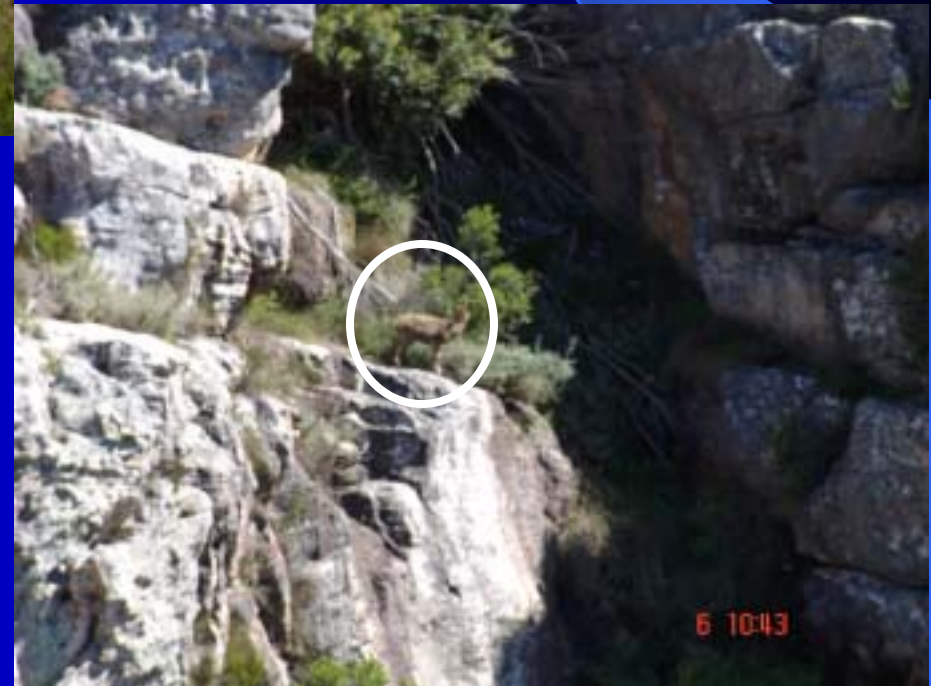
- Powerful helicopter with a pilot that has mountain flying experience is essential**
- Ideally one needs perfect weather with clear skies and no wind.**
- Crew must be kept to a minimum**





- **Small size of the antelope makes them difficult to dart.**

Rocky habitat – rapid knockdown is required



Small pneudarts with a combination of thiafentanyl oxalate (A3080) and azaperone was used – knockdown time of 2-3min

Light weight therefore had to be extra careful of the downwash.



Micro-habitat within the mountains:

- **Rocky outcrops with 360° view**
- **In the lee of the mountains therefore protected from the strong prevailing winds**
- **Aerial searches were concentrate in these areas**



Aimed to try keep the pair together:

The one that breaks away first was targeted first

**Slow helicopter
approach from above -
using the shadow of the
helicopter as a decoy**



**Ideally only darted
once stationary**



Assistant to hold
and monitor



On the ground the animals were treated and tranquilized with a short acting tranquilizer



Samples taken for bio-banking

Males horns piped to prevent damage while in the crate.

Ear-tagged for identification and collared for monitoring



Release sites where aimed at similar habitats to where they were captured

Initial releases where free releases straight out of the crate

Was not to successful as the animals tended to scatter – splitting family groups



Subsequent releases were managed by re-immobilizing the animals with A3080

Physically carrying them to the release site where they were given an intra-muscular dose of the antidote. Could wake-up slowly – together.



Proved to be far less stressful and the recommended method of choice in the future

Results

- In total 37 klipspringer were translocated to Table Mountain NP
- One capture related mortality – dart that had penetrated the intestines.
- In 2004 six animals were collared with VHF collars and a further five with cell phone collars in 2005

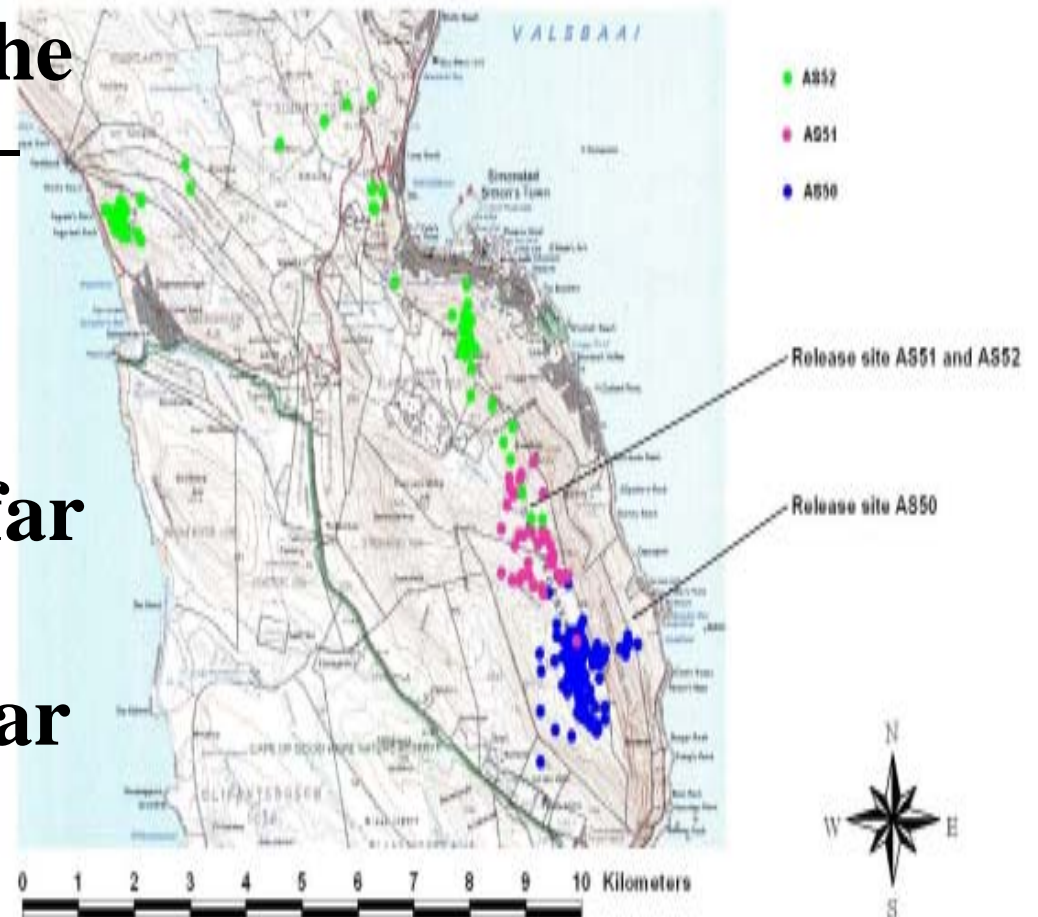


Preliminary Monitoring Results

Monitoring has proved to be difficult due to the mountainous terrain — especially the VHF collars

GPS collars have so far proved to be more successful with regular readings.

Klipspringer locations near Simons Town



Post-release mortalities

- Unfortunately there has also been two deaths of collared animals as a result of predation – caracal?
- Thus raising questions as to the impact of predators in the area
- Another collared animal found dead of unknown cause.

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Future

- **By following sound conservation principles and guidelines the reintroduction of historically occurring species can be achieved successfully**
- **Joint initiatives between conservation bodies such as SANParks and Cape Nature should be encouraged and applauded**
- **This holds the key to the successful conservation of our rich biodiversity in Southern Africa.**

Acknowledgements

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