



**forestry, fisheries
& the environment**

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ref: O2/1/5/2

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(For written reply)

QUESTION NO. 2318 {NW2637E}

INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 23 of 2021

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 04 November 2021

Mr D W Bryant (DA) to ask the Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment:

Whether, with reference to the report of the High-Level Panel of Experts for The Review of Policies, Legislation and Practices on Matters of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros Management, Breeding, Hunting, Trade and Handling, which mentions that the ongoing hunting of leopard will be looked into going forward, and in view of the fact that leopards are notoriously difficult to count while it is important to know what the current numbers are so that any hunting of leopard can be properly legislated, she will advise what (a) the current estimated numbers of leopard are in the (i) Republic in general and in (ii) Kruger National Park in particular and (b) steps are being taken to promote the use of artificial leopard skin replacements for traditional ceremonies and activities; if not, what is the position in this regard; if so, what are the relevant details?

2318. THE MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT REPLIES:

- a) (i) Leopards are generally considered uncommon in South Africa, however, estimates of the size of the national population vary widely from 2 185 to 23 400 leopards (Friedmann & Traylor-Holzer, 2005; Martin & De Meulenaer, 1988; Swanepoel et al., 2014b). None of these estimates are based on rigorous population counts at regional scales and their confidence intervals are so wide,

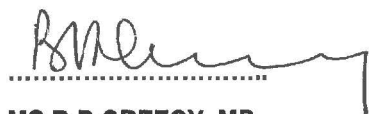
indicating the need for more information (for example, 2 813 to 11 632 leopards estimated by Swanepoel et al., 2014b).

ii) Leopards are very difficult to survey accurately, especially in the dense bush found in the Kruger National Park (KNP). A mark-recapture survey using camera traps gave an estimate of between 1 630 and 2 860 leopards in the KNP in 2011. SANParks is confident that there has not been much fluctuation in respect of leopard numbers in the KNP year on year since the survey was conducted.

b) Given the concerns around the current state of conservation of leopards, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) is of the view that all options for the conservation and sustainable use of leopards should be explored. The use of artificial skin is an option that was introduced by NGOs in an effort to reduce the poaching of leopards for their skin. To date, it has not yet been promoted by the DFFE and may be considered by the Leopard Forum (a forum to coordinate the work of leopard management from various role players towards the development of the Leopard Biodiversity Management Plan) if it is deemed a viable option for the promotion of the conservation and sustainable use of leopards. The DFFE, however, continues to educate and raise awareness throughout the country on the threats to the survival of the species and the impact of the illegal and unsustainable use of leopards, including the unsustainable harvesting of skin and other derivatives from leopards. More importantly, the DFFE is engaging with rural and urban communities on legal ways to source skins to ensure compliance with the legislation.

SANParks has engaged with the Panthera Foundation on sourcing artificial leopard skins to be used by traditional leaders for ceremonial purposes. The Panthera Foundation has committed to providing SANParks with 20 artificial leopard skins. Upon receipt of these skins, SANParks will engage with the traditional leaders to map a way forward.

Regards



**MS B D CREECY, MP
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

DATE: 19/11/2021