

New specie discovered in Irma Booysen Nature Reserve, Cape St Francis!

## Introducing the Leaproach

Entomologist Jonathan Colville from the South African National Biodiversity Institute at Kirstenbosch Cape Town, collected a brand new species of jumping cockroach ( Leaproach) in the Irma Booysen Nature Reserve in Cape St Francis. The genus name is *Saltoblattella* (a cockroach that jumps). This highly unusual insect genus was first described in 2011 and is only found in the Cape Floristic Region. This find represents the eastern most record of a Leaproach and is very significant in that respect.

## Background

Leaproaches are only found in the Cape Floristic Region in South Africa. The discovery of the first species of Leaproach in the CFR made it into the International Institute for Species Exploration's top ten species discoveries in 2011. Several new species have recently been discovered in the CFR, including this specimen from the Cape St Francis coastal fynbos. This specie represents the most eastern discovery of a Leaproach

## Leap Roach Facts

Leaproaches can jump 48 times their body length. Their jumping mechanisms and hind leg structures show remarkable similarity to those of grasshoppers with whom they share their habitat. Leaproaches rival and even outperform grasshoppers in jumping performance. They are unique species, as all of the approximately 4000 known cockroach species in the world locomote by scuttling. The Leaproach is arguably the most attractive species with beautiful silvery white and black striping. It is approximately 10 mm in length, jumps from stem-to-stem among plants and restios - much like a grasshopper. It can also scuttle short distances like normal cockroaches do. The Leaproach achieves its remarkable jumping feats by using its long and muscular hind legs, it has an elastic protein in its knee-joint that aids in jumping and storing energy. Unlike other cockroaches it has lost the ability to fly and has no functional wings. The natural diet of the Leaproach is largely unknown, but in captivity it feeds on a range of plant-based foods, it has also been observed to feed on grasshopper droppings!

## Importance of discovery

Discovering new species, Leaproach or otherwise, extends humanity's collective knowledge of global biodiversity, it provides us with greater perspective of our place on earth and corresponding influence on the natural environment. A discovery of this nature, with approximately 80% of earth's species being unknown to us, highlights the need for the preservation and conservation of your local ecosystem via the FOSTER reserve network. This discovery vindicates our collective conservation efforts thus far. Your support of FOSTER has directly aided the local conservation effort and we thank you wholeheartedly. ***The Leaproach is your discovery, and yours to protect.***

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