



July 2000

The Barking Gecko

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

Volume 1, Issue 2

NamibRand Invited to Expo 2000

Following my visit to the Nationalpark Harz during August last year, I was extended an invitation by Dr Wolf Barth to participate in the World National Park Convention, being part of Expo 2000 and to introduce the NamibRand Project with its conceptualisation to the delegates at this convention. Concurrent with this convention an international publication will be distributed to the delegates and other interested parties, wherein NRNR will feature over three pages in a 62 page edition. The actual presentation combined with a slide and overhead show will be part of the Expo 2000 procedures in Hanover at the end of October 2000.

This invitation affords us a

unique opportunity to introduce the project to the world at large. Consequently, the preparations for this event are already in full swing and, in the interests of all stakeholders, the concessionaires operating on NamibRand will be acknowledged as the financial backbone for this unique project.

To-date 110 delegates have registered from all over the world not only from the first world, but also countries such as Vietnam, Malaysia, Russia, Croatia, Hungary, Greece and a number of countries from Africa.

Following this event I will report on the proceedings and hopeful success, when I am back.

J A BRÜCKNER

NamibRand Website

We are currently working on the concept of a website for our Nature Reserve, to be hosted reliably and linked to the relevant search engines.

The purpose of the web-site will be to advertise the features, contact details and full spectrum of the products of the Reserve to interested users of the Internet.

We see that a link should be provided from the NRNR web-site to a web-page or -site for each concessionaire.

Concessionnaires: please let us know if you are interested.

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Sebastian(ne) - Herman Cloete

Sebastian came to me in the winter of 1997. A June evening while we were celebrating a wedding at the Dune Camp.

He was sitting on the little dune between the lapa and the firedeck. Not at all bewildered by all the guests or the noise created by all the music and talking.

For days I looked for him. He would appear from time to time and start to respond to my voice. Many evenings would become "Sebastian



Evenings" with him creating a show for the guests.

Like a cat, he would jump onto the dinner table and have butter bread and egg. Like a model on a walkway, he would briefly pose for a photo and then disappear into the darkness again.

(Continued on page 2)

Sebastian(ne)—contd

(Continued from page 1)

A quarrel between him and his kind cost him part of his beautiful tail. The next morning we found part of his tail and also a lot of hair – the first thought was, Sebastian is dead!

The private camp was constructed and Sebastian found a more sophisticated home and lifestyle. His well-doer let him sit on the chairs and lie on the carpets.

A very simple life with no interference

and more up market food and drinks. The lady of the house took a picture of Sebastian one morning and we discover Sebastian was lactating.

What can I say? Anyone can be fooled by a good looking Cape Fox – Sebastian you dear little girl and charmer!!

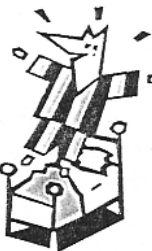
Sebastianne a household name, with a few others, Felix the familiar chat and Agatha the fat skink, all crazy about cheese and over the moon with life at Wolwedans.

Herman Cloete, Wolwedans

Tea Tree Oil—Ursi Lenssen

Elize the wife of Markus Tsaobes had been bitten by a horned adder in the heel of her foot. She at once made a small incision at the site of the bite and tried to get out as much poison as possible by bleeding it. (This treatment may be old fashioned and not appropriate, but it definitely gave Elize the feeling that not all the poison was in her foot, which made her feel less worried).

I was called and when I arrived her lower leg was quite swollen, she had a high Blood Pressure and a quick pulse. I decided to pour some tea-tree oil over the bite mark and apply a bandage, which had also tea-tree oil on.



The next morning I was informed that she had a good night, yet the swelling was worse than the day before. Once again I visited her. Her blood pressure was only slightly raised, her temperature and pulse normal. Once more I applied some tea-tree oil and a bandage. Yet she had no pain and seemed happy with the treatment.

A day later the swelling in her lower leg was only slight and her wound looked near normal. I stopped treatment and a week later Elize told me that she was fine.

Tea-tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*) oil is a first-aid kit in a bottle. It hales from Australia and has been utilized by the

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★
★ **Next Issue:** ★
★ For the October issue, please let us ★
★ have any articles of interest from ★
★ you by the end of September. ★
★ From October we'd like to run a ★
★ **concessionaire profile** per ★
★ issue, with the bulk of the profile ★
★ material provided by the conces- ★
★ sionaire themselves (about one A4 ★
★ page when laid-out). A description ★
★ of your product, perhaps how it ★
★ came about, photos, people, etc... ★
★ We'll start from the newest to the ★
★ oldest (for wont of a better se- ★
★ quence), meaning we are hoping ★
★ ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Aborigines for many generations. From the bite of the "funnel-web spider" found only in New South Wales, many people had died, until a victim decided to try tea-tree oil and survived! That is why I decided to try it on snakebite and with a horned adder we had success.

Its other uses: as a gargle for sore throat, for earache, boils, sores, wounds, ringworm, burns, athlete's foot, cold sores, herpes and many more.

Aroma therapists have found that it is a powerful immune-stimulant when used in the bath at the first signs of a cold or flu.

Ursi Lenssen, Keerweder

Interesting Sightings

Having some honeybees living in our package room, we had an exciting experience some days ago.

Konel and Andries – two of our local workers – ran like crazy around the house. Wondering what had happened, I went to check outside. I saw a huge and noisy cloud of bees turning around the room.

Looking for an explanation of the event, I asked Konel why the bees were so excited. He replied very seriously that a special kind of snake was probably busy eating the honey; the snake digs a hole in the middle of the beehive to eat the honey.

I don't know that kind of snake! And

you! Maybe another legendary snake of the Namib?

Natalie, Camp Mwisho

On 31st March 2000 I had a reasonably good sighting of a leopard on Gorrasis farm. I was on a scenic drive with two guests, Mr and Mrs. Germissten, from Germany, and a fellow guide from Wolwedans, Obedias. The time was approximately 12.45 h, it was very hot and sunny with a few clouds in the sky. We noticed a reasonably large number of springbok in the vicinity.

The leopard was resting in the shade of a large boulder at the foot of a small granite koppie. Obedias noticed the tail first, we obviously disturbed it because it slunk over the boulders and

out of our view immediately. However, its head reappeared above the rocks, and it remained for about 30 seconds sniffing the wind and watching us cautiously. It then disappeared from sight. It was too far away for photographs but we could see it quite clearly with binoculars. It was not a particularly large cat and did not appear unduly dark. Two years ago Helge Denke reported seeing a large,



very dark leopard in the area.
Louise Clapham, Wolwedans

for the following

Forthcoming Attractions:

Oct '00	Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge
Jan '01	NamibRand People
Apr '01	Wolwedans Dunes Lodge
Jul '01	Tok Tokkie Trails
Oct '01	Wolwedans Dune Camp
Jan '02	Namib Sky Adventure Safaris

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ursi and Mandy,

Congratulations on the first edition of the Barking Gecko. I think it is a great idea and with your professional approach right from the start it can only be a winner. I wish you all the best.

An idea:

A regular article/column for tourists about the Nature Reserve – e.g. discussions of different species of birds, animals, trees, grass etc. An interesting question I heard a tourist ask:

Why is the colour of most of the flowers on Wolwedans yellow? (I also would like to know).

Another question was about the different sand patterns on the dunes. Why the names: "Barking Gecko" (not the news letter) and "Toktokkie".

Kind Regards,

Sandra Bassingthwaite, Wolwedans

Let's use the "Eco-Tourism Corner" on page 5 for any contributions of this nature, OK? Ed.

NamibRand People—Louise Clapham

Over the last five and a half to six years I have done almost every conceivable job at Wolwedans, some admittedly more efficiently than others! including cook for 2 years, laundry, tent cleaning, administration, fixing broken water pipes (that was one Christmas day!), and guiding. One soon learns how to turn a hand to most things in times of need.

I am currently the senior guide at Wolwedans and responsible for training new guides who come to work here. Another very interesting aspect of my job is the manual for field guides which I am writing. It is a reference book to be used by guides, covering, I hope, most aspects of the natural history of NRNR and involves some fairly intensive research. Any contributions, particularly in the form of photographs of particular species (insects,

birds, plants etc.), would be very welcome. I am also inviting our guests to participate. I would one day like to take the book a step further and publish something guests at NRNR could purchase when they visit us.

There have been many very special moments for me on NamibRand, one of them has to be my first sighting of a leopard on Gorrasis, two days ago. My thanks to "Obi", whose sharp eyes picked out a leopard's tail amongst the granite boulders, and to the two guests we had with us, who understood the uniqueness of the moment and appreciated it almost as much as I did. The report of the sighting is included under "Interesting Sightings".

At the Kgotla in February I was very

heartened to hear that the Reserve is now financially in so much a better position than in the past, and it couldn't be in any better hands either, than Achim and Peter's. My very personal feeling for the reserve is that it will not be developed too much. This is a wish that has been expressed many times also by guests who have stayed here. There are so few wilderness areas left in the world, and my greatest wish for the reserve is that one day a part of it could be classified as a true Wilderness Area, devoid of the mechanisms and trappings of man, but which can be appreciated aesthetically and spiritually, as pristine nature.

Louise, Wolwedans



nature.

Where are Castor and Pollux? - Albi Brückner

Following the release of the first two Cheetahs on NamibRand in November 1999, both of which disappeared and probably met their fate through the barrel of a gun, we released another two specimens on 12 May 2000 on Keerweder. Both animals were fitted with collars (not radio collars) carrying numbers 051 and 078.



The Cheetah were siblings from the same litter and we therefore named them Castor and Pollux. They were trapped on the farm Weltevreden and

flown into Keerweder under sedation by Dr Flip Stander, accompanied by Dirk Heinrich. At the suggestion of Dr Flip Stander they stayed for only one night in the paddock and were then released. For a number of days they were sighted near the Wolwedans Camp, from where they moved northwards.

On 10 June Mr H H Schulz sighted a Cheetah on his farm Voorspoed, feeding on a Springbok. The animal wore a collar, but unfortunately Mr Schulz could not make out the number. A second sighting near the kill happened in the late afternoon.

On the morning of 12 June a NRNR employee, Abraham, crossed the mountains from Voorspoed towards Toskaan when he found himself face to face with a Cheetah, wearing a collar, on the mountain pass between Toskaan and Welverdiend. We assume that it was either Castor or Pollux. After looking at each other for some time, the Cheetah took flight. The last sighting was later in June on the farm Witwater, although this was not formally reported. Since then no more sightings were reported. If anyone has seen any of the Cheetah,

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(Continued from page 3)

please report to Achim Lenssen so that we can keep up the "Log".

The question remains: where are Castor and Pollux?

Albi Brückner

Message from the Sky

It was one of these cold mornings so common in August; the Austral winter was over us. Frozen tourists waiting like strange pilgrims, the arising of an amazing nylon ball: "My hot air balloon".

Excited by their first flight over the Namib, my pilgrims were very quiet, waiting the "boarding time". A few minutes before sunrise, after a general check up of my "flying bubble" we took off.

Pushed by a gentle eastern breeze, we flew over the linear dunes, west of Mwisho camp in the direction of Discovery Valley and the Namib Naukluft Park. My passengers mostly from Germany enjoyed the rising colours of the dunes hundred meters below us. Everything looked perfect: nice wind, nice scenery.

I was deep in thought when a noisy voice took me back to the human world. "Mister the Driver", called the voice it should be noted that in Ger-

[For the astronomy ignoramus, such as your Editor, Castor and Pollux are the names of the twins in the Gemini constellation!]

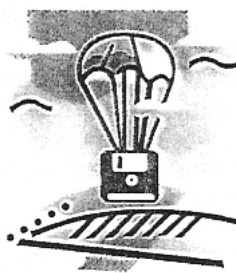
Hot off the press:

Castor and Pollux were spotted in the last week of July, again on the farm Witwater.

many the balloon Pilots are called: "Driver" - "Mister the Driver" again says the voice with more impatience: - "Yes, Madam", I reply as fast as possible to a blondish young lady. "Mr. The Driver this scenery around is nice but can you tell me when we will start to fly over the Namib Desert?"

We were flying over the northwestern part of the NamibRand a beautiful sea of dunes and without doubt a part of the Namib. So I replied with confidence to my passenger: - "We are over the Namib, Madam". "Ho-ho-ho", replied the girl with a sarcastic accent and pointing to the sandy dunes; she said: "That is not the Namib Desert. I saw the Namib on TV and it doesn't look like that".

For a few seconds I doubted, should it be possible that the wind took me over the Kalahari Desert 300 km east of Mwisho camp, or maybe I was busy



Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue. And thanks also to Brigitte for all her typing and scanning!

Contributions would be appreciated on diskette if possible, or at least typed. We can now also scan in photos, drawings, maps, etc.

piloting one of the faster balloons in the world. The girl was looking at me like a praying mantis ready to eat the miserable insect I was.

Looking to the far horizon like one of those first pioneers discovering the world abroad their ships, I replied with an icy voice: "Dear Madam, the Namib desert has thousands of different faces but it is not for everybody to discover it!"

Madam was speechless, trying probably to remember the next sequence from her TV movie. During breakfast she came to apologize to me. She said, from the ground the dunes look like what I saw on TV but from the sky it's so different!

On that day I was happy to fly over the oldest desert in the world: "The Namib"

Philippe Calonne, Mwisho Camp

Fairy Circle Waffle—Tok Tokkie Trails

Nothing exciting to report from Tok Tokkie for this newsletter, but we are happy to say that despite all the fears about a drop in tourism because of the situation in the north, we can report a bumper year.

A few suggestions for the newsletter:

The fairy circle project needs to be addressed.



1. A list of the "adoptive parents" of the fairy circle should be published in the Barking Gecko and the Barking Gecko should be sent to them. The big question is:

What has been sent so far to Adoptive Parents of the Fairy Circles?

2. How we sold the circles:

On the walks, Marc always explains the Fairy Circles and the project. At last - one German woman said she was interested in adopting a circle. Marc did not have the disks with him, so when he took the next group out, he took the disk with him, and explained that he was putting the disk in the circle and asked one of the other guests to take a picture of him doing it. This picture will be sent to the adoptive parent. Of course this got the interest going of the next group, so the next group then adopted circles.

3. Best story yet of how the circles were formed that we've come across from guests is as follows: In

German they are called "Hexen Kreisen". So, in fact this here on NamibRand is a witch'es playground and meeting place. These days - technology being what it is - witches ride around on motorized broomsticks. After they're meeting before flying off to do their various bits of good or evil, they rev up their broomsticks and do donuts in the sand.

Of course if we ever caught them, we'd have to fine them - no off track driving and certainly no donuts, but they rather do us a favour by leaving behind a piece of earth worth N\$ 300.00!

Looking forward to the next edition of the Barking Gecko and we will continue trying to support it by writing a whole lot of waffle.

Marc and Elinor Dürr

The Goose and the Gander - Ursi Lenssen

At long last after many years of severe drought our country has had more than average rainfall during the past rainy season.

Everyone feels more positive and inclined to have once again a more optimistic outlook concerning the future. We on NamibRand need only look out of our houses to see the big plains covered with grass. When the wind blows softly over the plains the grass moves like waves elegantly to and fro.

We Namibians, just cannot talk enough about the past rains with the flowing rivers, the roads that had washed away and the first little greenery starting to show. Flowers all over - yellow, purple, red, blue and pink - God's own wonderful garden with seeds germinating after so many

years of dormancy.

Yet our overseas guests do not at all times share our enthusiasm. Namibia to them is a desert country, and this they have come to experience. Now suddenly they arrive and are confronted with grass plains in most parts of the country especially in the South, which had been drought-stricken for so many years.

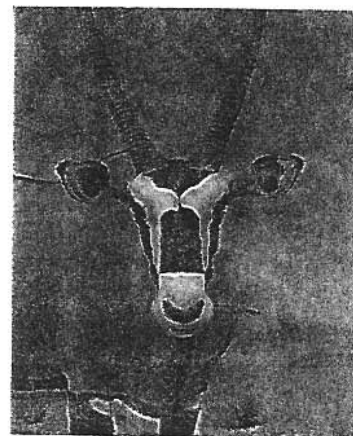
The dune areas suddenly boast grass fields, which even to us are unexpected. The tourists came for the dunes, the vast plains without growth and are at times disappointed with so much vegetation everywhere.

Many hope that should they return in another year or so they might once again enjoy the desert as offered in the

catalogues that advertise Namibia.

So the old adage holds true yet again: what is good for the goose may not be good for the gander!

Ursi Lenssen



Eco-tourism Corner

The Resurrection Bush.

(*Myrothamnus flabellifolius*)

Other names: bush tea or bushman tea; teebossie (Afrikaans); Wundertee (German); !khootorotorosen, torotorosen (Nama/Damara); ohandukaze (Herero); uvukwabafile (Zulu).

The botanical name is very apt and most descriptive; *Myrothamnus* means 'perfumed bush' and *flabellifolius* can be translated as 'leaves like a small fan'.

We are all familiar with the resurrection bush and its amazing powers of rejuvenation, but fewer are aware of its many medicinal properties. For those who are not familiar with the plant, it is a small shrub growing amongst the rocks of our koppies and mountains on NamibRand. For most of the year it can easily be overlooked, as it dries up into a bunch of dead-looking twigs, but with the onset of rain it changes dramatically. Within hours, the leaves spread out and turn a rich, dark green.

It is very aromatic and can be used as a herbal tea, usually it is mixed with commercial black tea, but I prefer it on its own. The leaves and

twigs are both used for tea-making, and for medicinal purposes as well. The roots are used rarely. Numerous traditional uses have been reported. Infusions are drunk for colds and respiratory ailments. Decoctions are taken to alleviate pain and for backache, kidney problems, haemorrhoids and painful menstruation. It may also be used externally to treat abrasions. Smoke from burning leaves is inhaled for chest pains and asthma, and I have personally found, quite by accident, that inhaling the steam from the tea also helps with asthma. Dried, powdered leaves are used to dress burns and wounds.

Myrothamnus contains volatile oil of which camphor is the major ingredient. Camphor is known as a decongestant and antiseptic. Pain relief is probably brought about by a combination of the camphor and other ingredients, which include eucalyptol.

References:

van Wyck, B. et al. 1997. *Medicinal Plants of South Africa*. Briza Publications, Pretoria.
Craven, P. & Marais, C. 1992. *Damaraland Flora*. Gamsberg Macmillan Publishers, Windhoek.

Louise Clapham, Wolwedans

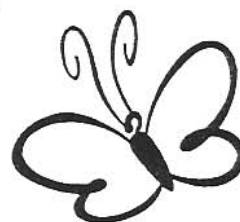
Barking Gecko's

Sandra's question about "why barking gecko" set me attempting to find an explanation of why this creature's distinctive "click" or "chirp" was preferred to be called a "bark" by the powers-that-be.

I have to report still being in the dark. Admittedly, my layman's (printed) research material was somewhat limited. I did discover, however, that there is not just one species of gecko that "barks". As far as I can make out, there are at least 3 barking gecko's (of the genus *Ptenopus*), Common, Carp's and Kock's. Surprise you? I guess you all knew that! And that when they all start chirping at once just before sunset in front of their burrows, you can't even listen in to Elinor's conversation on the telephone line passing the Hideout!

I wasn't too surprised to read that it is the males that do the chirping, though. How about you?

Mandy Brückner



Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

P.O. Box 40707
Windhoek
Namibia



Editor: Mandy Brückner
Phone: +264-61-226803
Fax: +264-61-232890
Email: ambruck@mweb.com.na
Resident Editor: Ursi Lenssen, Farm
Keerweder
Phone: +264-6638 ask for 5702

"The wildlife of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust and must account for it to those who come after us."

NamibRand Facts

NamibRand Nature Reserve Executive:

Mr. Albi Brückner
Mrs. Marianne Berker
Mr. Jürgen Klein
Mr. Achim Lenssen
Mr. Andre van Rensburg
Mr. Andreas Brückner

Personnel of the NamibRand Nature Reserve only (excluding those employed by the Reserve's Concessionaires):

NAME	FARM
Achim and Ursi Lenssen	Keerweder
Willem Booysen	Keerweder
Abraham Tsaobeb	Keerweder
Elsawie Rooi	Keerweder
Peter and Marilyn Bridgeford	Aandster
Johannes Kooitjie	Aandster
Jakobus Kooper	Aandster
Eduard Gous	Toekoms
Markus Tsaobeb	Verweg

Known Websites:
www.wolwedans.com
Any others?

Wolwedans—The Place to Meet

Two young ladies booked into the Dune Camp, enjoyed their day scenic drive and met new arrivals that evening at dinner. "Oh, really, also from Germany" started the conversation never to be forgotten. "We too, Hamburg, and where from in Hamburg?"

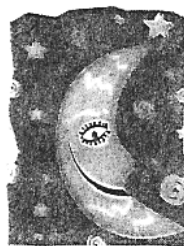
Never! We are also from that same suburb. Mittelstrasse, really? We don't believe it! We also live in Mittelstrasse. Number? Don't say it, that's just across the street from us. Oh, you are the girls on the motorbikes, what a coincidence. Here at Wolwedans these neighbours living across the street from one another for seven years come to meet for the first time.

Talk about coincidences. At Wolwedans we receive the booking of a Dr & Mrs. M van Rooyen with two children for two nights at the lodge. Two days later a similar booking; Dr

& Mrs. M van Rooyen and two children. This can't be, is our unanimous conclusion. Somewhere someone got it wrong. Forget it, no dinner and don't plan them in with any activities is the verdict.

Murphy's law again! Second Dr & Mrs. M van Rooyen with two children do turn up at our gate at their appointed time.

That was a close call, but how about this one: A family with two pre-schoolers arrives at Wolwedans. He is Chris, an American, studied law and met and married another law student, Helette. She's as South African as can be and from Stellenbosch. The first arrival is Emma, lovely girl and then to arrive is Sias (a derivative of Joshua). Mother Sandra is thrilled to have



friends to play at Wolwedans with her own Jessica and Joshua. She meets with lawyer mom and start that chat about mutual siblings. How old is Sias? Yes, Joshua will be 4 years old in September, when? Really! Joshua was also born the 17th. Hesitantly Sandra thinks, should I ask what time he was

born? The same thoughts in mother Helette's mind, I wonder what time? These two little fellows meet at Wolwedans, born the same year, same day, only thirty minutes apart. And here amongst the dunes they meet to play.

Just for the record, two weeks later another American and his South African wife book in at Wolwedans. Want to hear more?

What a place to be...**WOLWEDANS!**

Jimmy Bassingthwaight