

Volume 1, Issue 3

# "The Real Thing"- Drawing by Christine Marais



# The Origin of Fairy Circles?

Gravel plains and sand dunes also contain degraded granite – these granites of the Damara Geosincline, often contain radioactive elements (Rhodio, Uranium, Potassium 40) so these gravel plains contain now and again radioactive material which might alter the growing pattern on the Flora of the desert area in the region.

Radioactivity goes in all directions like from the center of a sphere. In the ground the effect of radiation will always be circular. This could also be in one or the other way the origin of Fairy Circles.

Issy Karaerua Field Guide, Wolwedans

# Albi Junior

In this season of plenty on NRNR, birds, bees, bats and other creatures are all doing well. There has been a population explosion in the whole food chain.

One animal, which prefers drought and disease, is the vulture. However, even they are being looked after on the Reserve. At a gemsbok carcass on Gorrasis, I counted 32 Lappet-faced Vultures. Then Wêreldend donated a dead cow and it attracted 26 vultures.

A sufficient supply of food is vital for the vultures as they now have chicks to feed. Marc Dürr found the first vulture chick this season near DDR. On 9 September Mr. & Ms Albi Brückner assisted

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My Home, My Soul

with the ringing of "Albi Jnr" (Ring number G22471).

(Continued on page 2)

# Albi Junior (contd)

(Continued from page 1)

Richard has let us know of another nest with a possible chick, which we will still check. If you know of any other nest or suspect that there may be a chick please let us know.

We wish Albi Jnr a full crop every day.

Peter Bridgeford Aandstêr

### Losberg Radio-Achim Lenssen

Losberg Radio enhances the lives of all who live on NamibRand. If this radio fails life becomes more tedious for us. For those readers who do not know Losberg Radio – it is our two-way repeater radio on the high Losberg Mountain in the center of the Reserve. It plays no music but puts us in touch with each other and mal.

Losberg, the mountain, is no ordinary mountain. The peak is at 1978 meters above sea level and the slopes are steep and covered with loose material, which makes climbing difficult.

The climb up Losberg starts at an altitude of 1250 meters above sea level and it takes three hours or more to reach the summit depending on the composition of the climbing party and what they are carrying up. The descent takes two to two and a half hours.

Our Losberg radio is now three years old and this year it started having problems intermittently. We have climbed up the mountain five times this year for maintenance and repairs. The most difficult ascent was taking up a new battery weighing 25 kg or more. Let me tell you that altitude increases the weight of an object — a fact that Newton never discovered because he came from an area with no real mountains.

To improve the service of Losberg Radio it was decided to do the proverbial "improvements and maintenance" in August. Radio Electronics technicians joined the party of 6 volunteers that gathered at Toekoms early in the morning to avoid the midday heat on the way up.

We followed by now the well-worn track up and reached the summit in record time thanks to Eduard's pace setting leadership. Being the only representative of the over fifties club

#### \* Next Issue:

For the January 2001 issue, please let us have any articles of interest as early as possible in January.

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From this issue, we are running a concessionaire profile per issue, with the bulk of the profile material provided by the concessionaire themselves (one to two A4 pages 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 sequence), meaning we are hoping for the following

#### Forthcoming Attractions:

Oct '00	Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge
Jan '01	NamibRand Family Hide- out
Apr '01	Tok Tokkie Trails
Jul '01	Wolwedans Dunes Lodge and Dune Camp
Oct '01	Namib Sky Adventure Sa- faris

in the party I suffered proportionately.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

On the mountain we lengthened the aerial mast from 9 to 14 meters. Rais-(Continued on page 3)

# Interesting Sightings

Mighty Mouse Found on Aandstêr

With the capture of a large-eared mouse Malacothrix typical on Aandstêr, the known distribution for this attractive little mouse has been considerably extended.

According to MET small mammal biologist Mike Griffen, this is the first record of the large-eared mouse on NRNR.

If someone has seen or sees it on NRNR, please let us know so that we can inform Mike and update his records.

The characteristic dark patterning on



the back, the short tail and large ears make identification easy.

Peter Bridgeford, Aandstêr

Summer in the Namib

How do you know when summer has arrived in the desert? Well the rain is a bit unpredictable, temperature is almost hot all year round, however there are certain friends that visit the lodge only when summer is here. (Reported 13 October, with 3 photo's of the adder being caught on the stoep of the Lodge—uuggh! Unfortunately, the photos didn't come out in black and white. Ed.)

The snake in the photographs was a record-sized Horned Adder (Bitis caudalis). Average size 30-35 cm, record 51 cm. The snake featured is 50 cm plus. The venom is mild, causing swelling, pain and some necrosis. No fatalities have been recorded.

Steven Mauromatis Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge

### Concessionaire Profile

Sossusviei Mountain Lodge became a reality in the last quarter of 1998. The negotiations with Mr. Brückner were finalized and the project began in earnest.

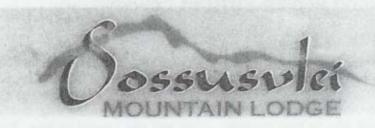
Firstly a bit about our geography:

Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge is situated on the northern most boundary of Namib-Rand and has two neighbors. To the northeast is the farm Geluk belonging to the Kulala family and to the Southeast is Mr. Schultz from Windhoek.

For this reason we often feel a bit like "Davey Crocket" to defend and protect the reserve on its borders. The remainder of our boundaries to the South and south-vest are with the Namib Naukluft Nadonal Park and fellow concessionaires.

A bit about construction: Some amazing facts that are of interest:

- All the natural rock used in the construction and rehabilitation was hand picked by twenty casual laborers for eight months prior to construction. All the natural rocks came from the road corridor a few kilometers north and south of our current gate. There was not one Scorpion or Adder bite during the entire construction phase.
- All floras were brought in under license from a nursery in the Northern Cape. There was special attention paid as not to introduce foreign species. I am happy to report that we have enjoyed a very high success rate (Quiver trees 100%).
- All the bricks used in the construction were made on site.
- The interior décor concept is said to be referred to as modern colonial.
- The colours on walls which did not contain natural rock were chosen as to



blend in with the dune and mountain theme.

A bit about the lodge:

Although most folks visited us in early 2000 for the annual Kgotla, here are a few facts you may be asked about:

- 24 Hour 220v electricity provided by silent generators.
- Ten air-conditioned luxury desert villas.
- No baths only an inside and outdoors shower both with a view.
- Each room is twin bedded, with a mini-bar, glass skylight above the bed, a spotting scope, tea and coffee station, CD player, electronic safe and a hairdryer.
- The main complex houses a walkin wine cellar, upstairs library (book and CD) an indoor restaurant and outdoor dining area. There is a full bar and casual lounge.
- And don't forget the observatory, containing a 12-inch telescope.
- The food service style is Table d'Hôte for lunch, dinner and breakfast is served buffet-style.
- We were recently honored by being included in the top twenty-one new accommodation establishments in the world (Conde Naste) thereby contributing to putting Namibia, NamibRand and ourselves on the international map.

Editor: I found the following quotation on SML's web site:

A bit about the folk who keep the place going:

- There are five people who cover the different facets pertaining to the daily operation of Sossusvlei Mountian Lodge.
- Gilda and myself are ultimately responsible for the overall management of the Lodge.
- Hugo Hayes, our chef, is responsible for all the food.
- Wayne Hutchinson takes care of the guests with regards to all field activities, information and training of guides.
- Nelson Kamaa-vei looks after all the technical and maintenance aspects.

Our future goals, ideas and dreams:

- Conservation is still the highest priority of the owners, management and staff. As discussed and agreed at the Kgotla our association with NamibRand is honest and sincere.
- We would like to see NamibRand Nature Reserve, along with ourselves and the other concessionaires, as a destination on its own within Namibia.
- Along with Achim and Peter, we would like to create a model nature reserve for other private areas to aspire to.
- We as an accommodation establishment would like to provide a very high standard of service, which will be known for its value for money.
- Our dream is still to see the fence between NamibRand Nature Reserve and Namib Naukluft Park removed, allowing the free movement of endemic game.

Steven Mayromatis

"My hosts, Steve and Gilda Mavromatis, are hospitality personified, with no request being too outlandish. Meals, prepared by master chef Hugo Hayes, are lavish four course symphonies, featuring such delicacies as fillet of eland, oryx prosciutto and ostrich terrine - as well as more conventional choices."

Graham Simmons, "Dunes Alive!" - The Peak magazine

### NamibRand People-Tristan Cowley

I feel very privileged to have been asked to write something for the "Barking Gecko".

The Barking Gecko is a great concept and a brilliant idea to keep everyone on NamibRand informed. I think most of us are all very busy and often don't have the time to keep in contact, let alone time to write something for the Barking Gecko.

So for those of you who don't know me, I am the 19-year old Wolwedans Dune Camp Manager. I have been at Wolwedans since April of this year. The idea was that I would look after the Camp for a while until they found someone "older" to run the camp. The idea being that I would just move over to the guiding section of the operation. So, here I am still running the Camp and doing "Lots" capable of "conquering the world".

### Horseshoe Water Plan

We have seen a lot of Achim, Eduard and Peter lately, which we are very pleased about. Very soon now there will be Oryx, Springbok and hopefully a leopard or two drinking at Horseshoe water. We were the ones that asked at the last AGM when the water plan was going to be implemented and we are happy to see that it is progressing.

We would like to thank Achim and his team for the long, hard and often frustrating work that they have done and hope to hear soon that the whole water plan has been implemented and only maintenance work needs to be done.

Tok Tokkie would also like to thank Achim for our tank and stand that we will put up at Tok Tokkie and build a sand grouse friendly waterhole.

This means the old infrastructure i.e. the crib and old pipes will be removed and replaced by the new waterhole.

By Tok Tokkie Trails

Anyway, I left the Caprivi, having worked at Namushash Lodge, running like a convict from all the unrest up there. I immediately decided to move south i.e. Wolwedans and this was how and why I ended up here. My intention is to work until the end of the year and commence with my studies next year.

I am planning to study a Diploma in Natural Resource Management at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Who knows, maybe I will be back on NamibRand in a few years.

This article has come at the end of my time at Wolwedans, having only three months left. Now, having worked at Wolwedans for a while I can really say that Wolwedans is a very special and unique place. Having managed the

### Ripples on the Dunes



Why there are ripples on the dunes?

Wind tends to form sand into dunes. Water flow produces similar but smaller sedimentary structures, of which ripples are best known. Ripples, dunes and the like are referred to collectively as bed forms.

Many ripples and dunes are characterised by asymmetric cross-sections. Each ripple has a gentle slope on its upstream side and a steeper slope on its downstream side, or lee side.

Grains bounce or roll up the gentle upstream slope, which is exposed to the full force of the current. As they topple over the ridge they fall into a sheltered region, where the current is to weak to transport them farther, so they simply drop onto the upper part of the lee side.

This face is constantly being oversteepened by the arrival of sediment at its top. Every time it gets to steep an avalanche of sand slides to the bottom of the slope. Each avalanche forms a layer resting on this slip-face Dunc Camp I have found a fantastically spirited and highly motivated team really enjoying the work they are doing. It has been great being associated with Wolwedans and NamibRand and I have really enjoyed my time here.

As far as NamibRand goes I think everything has already been said. What a brilliant idea and a fantastic example of rehabilitation and conservation. All I can say, let's keep it the way it is, and this can obviously only be done with everyone's co-operation and effort to conserve and protect.

#### ALTIUS ET LATIUS

By Tristan Cowley Wolwedans Dune Camp

It is good to know that there are still young people like you around who can one day take over when we "oldies" want to sit back and relax. (From the resident editor)

at the maximum angle that can be supported, which is around 30 or 40 degrees. Grains are thus removed from the up-current side of the bed form and deposited on its lee side, and so the ripple or dune migrates slowly downstream.

When there is sufficient material i.e. more than can be transported away, then there is net deposition. Successive bed forms migrate up the upstream faces of the previous ones therefore more than one ripple is formed.

The shapes of bed forms as seen from above depend on the conditions under which they form. A relatively slow flow in a constant direction produces transverse ripples or transverse dunes, with their crests aligned at 90 degrees to the current.

As the flow gets stronger the crests get wavier, eventually breaking into crescent shapes.

Hopefully this gives you the answer to a characteristic of dunes that make them so photogenic in the early mornings and late afternoons.

Reference: Teach yourself series, Geology, David A Rothery A contribution from Tok Tokkie Trails

### Stories From the Wild - Herman Cloete

The first week in August we had quite an experience with some of the fauna around Wolwedans.

Two of our guests, a young Italian couple, asked me one morning at breakfast if I had a dog because there was a dog in their chalet (7) that morning looking at them.

I laughed and asked them to describe this dog. We then also went to look at the tracks ... what do you think - a spotted hyena had been visiting them in their chalet.

That same night the hyena came back and went onto the deck of the Lapa. I chased it off with a broomstick. The next morning Tate Koni and I found the hyena sitting in the drain for the overflow water of the kitchen. We both chased him/her away with brooms.

A few weeks the hyena was not observed, but the last two mornings "my dog", as I call it, was back! Will have to see who is going to be the next to question me on my pets?!

In the same week two rock pigeons

moved into my chalet. They discovered a good site to build their nest. On top of my cupboard stands a basket with a very fine tea set.

I've only covered it with a tablecloth. Every afternoon I discovered sticks on the tablecloth, I removed them ... but the next day there were others – this procedure repeated itself every day, till I closed my chalet flaps for a few days.

This discouraged the pigeons, but they didn't give up until Justine came to visit to find an egg in her shower. What can I say, we've moved without permission, can we blame the animals and birds if they adapt to circumstances...!

Herman Cloete Wolwedans

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this BUMPER issue! And thanks also to Briggette 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. High-contrast is best for black and white printing.

### Losberg Radio (contd)

(Continued from page 2)

ing that long pipe again to the vertical position took some daring and it was indeed necessary to have that many helpers on hand at that moment.

The radio aerial was also turned from its previous orientation facing east in a northwestern direction. This should favour the major operators on the Reserve. After testing the entire system the descent was uneventful except for two tumbles by the only lady in our midst. By the time we parted company at Toekoms after 16h00 the talk in the group centred on a cold beer, a good nights sleep, stiffness of muscles and a hot bath.

I am so grateful that all on NamibRand join in on these maintenance excursions for the radio station that we all utilise every day. Apart from

the slog up the mountain it is good fun as well and it builds comradely spirit too.

O Any volunteers for the next trip up?
I have been up seven times by now and am volunteering for another three before retiring.
Achim Lenssen, NRNR

### Eco-tourism Corner

#### Yellow Flowers on NamibRand

The yellow colour of flowers in the desert environment had intrigued me already whilst living in Ganab.

I have tried to find the answer in various books, but have had no real success. When after rains I have been on my long walks to enjoy the beauty of the many flowers the first, my eyes detected, were always yellow.

But looking further I was amazed at the multitude of other colours also to be found. Yellow flowers are to be found more on the plains than perhaps any other colour.

Yet walking in between rocks and

crevices I found so many flowers boasting red, pink, mauve, blue and orange. As I doubt if wind pollination in our desert environment can be that successful with plants scattered far and wide they have to rely more on insects for pollination.

Here an extract from one of my gardening books — "the shape, colour or fragrance of most flowers are devices to lure an insect to pollinate the plant. White flowers, sweet smelling and opening at dusk, attract night-flying moths; brightly coloured day flowers attract butterflies; blue, red and white day flowers attract bees; yellow flowers often attract beetles and putrid-smelling flowers attract flies".

Yellow does seem to be one of the most

conspicuous colours in our desert environment and we definitely need to lure any passing insect to pollinate our flowers therefore it seems quite normal that yellow will be the colour of preference in our desert

We might not normally see as many butterflies and moths around, but a watchful eye will encounter beetles almost daily.

By Urs Lenssen Keerweder



#### Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

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"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."

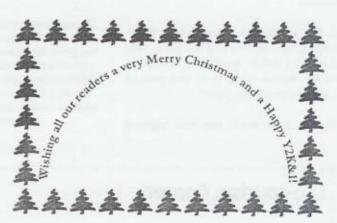
Known Websites:
www.wolwedans.com
Www.ccafrica.com
Www.members.mweb.com.na/nrfhideout

Any others?

### NamibRand Facts

Who's who in the NamibRand Nature Reserve Windhoek Office and surrounds?

NAME	POSITION
Albi Brückner	CEO
Debbie Geyser	Executive Secretary
Andreas Brückner	Financial Controller
Mariaan König	Accountant
Briggette Dentlinger	Barking Gecko typist
Mandy Brückner	Barking Gecko Editor
Zebulon Hangero	"Man Friday"



# My Home, My Soul-some poetic contributions

Over 180 000 hectares of Towering mountains which turn blue in the distance

Endless golden-yellow grasslands, Wave after wave of red sand dunes, and our ever-faithful camel thorn tree.

A climate that leaves you to expect the unexpected.

Beautiful warm sunny days, which can turn into –

Burning hot never-ending days or Cold and misty mornings, which could Bring rain here and there,

And of course our wind and occasional sandstorms.

A wildlife population, which ranges from

Oryx, kudu, springbok and zebra – (to name a few)

Bird species from as big and magnifi-

cent as the ostrich.

to as small and shy as our "lovebirds". Hyenas, jackals, bat-eared foxes and ...cheetahs??!

Even snakes, geckos and insects.

Sounds like an African experience?

(After just 5 months) this is the place we are proud to call our home.

Eduard & Charmaine Gous Toekoms

"Here in this windy house of silence I can lose myself – the sky Is endless and empty And here the sand Shifts and forms the land. Here in the nearness of where I Stand there is always a distance – A space – an in-between and Here I am alone, but I belong.

Here in this great crucible of dreams –
Stretched out plains, ancient mountains,
Whispering grass and patterned dunes –
formed and
Stimulated by wind and water,
Stand as sacred signatures an
Ancient contrast

Here in this vast and visible in-between Is the birthplace of Peace, urging soul into rest And thoughts into wings Here silence becomes free!!"

A Poem by: Herman Cloete, Wolwedans