





October 2000


The Barking Gecko

 Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

Volume 1, Issue 3

"The Real Thing"- Drawing by Christine Marais



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The Origin of Fairy Circles?

Gravel plains and sand dunes also contain degraded granite - these granites of the Damara Geosyncline, often contain radioactive elements (Rhodium, 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



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

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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 makes life so much easier and reduces the stress levels.

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.
 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 want 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 Safaris

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



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.

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

(Reported 13 October, with 3 photo's of the adder being caught on the stoep of the Lodge—uugggh! 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

Sossusvlei 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 NamibRand 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 southwest are with the Namib Naukluft National 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 walk-in 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 (Condé Nasté) thereby contributing to putting Namibia, NamibRand and ourselves on the international map.

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 Mountain 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:

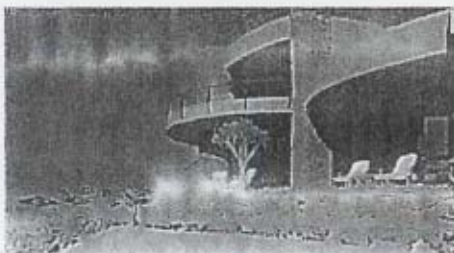
- Conservation is still the highest priority of the owners, management and staff. As discussed and agreed at the Kgotla our association with NamibRand is honest and sincere.
- We would like to see NamibRand Nature Reserve, along with ourselves and the other concessionaires, as a destination on its own 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.

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

Steven Mavromatis

.....
"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 too 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

Dune 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

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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."

NamibRand Facts

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

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

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

Any others?



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