

THE BARKING GECKO



Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



February 2005

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Best Wishes for a Happy 2005!

We would like to extend our best wishes to all of you for a happy and prosperous new year. Although it is already February, this first 2005 edition of the Barking Gecko is our first opportunity to wish you the best.

We are excited about what this new year will bring on NamibRand. Our first six months have been exciting and challenging and we look forward to this new year with great anticipation. Our projects list is long and interesting – for example, we are continuing to develop our resource monitoring system and are working on a proposal for a research field station. We have enjoyed building relationships with landowners, concessionaires, staff and other stakeholders and hope to continue strengthening our ties. There are many good things happening on the Reserve and we thank you all for your continued support and involvement!

Happy New Year!

Danica Shaw and Nils Odendaal

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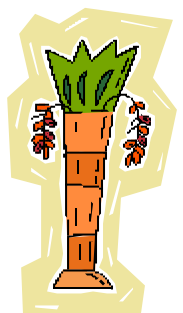
The Aandster Trust: In support of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

As we all know, the financial security of the NamibRand Nature Reserve is entirely dependent on the goodwill and support of tourists visiting the Reserve as “paying guests” of our concessionaires. Tourists contribute towards the revenue of the Reserve through paying a park-fee, similar to the system applied in our National Parks. After we ceased all forms of commercial hunting at the request of our concessionaires and their guests some four years ago, the Reserve has generated its revenue entirely from tourism. The Board considers this revenue vulnerable should anything occur which would put an end to tourists visiting Namibia and specifically the NamibRand Nature Reserve. To “stand on two feet” with regard to revenue would create greater financial comfort for the project. In addition to this, there is growing expectation that the NamibRand project should contribute towards the social and economic upliftment of the inhabitants living in the area, through creating work and vocational training opportunities.

The Aandster homestead is located against the southwestern boundary of the Reserve on top of an aquifer which is charged from two river courses draining from the high lying plateaus to the west of Maltahöhe and Duwieseb.

The previous owner irrigated extensive gardens from this abundant water resource. Following a preliminary study as to the viability of reviving horticulture on Aandster – albeit in different form – the Board in its meeting during November 2004 sanctioned the development of a “desert horticultural project” on Aandster as proposed by the Aandster Trust. The Trust has nominated the Reserve as its sole beneficiary, in accordance with the Trust Deed.

So as not to violate the conditions of the Articles of the NamibRand Nature Reserve the Board agreed to deproclaim an area of some 100 hectares, including the homestead, from the Reserve for the purpose of starting this desert horticultural project under the flag of the Aandster Trust. It is envisaged as a first step to start with a date-palm plantation over an initial area of five hectares as well as experiment with medicinal plants which would only grow in an environment similar to the one found at

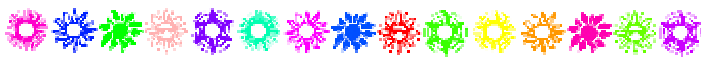


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Aandster and find a rapidly growing international market. Obviously, growing dates will take a number of years until the first harvest takes place, but the anticipated annual net-income thereafter will be substantial. The Reserve will be the sole recipient, after initial bridging finance has been repaid to the various lenders. The Trust is, however, hopeful that such a unique project might find one or more donors, who would support the project financially.

All in all – this is an exciting new development for the benefit of the Reserve. We would appreciate the support from all interested or involved parties of this unique project, whereby desert horticulture contributes towards sustainable nature conservation in the pro-Namib.

The Aandster Trust (a member of NRR)



Something old, something new...

Usually a phrase attached to a wedding – this time very apt for the events happening in October 2004. At the NaDEET Centre, Craig, the youngest member of the Tok Tokkie team, was baptised. This happened almost exactly a year after Craig was born and the UNESCO representative, Dr Claudia Harvey, officially opened the NaDEET Centre. It was a nostalgic day for many of us – especially the Tok Tokkie and NaDEET members. Again we had a choir – this time the choir from the Lutheran Church in Windhoek. Again we had Bishop Keding’s blessing. Again we had family and friends from far and near. Again we were celebrating the birth of something new – this time the birth of our son, and again being able to celebrate the birth of NaDEET (not yet something so old ...).

It was a very “multidenominational” day. Every religious and ethnic denomination was present – giving the sense of the “true” Namibia.

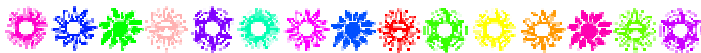
All in all a happy and successful day.

Marc and Elinor Dürr



Photo: Bernard de Winter

L to R: Bishop Keding, Craig, Marc, Sheena & Elinor Dürr



Game Count on NamibRand Nature Reserve

The last wildlife census on NamibRand was held in June 1999 and we have a need for updated information. In order to manage the Reserve effectively, we need to know how much wildlife there is (population), where it is (distribution) and whether or not numbers are increasing or declining (trends).

With this in mind, the first vehicle-based wildlife census was held on NamibRand on the 18th and 19th of December 2004. Previous wildlife counts on NamibRand were done using aerial census techniques; although this is a proven method the high costs involved are often prohibitive. Vehicle-based counts are cheaper and thus more repeatable, which is important for collecting data and important for the long-term management of the Reserve as a whole.

The vehicle-based survey method also presented us with the opportunity to involve more stakeholders and interested parties on the Reserve. In order to get maximum coverage of the Reserve, we divided the area into seven routes. The routes were set up in such a way that each concessionaire or landowner on the Reserve had a circular drive which they could cover, usually starting and ending at their base of operations.



Photo: Danica Shaw

Simon Mayes of the NR Working Group, right, explains how to judge the distance of animals from a vehicle

Preparatory work and explanations of the survey methodology and rules was done at Keerweder on the 18th of December. 35 people comprised of management and staff from Wolwedans, Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge, Tok Tokkie Trails and the Reserve participated in this training. We were fortunate to have Simon Mayes of the Natural Resource Working Group (a Ministry of Environment and Tourism, NNF & WWF partnership) joined us to help set up the survey methodology and to assist in briefing the participants as to the how, why and when’s. A social gathering followed this briefing at Keerweder.

The actual count was then conducted on the 19th of December. Teams started their designated routes at seven in the morning, counted everything they saw to the left and right of the vehicle, recorded the distance at which animals were seen and their location (participants used maps that were divided into numbered grid squares). Teams were then asked to report back their sightings at Keerweder. Information was then duplicated and summarized for analysis.

The initial data gathered is very encouraging and although some work is still needed to obtain population estimates (we need to get accurate correction factors) enough data is available

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to determine a population estimate of ~2800 oryx and ~4200 springbok. Although population estimates can vary and numbers can be obtained in various ways the most valuable data obtained from this count are the actual sightings. This data is indisputable and is the foundation on which distribution patterns and increasing or decreasing numbers or trends are based. Participants were very pleased with the game count methodology and over-all organization and expressed their appreciation in being involved with this exercise. This was an "excellent" team building exercise for the Reserve!

The next game count has been scheduled for the 3-4 June. We hope many more of you will be able to participate!

Nils Odendaal



Photo: Danica Shaw

Senior SML staff and others enjoy a chat at Keerweder after the training.

Household Competition

In the spirit of promoting good housekeeping, the first household competition was held on the Reserve in December 2004. This competition, where workers houses are inspected by management, was initiated by the Lenssens and J.A. Brückner with the purpose of encouraging workers to maintain and improve their living quarters. This year's first prize of N\$500 was won by the household of Mrs. Lydia Kooper. Second prize of N\$250 was awarded to the household of Mrs. Sara Tsaobeb and Ms. Elsavee Rooi. In recognition of the hard work that was put into the houses, all other households received a consolation prize of N\$50. NamibRand staff members expressed their satisfaction with the results, but requested that in the future the evaluation be done in a more participatory way (i.e. that they also be able to view houses) so that they would be able to learn from each other.



Nils Odendaal



Desert Thoughts

We laughed together in the desert, we who shared neither language nor country, race nor creed; only our humanity did we share and that was enough.

Edward Edwards



News @ NaDEET

NaDEET is now beginning its third year. In 2003 we built NaDEET Centre. In 2004 we had a busy schedule with 17 groups at NaDEET Centre, 1 Nature Conservation student, 3 Bush Telegraphs (our youth magazine) and much more. 2005 hopefully will bring some more of everything.

Fund Raising in USA

Taking advantage of a trip to the US to visit my family and friends over the holidays, I spent two weeks in November 2004 trying to collect funds and raise awareness about NaDEET. My parents, especially my mother, did an enormous amount of groundwork before my arrival by meeting with potentially interested groups to whom I could speak to about NaDEET. I therefore had a very busy speaking schedule that started only a day after my arrival. I gave presentations about our work to the local Rotary Club, German Club, Audubon Society (an environment/ wildlife society), Delta Kappa Gamma (an international women educator's society) and my parents' church. I also spoke to children at two different schools. Many people were very interested in NaDEET and how a "young woman from outside of New York City would choose to live in the Namib Desert". I managed to raise some funds and made many good contacts that will hopefully provide more financial support in the coming years.

New Staff

This year we have three new people working for NaDEET. Yvonne Adriaanse joins us from the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP) where she has been the programme coordinator for the past two years. Yvonne is extremely interested and passionate about environmental education. She has

Dust Storm Hits the Reserve



Photo: Hilda de Villiers

On Sunday 6 February the temperature hit a high of 45.5°. In the late afternoon a major dust storm developed due to stormy weather. It hit Wolwedans first, removing the roof of their office. Moving north of Wolwedans it then continued east across the Keerweder Pan fed by wind and rain on the western edge of the Reserve. It hit Keerweder with an unbelievable power, engulfing the homestead for at least an hour. Luckily none of the roofs came completely off, but they did try!

Dust storm at Keerweder as seen from Jagkop - the homestead is in there somewhere...

experience working with youth while she was working at the Keetmanshoop Multi-Purpose Youth Centre. She will be trained to run programmes at NaDEET Centre and will be working with me on the programme development of an environmental education programme for the Succulent Karoo.

Almello Muzuma is a second year Nature Conservation student who is working at NaDEET to complete his In-Service Training. Almello is from the North-west of Namibia. During secondary school he was part of the environmental club and participated in the AfriCat EE programme. With this discovery on my part I am extremely pleased to hear from Almello that his weekend at AfriCat sparked his interest in Nature Conservation. Almello will be assisting in all of NaDEET's work with an emphasis on school groups at NaDEET Centre.

Hilda de Villiers is returning to NamibRand for the second time. As a retired banker, she has offered her time to NaDEET to help us with "whatever is needed". Hilda will be involved in many aspects of NaDEET especially regarding marketing and fund raising.

Office and Accommodation

We are currently busy remodeling the storage/ generator building at Die Duine to accommodate a larger office, kitchen and staff housing for NaDEET. This renovation will also provide a reception area for visitors of NaDEET. Although for the first two years, we managed to complete our objectives from a converted storage room, it was very difficult to host guests in that space. With the new staff it was vital to expand to meet our needs and better be able to fulfill our aims and objectives. Hopefully the facilities will be completely finished by February/ March.

Otherwise I am looking forward to a busy year in educating for a sustainable future!

Viktoria Keding

nightly guided 'Tour of the Universe' encompassed a journey that began through our Solar System, then out beyond into the Galactic centre, where we encountered Open Star Clusters (like the famous 'Jewel Box'), Globular Clusters (Omega Centauri), stars tens of thousands of times more luminous than the Sun (Rigel in Orion), and then out beyond our own Galaxy to galaxies millions of light years away (the 'Sombrero Galaxy,' fifty million light years away and so named because it resembles a Mexican hat!). From the smallest (dust-grain-sized shooting stars aplenty), to the biggest and farthest, I would attempt to encapsulate a picture of our Universe, and try to emphasize the tiny, yet precious place we occupy within it.

I felt safe beneath the stars in Namibia. Unlike we humans, rushing around on Earth, constantly changing things, unable to leave anything alone (and for what reason?), the stars, without fail are reassuringly constant. They are always there in the same way that the surrounding mountains are at SML. As one lady guest said to me, "These mountains are older than some of the stars in the sky!" Of course I will never be able to witness the complete life cycle of a star (the Sun's lifespan is ten billion years), from its nebulous birth through to its desperate, often catastrophic end. But that's ok, because, like the best firework display ever, the sky is alive now with stars being born, stars living out their lives and stars that are dying. I can see it all in the here-and-now. If you feel sage beneath the stars, go outside. Spend time beneath them. The answers are there in the sky. All we have to do is open our eyes.

Thank you to all those wonderful guests who gave me so much encouragement. Thank you to SML for giving me this opportunity in the first place. And thank you Namibia for my first experience of your land, your people and your wondrous skies.

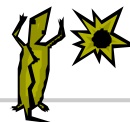
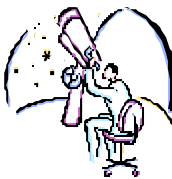
Caroline Beevis, March 2004



Under Namibian Skies (Part 3 of 3)

Everything has a birth, a lifespan and a death, even stars; even, I believe, the Universe itself. The fact that the Universe is not only expanding, but speeding up, suggests to me that this is a one-way trip, like all things mortal, and that, yet again, we have to re-evaluate our sense of importance and look from a more objective perspective regarding our place in the 'big scheme of things.' If the Universe continues to expand, then, one day, many hundreds of billions of years from now, the sky will be black and empty. No stars. No stargazers. Like the many elements here on Earth which are used and re-used, it's possible that the Universe may recycle itself in some shape or form someday. But that is not for us to know, yet. What is important is that we keep looking, keep trying and keep learning.

This has been just the briefest glimpse of the Universe. My



Sacred Nature

Sometimes, when a bird cries out,
Or the wind sweeps through a tree,
Or a dog howls on a far-off farm,
I hold still and listen a long time.

My world turns and goes back to the place
Where, a thousand forgotten years ago,
The bird and the blowing wind
Were like me, and were my brothers.

My soul turns into a tree,
And an animal, and a cloud bank.
Then changed and odd it comes home
And asks me questions. What should I reply?

Hermann Hesse

Happenings on the Reserve

NamibRand Bird Atlas



Photo: Nils Odendaal



Digging of Bobbejaan-Keerweder pipeline

In December a 5 km long pipeline was completed, linking Bobbejaan dam and Boscia to Keerweder. This pipeline now helps provide additional water for both Jagkopwater and Sandgrouse. Another 900m pipeline now links Draaihoek mountain water to the house. This line

helps provide additional water for Porcupine. The Reserve employed four casual workers to complete this project over the span of six weeks.

The western corridor fence from the northern border of the Reserve to the Kwessiegat motor gate has been taken down. The poles are still to be collected in certain sections, but it now allows free movement of game onto and off the road.

New border signs have been erected at the northern and southern borders to the Reserve. Have a look on your next trip!

A new satellite phone and internet system have been installed at Toekoms. You can reach Andreas and Viktoria Keding privately on (063) 683085. A new phone and internet system is almost completed at Kwessiegat. You can reach Hilda de Villiers at (063) 683081.



The old telephone lines from Keerweder have been removed and once the old farm lines have been removed, we plan to remove the lines to the southern border. The view on the Reserve is constantly improving!



The Reserve has recently acquired ArcView mapping software. This powerful software allows senior staff to generate any number of satellite maps for use as management tools. In the near future we hope to produce maps for sale – we will let you know when this is a reality!

We would like to welcome our new nature conservation student from the Polytechnic of Namibia – his name is Josea Kaumba and he will be doing his in-service training with us through June. He will be researching the social behaviour and range of our giraffe - we hope to learn many things from his report! Please see his article on page 6 for more personal information.



The temperatures this summer have been high and we have been busy over the past couple of months maintaining pumps and water points to keep up with the demand from the animals.

Danica Shaw

When I started working on NamibRand Nature Reserve, Peter and Marilyn Bridgeford were running the NamibRand Bird Atlas and they asked me to get involved. I gained my main birding skills working as a guide at a lodge in northern Namibia and I must say that I found birding in the south a somewhat different experience. The sun seems brighter, the distances further, the colors vary and some of the birds are different. Nevertheless I enjoyed participating, especially because of Peter and Marilyn's enthusiasm.

When the Bridgefords moved to the coast, they suggested that I continue the Atlas and I have taken on the task. The collection of this data is an important resource management activity for the Reserve – it contributes to the general monitoring of bird distribution throughout Namibia and valuable trends can be projected for ornithologists, managers, students and other interested parties.

For the layperson, here is a short description of how our Bird Atlas works:

- The Reserve is divided into $\frac{1}{4}^\circ$ (quarter degree of longitude and latitude) squares. This is the size on which distribution maps are based. NamibRand lies within six $\frac{1}{4}^\circ$ squares which are named from A to F for easy monitoring.
- A monthly Bird List is handed out to as many reliable participants as possible. These participants cross off the bird species that is positively identified in the relevant square. This data is then collected and put into a database.
- If we see a trend in the data that, for example, pelicans are living and nesting in the camelthorn trees in the $\frac{1}{4}^\circ\text{C}$ square near Wolwedans, we would report this. After verification by experts that this is not a random occurrence, the distribution maps of pelicans in new publications would be changed to include the relevant $\frac{1}{4}^\circ$ square on NamibRand.
- Data could indicate that there is a decline of Lappet Faced Vultures or other important species. This monitoring method functions similarly as game counts do – to determine game numbers.

Currently, the NamibRand Bird Atlas database consists of a total number of 4766 sightings. This covers the time from January 2001 until October 2004. The highest number of contributions have been received from Aandster, Die Duine, Keerweder and Toekoms. The bird with the highest recorded sightings is the Pale Chanting Goshawk. The most sightings were recorded in 2003, with exactly 1700 entries.

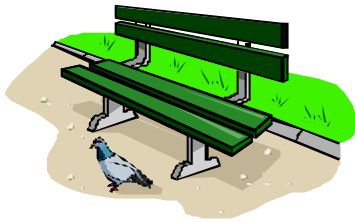


There is much more interesting information on the Bird Atlas which I will be sharing in future issues of the Barking Gecko. If you are interested in more information or other topics concerning the Bird Atlas, please contact us at Keerweder.

Andreas Keding

“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”

A Memorable Trip to Central Park



The adage, “travel broadens the mind,” is true. Being a seasoned traveller to such exotic places as Pofadder, Maltahöhe and even Omaruru, I embarked on another mission. Many years ago

(“just after the Rinderpest epidemic” my friend Kojak would interject), I visited the famous Hyde Park. There I gawked at soapbox orators of every description, even left wing “experts” ranting about the evil apartheid regime in S.A. These days they all attack the Great Satan (a.k.a. George W. Bush). Therefore, I decided to visit another well-known park and that’s how I ended up in Central Park. I don’t think I have to tell anyone where that is.

As I crossed the busy avenue amidst the hustle and bustle of downtown traffic, I was almost wiped out by a taxi. This brought a lump to my throat as I nostalgically thought of Windhoek. Being made of sterner stuff, this close encounter of another kind did not deter me. I had come a long way and spent a lot of money to see how the other millions lived!

With a thrill of anticipation, I entered the PARK! Nothing happened to me in the first 30 seconds, so I slowly advanced down a path. The cool dude with the wrap-around dark glasses appeared in front of me like a genie popping out of a Tafel Lager dumpy. Time seemed to stand still, as I thought of all the books I had read about Central Park and the movies I had seen. Would I be robbed, raped or rapped over the head? Dirty Harry, where are you? It was a ludicrous anti-climax as he whipped open his jacket to expose his wares: flashy watches and dark glasses. Hiding my shaking hands in my coat pockets, I sidled past him. On an adrenalin high, I floated down the path. WOW! I had survived my first encounter with the wildlife of Central Park.

Emboldened by survival and adrenalin, I ambled on, trying not to look like a tourist. People of all shades of the rainbow came and went as I sat on a park bench watching the human tide. A decrepit looking individual, bent over his walking stick, a few stubby teeth visible through the whiskers covering his face, hobbled closer, his rheumy eyes assessing me as a possible soft touch. I was so happy to have survived that I passed him 20 dollars. He was so surprised that he stood up straight, almost discarding his walking stick prop as he headed for the gate at a fast walk, probably to the nearest liquor store. Live and learn!

I ambled on past hawkers selling anything imaginable and from the look of some things, unimaginable. A policeman strolled past, turning a blind eye and cupped palm to the illegal traders. My third close encounter was almost more frightening than the first. A young mini-skirted lady, or rather female (I think),

blocked my path. Her face was plastered with a kilogram of make-up and she had poured a litre of sickeningly sweet something over herself. She whipped open her jacket, but fortunately did not expose her wares, only her bare midriff. Her belly button was decorated with a rusty curtain ring. Maybe I needed Dirty Harry after all. I was a mesmerised rabbit, turned to stone. When she saw I was not captivated by her charms, she flounced off with a few good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon words.

That was enough wildlife for a lifetime! As I emerged from the Park, I saw the comforting sight of a Precinct (police station) and headed for it. The old building looked as if it had experienced a hundred years of seeing the dregs of society passing through its portals. Two policemen leaning against the wall talking in desultory tones with a finger up the nose brought me back to reality.

So, if you ever pass through the metropolis of Keetmanshoop in southern Namibia, be sure to visit Central Park, sandwiched between the police station and the post office.

The Happy Pensioner (a.k.a. Peter Bridgefod), Walvis Bay

All About Josea



I am Josea Kaumba, born at a small village near Rundu called Kayengona. I attended primary school at Kayengona and grew up there. This is where I gained my experience by spending time with friends and elders. I

learned about cattle, milking, riding donkeys, fishing, swimming, making mud toys and about the forest (e.g. fruits, etc.). In 2000 I moved to Rundu to further my studies. I was admitted to Rundu Secondary School for grades 9 – 12 where I lived in the hostel.

In 2004 I enrolled for a National Diploma in the School of Natural Resource Management (Nature Conservation) at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Due to my background and subjects I matriculated in (natural science, life science, agriculture, geography, and biology) I was interested in enrolling in this course. I normally communicate in Portuguese, especially with my parents and family members. I only use other languages such as Rukwangali, Sambyu and others, when I am with friends who do not speak Portuguese at all. Good communication is important to me.

I like working hard because I believe that I can only be successful if I work hard. I like travel and religion books, driving around the Reserve, listening to music and partying in my spare time.

Josea Kaumba

Editor:
Danica Shaw
Farm Keerweder
P.O. Box 131, Maltahöhe, Namibia

Newsletter of the
NamibRand Nature Reserve



Phone: +264-63-683026
Email: nrrn@iway.na
Website: www.namibrand.com

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