

THE BARKING GECKO



Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



November 2005

Volume 6 N° 3

Greetings from Keerweder

The Reserve has been busy the past couple of months, not only with visiting tourists, but various activities as well. In late August Stephan Brückner married Jana von Hase in a stunning ceremony at Wolwedans. The Maltahöhe Farmer's Association made a visit and learned more about the Reserve. NaDEET was active with several school and adult groups. In October, Reserve staff participated in vulture ringing activities on and bordering the Reserve, while our CEO attended the 8th World Wilderness Congress in Alaska, USA. The bi-annual game count took place in early November and Peter Bridgeford was presented with an environmental award.

It has been an active couple of months, full of interesting happenings. We hope you will enjoy this latest bumper issue of the Barking Gecko, which contains all the stories mentioned above as well as many others.

We would also like to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season and all the best for the coming New Year. We look forward to working together with old friends and forging new relationships as we continue to contribute to our mutual conservation goals.

Happy Holidays and a prosperous New Year!



Danica Shaw and Nils Odendaal

8th WORLD WILDERNESS CONGRESS

8th World Wilderness Congress Generates Conservation Results

Anchorage, Alaska – October 10, 2005

The 8th World Wilderness Congress met for almost two weeks from late September into early October, including several pre-Congress wilderness management training sessions and seven days of plenary and concurrent sessions. The Congress achieved all of its conversation objectives and generated several unexpected results: new protected areas (both native and governmental); new wilderness legislation; increased inter-governmental and organizational cooperation yielding several new initiatives and networks; scores of professionals and volunteers trained in wilderness management, communications, and advocacy; and new funding to safeguard wildlands, wild species and human beings around the world. The 8th WWC involved 1200 delegates from up to 60 nations, and heavily emphasized the role of native peoples in protecting wilderness and wildlands. The 8th WWC also tackled contentious issues such as the proposed oil and gas drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and global warming.

The major accomplishments of the 8th WWC are as follows:

- Designation of new wilderness and protected areas in Mexico and the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- The announcement of the WILD Planet Fund to fund the WILD Planet Project, a proactive global wildlands initiative to integrate new data on the benefits of wilderness conservation into a concise and compelling case for decision makers.
- The announcement of new wilderness legislation in Mexico, the first such legal use of "wilderness" as a protected area category in all of Latin America.
- Under the WILD Planet Project, the unveiling of new and improved inventories and definitions to address the

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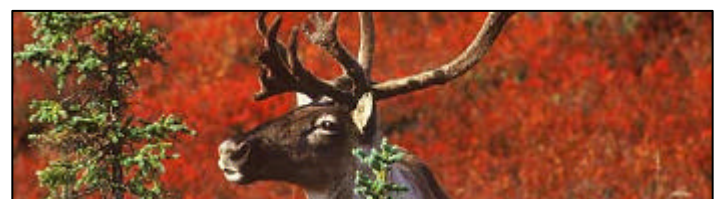


Photo: www.8wwc.org

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- protection as “wilderness” of marine and freshwater systems around the world.
- The formation of the Native Lands and Wilderness Council, an indigenous group to guide the use and management of wildlands and to demonstrate unequivocally that indigenous groups are an important part of conserving wildlands globally.
 - The initiation of the International League of Conservational Photographers by 40 of the world’s finest conservation photographers. This working group will further environmental and cultural conservation through photography and will work on global campaigns to highlight critical issues.
 - The announcement of a new initiative by the Wilderness Foundation (South Africa) and other partners to assist young people orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Umzi Wethu – “our home” – will give orphaned young people housing, training and jobs in the ecotourism, hospitality and other industries.
 - The formation of numerous other professional networks and conservation organizations. The Africa Wilderness network was established by the Zambezi Society (Zimbabwe) and the Wilderness Action Group (SA), in collaboration with the Wilderness Task force of the IUCN. The World Wilderness Youth Network was established by the youth and young professionals whom participated in specific programs at the 8th WWC.
 - Public outreach in Alaska, prior to the start of the conference, to help inform and educate Alaskans on the values of wilderness and wildlands.
 - Technical information and training was conducted before and during the 8th WWC – 30 professionals from 21 countries completely an accredited Wilderness Management course. 15 youth from 6 countries participated in numerous communications and information trainings, worked as communications interns during the 8th WWC, and then established the World Wilderness Youth Network mentioned earlier. Over 200 scientists and managers participated in three days of almost 70 concurrent sessions.
 - A targeted list of 49 Resolutions was approved addressing broad conservation issues as well as specific areas and issues needing international and local attention and action.

This information was compiled from the 8th WWC website at www.8wwc.org.

Danica Shaw



Photo: www.8wwc.org

Call for Contributions

Please remember to send us your interesting tidbits, exciting stories, beautiful photos, comic relief or any other things which you would like to share.



Photo: www.8wwc.org

NamibRand CEO attends the 8th World Wilderness Congress in Anchorage, Alaska

After exploring the Alaskan outback along the Brooks Range in the northwest of that vast and sparsely populated country, I prepared to respond to an invitation by the organizers of the 8th World Wilderness Congress to submit a presentation to the delegates on NamibRand Nature Reserve as a model of wildlife and biodiversity conservation in Africa through private initiative and on a sustainable basis. The documentation for this presentation was prepared by NRNR’s Danica Shaw, Environment and Research Warden and Nils Odendaal, Control Warden. They went to great length in preparing a 1.5m x 1.0m poster (an informative and colourful documentation on NRNR and its aims & objectives), a PowerPoint presentation based on the poster and a brochure, summing it all up as a reference paper for those that would want a “reminder” for later reference.

The Congress, under the theme “Wilderness, Wildlands and People – A Partnership for the Planet” was arranged into plenary sessions in the mornings addressing fundamental subjects, while the afternoons were reserved for specific presentations, such as the one on NRNR. These presentations were limited to a maximum of 10 minutes each, while more than twenty presentations would run concurrently, there was hardly sufficient time to convey the NRNR message to those present which never numbered more, than say, twenty listeners – many of which showed more interest in the plight and predicaments of Alaska and North-America’s indigenous people, than a successful privately initiated conservation project in Namibia, Africa.

As can be expected, each WWC highlights the current issues facing the host country and region. Although, African issues did enjoy various platforms and exposure, the real focus was elsewhere.

According to the organizers some 1200 delegates had registered for the 8th WWC and its activities over a two week period. However, the plenary sessions in the second week seemed limited to around 500 attendees.

When I learned that my presentation was scheduled for the late afternoon on the last day of the Congress – by which time a fair number of delegates would have left already, as is normally the case – and with the expectation of a very limited audience, I decided to abstain from making my presentation and left Anchorage, heading back for Europe, two days earlier than originally planned.

Nevertheless, it was an experience to attend the 8th WWC on

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the other side of our globe and to learn that many problems are similar or even comparable to ours in our “mutual desire to protect and sustain wilderness and wildlands, while meeting the needs of the human communities socially, economically and culturally.” (Vance Martin, President of the WILD Foundation). It was also my pleasure to meet again with old acquaintances such as Vance Martin, Dr. Ian Player, Andrew Muir and especially, my friend from Kenya, Kuki Gallmann.

Perhaps NamibRand will be invited again to the 9th WWC and will have a better opportunity to interest people in our efforts and achievements.

J.A. Brückner

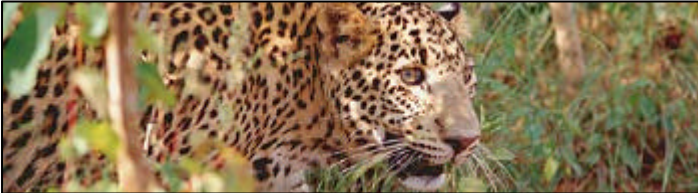


Photo: www.8wwc.org

Concern for the Namib-Naukluft Park **8th World Wilderness Congress** **Resolution 15**

The following resolution, expressing concern for the impacts of the Langer Heinrich Uranium Mine, was passed at the 8th World Wilderness Congress.

RESOLUTION #: 15

TITLE: Cultivating Wilderness Conservation Values Within The Mining Sector: The Langer Heinrich Uranium Mine, Namibia

WHEREAS:

The Namibian Government has recently granted approval of a new uranium mine located at Langer Heinrich, within the Namib-Naukluft National Park, to be developed by Paladin Resources;

The Namib-Naukluft National Park has been identified as a globally Important Bird Area by BirdLife International, and lies within the Namib Desert Wilderness Area, which is identified as a globally important Wilderness Area by Conservation International;

This development appears likely to impact the integrity of the Namib-Naukluft National Park and its biodiversity values, both immediately and in the long term;

The mining company involved appears to have no track record in mining and rehabilitating ecologically sensitive areas.

THEREFORE:

The World Wilderness Congress expresses its concern that such a mining development should proceed within an outstanding and sensitive location within the Namib-Naukluft National Park, and apparently without adequate plans for impact mitigation and site rehabilitation.

RESOLVED:

That the World Wilderness Congress urges the Namibian

Government to:

Undertake a comprehensive Action Planning process in collaboration with Paladin Resources (and its subsidiary in Namibia, Langer Heinrich Uranium), involving relevant and appropriate local, national and international stakeholders;

Use such engagement to ensure that the impacts of the mine development at Langer Heinrich and associated areas within the Namib-Naukluft National Park are avoided wherever possible and are mitigated where appropriate;

Ensure that a closure plan addressing full rehabilitation of the mine site and associated infrastructure impacts is developed and approved through a process of public consultation;

Pledge to maintain the highest standards in impact assessment and public consultation regarding any further developments of this nature within the Namib-Naukluft National Park and other Protected Areas of international significance.

PROPOSER:

Jonathan R Stacey, BirdLife International

SECONDER:

Antonio M. Claparols, Ecological Society of the Philippines

Javier M. Claparols, Ecological Society of the Philippines

Alec Marr, The Wilderness Society

Prof. Graham Kerley, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Michael Hoffmann, CABS, Conservation International

Matthew Norval, Wilderness Foundation SA

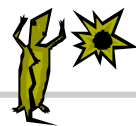
Nyika Munodawafa, Livingstone, Zambia

Sandy Slater-Jones, Caprivi, Namibia

Bittu Sahgal, Founder Editor, Sanctuary Asia

This information was compiled from the 8th WWC website at www.8wwc.org.

Danica Shaw



Sacred Nature

Once in a lifetime, perhaps, one escapes the actual confines of the flesh. Once in a lifetime, if one is lucky, one so merges with sunlight and air and running water that whole eons, the eons that mountains and deserts know, might pass in a single afternoon without discomfort. The mind has sunk away into its beginnings among old roots and the obscure tricklings and movings that stir inanimate things. Like the charmed fairy circle into which a man once stepped, and upon emergence learned that the whole century had passed in a single night, one can never quite define this secret; but it has something to do, I am sure, with common water. Its substance reaches everywhere; it touches the past and prepares the future; it moves under the poles and wanders thinly in the heights of the air. It can assume forms of exquisite perfection in a snowflake, or strip the living to a single shining bone cast up by the sea.

Loren Eiseley from *The Immense Journey* (1957)



November Game Count

The November 2005 Bi-Annual Game Count took place on the Reserve on 4-5 November. This “end of dry season” vehicle-based game count was conducted as an in-house event, with assistance provided by those willing and able to do so. No extensive training or feedback events were held, as these are reserved for the public participatory game count, usually held at the “end of wet season” count in June / July of each year. However, some training on count techniques and methodology was presented to new counters by Senior Ranger, Andreas Keding, at the Die Duine homestead on the afternoon of 4 November 2005.

The count of Route 1 was conducted on the morning of 4 November 2005, while all other routes (Route 2 - 8) were counted on the morning of 5 November 2005.

Results of this game count are very encouraging. With reference to the Reserve’s three objectives an executive summary of data can be describe as follows:

Objective 1: Population Estimates

The overall population estimate has risen by 20% - see the table below. It is important to remember however, that management decisions are not based on population estimate increases, but rather on wildlife trends and distribution.

Objective 2: Wildlife Distribution

Game densities in the eastern and most southern areas of the Reserve have increased exponentially, while densities in the west are significantly lower than in June 2005.

Objective 3: Population Change

A significant increase for each species of wildlife has been recorded. Although populations are lower in the western areas of the Reserve, populations have increased massively in the eastern and southern part of the Reserve. Interesting to note is the overall increase in the frequency of wildlife sightings. Animals seen per hundred kilometers driven are up 37%.

The results can be attributed to the above average 2004 / 2005 rainy season and the west to east seasonal migration of plains

game in the pro-Namib region.

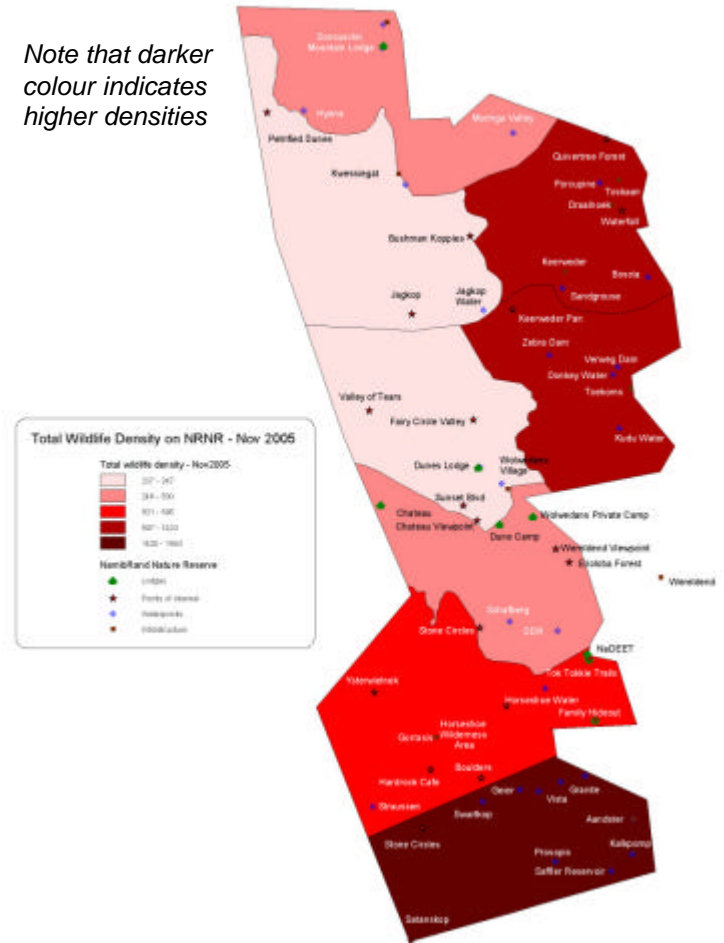
NamibRand staff would like to thank all those who helped with this game count. Although this census was conducted as an “in-house” affair we would not have been able to conduct the count over only two days without their help. Special mention is thus extended to Wolwedans – for making two teams available, TokTokkie Trails and NaDEET – one team and to the “crew” from Kwessiegat – Chris Berker, Carol Alberton and Hilda de Villiers.

Nils Odendaal

Note: A detailed results analysis and report is available on request. Please email us a nrrn@iway.na to obtain a copy.

Total Wildlife Density on NRNR—Nov 2005

Note that darker colour indicates higher densities



Population Estimates - November 2005

Species	Nov-05			Jun-05			Percentage Change
	No. Seen under 500m	No. Corrected For Area	Total No. Corrected For Species Nov 2005	No. Seen under 500m	No. Corrected For Area	Corrected For Species June 2005	
Gemsbok	982	3,988	9,571	801	3,085	7,405	23%
Springbok	1,498	5,754	16,688	1,351	4,833	14,016	16%
Kudu	64	318	827	25	112	290	65%
Steenbok	2	10	100	2	5	53	47%
Burchells Zebra	59	259	519	29	145	290	44%
Ostrich	102	403	846	89	371	780	8%
Blesbok*	1		11	10		10	9%
Red Hartebeest*	4		55	3		50	9%
Total	2,712	10,733	28,617	2,310	8,602	22,895	20%

*Numbers of these species are known



Photo: V. Keeling

Peter Bridgeford Honoured with the NNF-Go Green Environmental Award

On the evening of 17 November 2005, Peter Bridgeford, former Warden of NamibRand Nature Reserve was presented with the Namibia Nature Foundation – Go Green Environmental Award. Peter’s co-winner was Simson Uri-Khob of the Save the Rhino Trust who also received the award at the same ceremony. Along with the honour of receiving the award goes a N\$10,000 prize.

The purpose of these awards is to publicly acknowledge the contributions made by individuals and thereby demonstrate that individuals can and do make a positive and significant impact on the quality of our environment and to sustainable development. Other positive benefits of the Awards include the incentives that they provide for innovation and commitment, the publicity that they bring to the field of work of the winners and the general awareness that they create for the importance of wise environmental management.

In the words of Dr. Chris Brown, Director of the NNF: “Peter Bridgeford has recently “retired” from a lifetime of dedication to conservation, though he is more busy now than before he retired. He has worked in the Ministry of Environment and Tourism in various National Parks, and also in a private sector park. In parallel to his official park duties, he has had a passion for birds – he has published a paper on the birds of the Naukluft Mountains and at least 15 more publications in the scientific literature – and a special passion for vultures.

For the past 15 years he has been monitoring and ringing vultures – particularly the Lappet-faced Vulture – he has ringed some 450 in the Namib-Naukluft park alone.

But perhaps his special skills are in dealing with farmers. “Die baas van die plaas” mentality of many farmers melts before his soft-spoken charm and understanding approach, and before long, farmers are giving up their bottles of strychnine and are climbing up trees to help ring and monitor the vultures nesting on their farms. Farmers and Farmer’s Associations have developed great respect for this man, and he has probably spoken at more farmers days than anyone – certainly on the subjects of predator management and vulture conservation.

Peter is highly respected throughout southern Africa for his vulture conservation work, as well as for his great ability to work so well with everyone.”

Our heartfelt congratulations go out to Peter for his lifelong dedication and his significant contributions to conservation in Namibia.



Danica Shaw



News @ NaDEET Polytechnic Student Reports on NaDEET activities

From the time I have been at NaDEET in July this year, the Centre has hosted seven school groups and three adult groups. There are still three more schools expected before NaDEET Centre closes at the end of the year in December. I have thus had an opportunity to understand the curriculum of the Centre and its approach towards environmental education. From its humble beginnings the Centre has grown stronger each day to become a key player in environmental education in Namibia. It is exciting to be a part of this.

One of the things that I have enjoyed learning about NaDEET is its approach to environmental education. The NaDEET curriculum embraces most of the topical environmental issues such as saving water, alternative energy, e.g. solar energy, waste management and biodiversity. The learners are also divided into living teams which makes it possible for them to understand the need for teamwork and realise how their actions as individuals affect the entire group. The setting of the centre is in such a way that learners are exposed to a situation where they experience the problem firsthand and thereafter are en-

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Desert Thoughts

The finest quality of the stone, these plants and animals, this desert landscape is the indifference manifest to our presences, our absence, our coming, our staying or our going. Whether we live or die is a matter of absolutely no concern whatsoever to the desert. Let men in their madness blast every city on earth into black rubble and envelope the entire planet in a cloud of lethal gas – the canyons and hills, the springs and rocks will still be here, the sunlight will filter through, water will form and warmth shall be upon the land and after sufficient time, no matter how long, somewhere, living things will emerge and join and stand once again, this time to take a different and better course. I have seen a place called Trinity, in New Mexico, where our wise men exploded the first atomic bomb and the heat of the blast fused sand into a greenish glass – already the grass has returned, and the cactus and the mesquite. On this bedrock of animal faith I take my stand, close by the old road that leads eventually out of the valley of paradox.

Yes. Feet on earth. Knock on wood. Touch stone. Good luck to all.

Edward Abbey from Desert Solitaire (1968)

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couraged to develop practical solutions for the problems.

Upon leaving the Centre, the learners have shown the zeal to put into practice what they have learned. The question one might ask is, are our learners capable of persuading the masses out there and raising awareness towards environmental problems? To try to address this NaDEET is piloting an At-School-Programme where a school decides upon a task that they undertake upon leaving the Centre. I feel this is more valuable as the community can see the results and comprehend the impacts of their actions on the environment. This is however limited by financial constraints, as the trust is a non-profit organisation. I feel the curriculum also needs a lot of support from the formal education sector, as the learners seem a bit mystified about the concerns for the environment.

NaDEET recently hosted an adult workshop on the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD) in Windhoek through the Southern African Development Community/ Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC/ REEP). The aim of the workshop was to collect information that will be used to develop a regional action plan for the UN DESD. The fact that the United Nations has dedicated a decade towards sustainable development education is testimony that environmental degradation is not a local, but a global problem.

Bornface Simangolwa



Birthday Celebration at NaDEET

NaDEET Centre celebrated its 2nd Birthday on 24. October 2005 together with a grade seven class from Danie Joubert Primary School in Mariental. Everyone at the party ate solar baked chocolate cake!

Our congratulations go out to NaDEET and Viktoria Keding on two years of great work!

Grade 7 students from Danie Joubert Primary School celebrate NaDEET's 2nd birthday!



Photo: J.A. Brückner



Vulture Restaurant Planned for NamibRand



A vulture restaurant and associated hide will be built next year on the Reserve. The restaurant will most likely be sighted on the western side of Jagkop and it is hoped it will contribute significantly to vulture conservation in Namibia. Reserve management is currently in consultation with Peter Bridgeford and Marc Dürr of the Vulture Study Group of Namibia to determine the most appropriate site for the restaurant as well as the design.

While the restaurant will provide an additional, specialized tourist activity for concessionaires on the Reserve, its main aims are to provide a safe haven for vultures, increase environmental awareness in the area and improve research opportunities.

Currently, a vulture restaurant and hide exists on Aandstêr at the Geier waterpoint. This is a very small, partially underground hide, housing not more than two people at one time and has been used strictly for research purposes.

NamibRand Nature Reserve staff, in consultation with the Vulture Study Group, will lead a group of Raleigh International volunteers to construct the proposed vulture restaurant. Construction will take place over two phases of three weeks each during April and May 2006. The Reserve will provide all on-site logistical support for the restaurant and to Raleigh. Raleigh will work together with Reserve staff to remove the remaining telephone poles to the southern border, which will then be used to construct the hide.

This project provides an opportunity to work with Raleigh International, exposing their volunteers to important conservation efforts in Namibia while assisting the Reserve to build the restaurant – everyone benefits from this partnership.

It is hoped that the restaurant will provide the incentive for vultures to move off neighbouring farmland and onto the Reserve, where they are protected and can breed without disturbance.

For more information on vulture restaurants, please see the following article.

Danica Shaw

Vulture Restaurants Supporting research, Creating awareness



At the recent Kgotla (1st Oct 2005), NRNR staff tabled their plans for a vulture restaurant and associated hide. As not all concessionaires were in attendance, many may not realise the importance of such a facility. This short article aims to outline some of the benefits of the planned “restaurant”. Providing food for vultures dates back to 1966 in South Africa

and 1970 in France. (Butchart 1988) The reasoning for these facilities was simple – the environment that the birds were living in was rapidly changing and their adaptation to the changes was too slow. This is still the case today. Vultures face numerous threats (NARREC 2002):

- Habitat loss through desertification, deforestation and bush encroachment;
- Irresponsible use of legal poisons;
- Pollution of wetlands and water sources;
- Disturbance at nest sites;
- Direct persecution through shooting and trapping;
- Drowning in reservoirs; and
- Diminishing food supply through agricultural expansion and decreases in wildlife as it was seen as competition to livestock.

Conservationists recognise that they have a responsibility to mitigate the threats. Apart from constant outreach programmes, a practical way is to provide a safe area for the birds to live in. There are various actions that may be taken, of which the “restaurant” is a multi-faceted one.

Vulture “restaurants” fulfil many overlapping functions.

- **Food provision** – the food provided minimises the exposure of the vultures to poisoned carcasses put out by farmers.
- **Research** – Since 1991, 425 Lappet-faced Vultures (*Aegypius tracheliotus*) have been colour ringed in the Namib Naukluft Park (NNP). (Bridgeford pers. comm. 2005) Re-sightings of these birds are scarce, with most recoveries being drowned or poisoned birds. The “restaurant” offers researchers the opportunity to observe birds at the provided carcasses. Observation of individually recognisable birds reveals information about behaviour and movement. A restaurant that vultures are attracted to fairly regularly thus provides a good opportunity to monitor marked birds. This has been shown at the REST site at the Waterberg, Namibia. In addition, the site will possibly reveal that there are other species of vulture present on the Reserve.
- **Awareness, Education and Tourism** – Vultures are often seen as dirty scavengers, yet these magnificent birds hold a great fascination for most people. Providing an opportunity to observe these birds from a close distance (from a well concealed, well-sited hide) may dispel some of the misconceptions that people hold. The group that will build the planned hide should also gain more in depth knowledge of the species.

The planned vulture restaurant and associated hide on NRNR is another step toward proving the Reserves commitment to conservation and supports national conservation objectives.

Marc Dürr

References:

Butchart, D 1988. Give a Bird a Bone. A brief account of vulture “restaurants” in southern Africa. In African Wildlife 42(6) 1988.

NARREC 2002. Namibia. Large Birds of Prey. Identification. Conservation Status. Future Survival.

Personal communication:

Bridgeford, P. 2005. Telephonic conversation. Tel 064 220 443



Wolwedans Wedding

On the afternoon of 27 August 2005, just before sunset, Stephan Brückner and Jana von Hase were wed at the Chateau Viewpoint at Wolwedans. Surrounded by family and friends, Stephan and Jana promised their lives to one another. The ceremony included the blending of red sand from the Kalahari, where Jana grew up, and red sand from NamibRand, Stephan’s home. The Wolwedans choir sang beautifully and Nico Brückner played the trumpet with finesse.

After champagne, the wedding train – consisting of nine Land Rovers and one Land Cruiser – wound its way back through the fading light and the dunes to the Dune Lodge. Here family and friends provided entertainment and funny stories as well as plenty of advice for the newlyweds. An incredible eight-course meal, interspersed with speeches, was a true culinary achievement. The celebration lasted early into the morning.

We wish Stephan and Jana all the best in their new lives together – love, joy, happiness and lots of fun along the way!

Danica Shaw



New Start for the Tok Tokkies

For the first time in two years, the Tok Tokkie family can start talking about a future together. Marc is once again healthy which coincided with a time that decisions had to and could be made. Tok Tokkie has been coasting for the last couple of years due to various reasons, but Tok Tokkie and the Dürrs have now made some plans for the future.

Tok Tokkie Trails cc has employed Thomas Soutschka and Kerstin Klein to run Tok Tokkie Trails from March 2006. Thomas and Kerstin will be employing resident managers who will be living at Die Duine and at their first opportunity, they will also be wanting to meet all Reserve stakeholders.

Tok Tokkie Trails cc still belongs to Marc and Elinor and they will still obviously be held responsible for any contractual obligations. All logistics, guides and bookings will be handled through the Safaris Unlimited office. All current bookings will be honoured at current rates and the 2006 rates and conditions

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will be honoured by Thomas and Kerstin. They are also fully aware of our biggest supporters and will continue to do everything in their power to ensure space for you.

Obviously Thomas and Kerstin will also be running Tok Tokkie at a higher occupancy than we have for the last couple of years, as they have the infrastructure to do so, so this can only be a positive move both for NamibRand Nature Reserve and for the tourism industry who is always battling to find space at Tok Tokkie.

After Elinor returns from Australia at the end of January 2006, she will be living permanently in Swakopmund as Sheena will be attending preschool full time. Marc will still be at Tok Tokkie for February and March, making sure that the guides and resident managers are trained to do the Tok Tokkie trails as well as in all rules of the Reserve. Most of the guides that will be employed have already spent a considerable time at Tok Tokkie over the last two years. Obviously any manager and guide who is living at Tok Tokkie will have the same commitment to the Reserve that we have had in terms of logistical support to other concessionaires and the Reserve staff, as well as carrying out all obligations to the homestead and water supplies as is currently seen to by Tok Tokkie. Thomas and Kerstin will also be liaising with Mandy and Andreas about the Hideout. In addition, Viktoria has and will continue to liaise with them about the relationship between NaDEET and Tok Tokkie which will carry on as it has done from NaDEET's inception.

Marc is obviously missing the time spent with the family, so once all is sorted at Tok Tokkie he will spend more and more time in Swakopmund with the family. Our heart will always be on NamibRand - you cannot take ten years of living in an area out of one's heart easily. We will be returning to Die Duine on a regular basis to ensure the smooth running of Tok Tokkie Trails.

The Tok Tokkie email address will still be operational as it stands, but as from the end of December 2005, all emails will be answered by the Safaris Unlimited office. For any telephonic correspondence, the telephone number is 061 264521. Marc and Elinor will have their own email address – marcdurr@iway.na. Our telephone number in Swakopmund is 064 404607 and cell 081 2591352.

Please do not hesitate to contact us at any stage should you experience any problems at Tok Tokkie and rest assured that

we will still keep in touch with our friends in tourism.



Elinor and Marc Dürr

Maltahöhe Farmers Association Visits the Reserve

In late August the Reserve hosted a group of members from the Maltahöhe Farmers Association. The group arrived at Keerweder late morning on the 27th of August for tea, coffee

and refreshments, while Nils and Danica presented a talk on the Reserve. After some lively discussions the group then departed to overnight at NaDEET. Jacobus Kooper and Jacky Vlees from Aandster visited the group in the afternoon and accompanied them on a game drive through the south of the Reserve.

Nils and Danica met the group early the next morning and accompanied them on a drive across the Reserve from NaDEET, via the new Acacia Forest – Chateau Plain road, past Jagkop, and back to Keerweder. The group often stopped along the way to point out interesting things and for discussions. They were stunned by the landscapes and the vast spaces. After reaching Keerweder at 13h30 the group then took leave from each other and returned home.

The group told us that they truly enjoyed their visit and were thrilled with the accommodation and programs offered at NaDEET. We have received several emails from those who attended, expressing their appreciation for being able to visit the Reserve. This is an important event which we would like to continue on an annual basis. Our relationship with neighboring farmers is extremely important and one we would like to nurture.

Danica Shaw



Photo: M. Dürr

An almost full-grown vulture chick found north of Bushman Hill in the NNP. He was a handful, but posed nicely for the camera.

Lappet-faced Vulture ringing in the NRNR Surrounds

The Namib Naukluft Park (NNP) is recognised as an important breeding area for the Lappet-faced Vulture (*Aegypius tracheliotus*). Since 1991, 425 individual birds in the Park have been colour-ringed by the Vulture Study Group, Namibia (VSG). The project was extended to incorporate NRNR for the practical reason that vultures do not recognise fences and breed wherever they are not disturbed. The first bird to be ringed on NRNR was in 2000.

In September 2005 an aerial survey was undertaken to determine if there were breeding vultures on NRNR. Two viable nests were identified on the Reserve – one on Aandstêr and another at Straussenwasser. In addition, two other nests were located only 2km from the western boundary inside the NNP and 500m from the eastern boundary on the farm Dina.

On the 17th of October 2005, the staff from Keerweder assisted in successfully ringing the chick in the NNP, north of Bushman Hill.

On the 18th the Aandstêr staff was ready to assist with the Dina

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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”



Photo: D. Shaw

Keerweder staff assist Marc.

(Continued from page 8)

bird, which turned out to be fully fledged and on the wing. This nest was very close to a nest that was used in 2004 on Aandstêr. It is believed that Lappet-faced Vultures mate for life, and that they will return to the same area each year to breed. A question that needs further investigation: Is the breeding pair at Aandstêr located there because of the vulture “restaurant” at the Geier waterhole? This could be answered in the future, if the birds continue breeding in the area.

The one nest at Aandstêr turned out to be a Blackchested Snake Eagle (*Circaetus pectoralis*) nest. One adult bird was on the nest, protecting a very small chick. At the Straussenwasser nest, no chick was found, only an abandoned egg. The fact that it was a successful breeding attempt is very positive, although we do not know why it was abandoned.

The Aandstêr staff also assisted in successfully ringing a chick on the farm Kumbis, south of the Reserve. This nest was located 50m from the NNP boundary.

As farming activities decrease along the NNP boundary more breeding attempts are likely. If anyone should recognise such attempts, please inform Reserve staff. **Try to avoid known breeding areas from May until early September** as the vultures are easily disturbed at the nesting sites, and they will rather abandon a nest, than tolerate the disturbance.

The VSG would like to thank the NRNR staff for their continued support for, and interest in, the research into one of Namibia’s most noble species.

Marc Dürr

Around the Reserve

A new road has been opened linking the Acacia Forest to the Chateau Plains. The new road enables Wolwedans to conduct short afternoon drives to the south in wintertime, when light is limited. It also bypasses the Tok Tokkie concession area, thus

ensuring the quality experience at both tourist destinations.

Jacky Vlees has been permanently appointed as a junior staff member at Aandstêr. Jacky was previously employed on a farm in the Keetmanshoop area and is the son of Jakobus and Lydia Kooper.

A new waterpoint is now operational at Porcupine. The old, unsightly corrugated iron reservoir and trough have been removed. The new tanks have been installed in the rocks and are less visible. Animals are drinking at the new point in large numbers.

The Reserve is sad to bid goodbye to Hilda de Villiers, long time resident at Kwessiegat. Hilda’s smiling face, friendship and enthusiasm for the Reserve will be sorely missed, but we wish her all the best in her new home in Cape Town.


Oreo, a Staffordshire bull terrier puppy has joined Nils and Danica at Keerweder. She is a fun addition to the homestead and keeps everyone entertained.



Photo: D. Shaw

Danica Shaw and Nils Odendaal

Oreo Odendaal



Weather Report

Temperatures have been heating up here on the Reserve as we move into summer, although the nights are still cool. We have had only one small thunderstorm the night of 16 October, yielding 1mm at Keerweder and 2 mm at Aandster. We hope more is on the way!

Please see the table below which provides the maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in a month as well as the average maximum and minimum for the month.

Month	Max	Min	Ave Max	Ave Min
Aug	33	-2	28.4	3.4
Sep	40	4	34.2	10.7
Oct	43	4.5	36.1	13.8

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

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