

THE BARKING GECKO



Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



March 2006

Volume 7 N° 1

Summertime on the Reserve

We hope you have all had a wonderful start to the New Year and that 2006 brings great things your way.

The summer on NamibRand has been hot and wet, but definitely interesting. The NamibRand Conservation Foundation met in early December and awarded two grants. Reserve staff enlisted the assistance of a visiting helicopter to replace the batteries of the radio repeater on the Losberg. The Game Rangers Association of Africa held its annual meeting at NaDEET. The NamibRand Desert Research and Awareness Centre took the first steps to establish a research field base at Toekoms. A new second-year Nature Conservation student arrived in early January to spend his six month practical on the Reserve.

However, the hottest topic at the moment is the rain - the entire Reserve received incredible rains in January and February, leaving us all awestruck by the beauty of a green Namib.



We hope you enjoy this latest issue of *The Barking Gecko*, containing all the stories mentioned above as well as many others. We look forward to continuing our good start to the year and working with you all to continue making NamibRand the exceptional experience it is.

Danica Shaw and Nils Odendaal

Rain Glorious Rain



The majority of Namibia received record rainfalls in January and February and NamibRand was no exception. The summer of 2006 will be remembered for the thrilling bursts of lightening and crashing thunder, the rushing of water along long forgotten drainage lines, the stunning contrast of new green against red dunes and the undulating silver-gold heads of seeding grass.

Rainfall received across the Reserve averaged 51.4 mm in January and 79.7 mm in February. The highest received in January was 109 mm at Kalkpomp on Aandster and in February the highest was 139 mm at Boscia on Keerweder.

Other key points received the following amount of rain:

Place	January (mm)	February (mm)
Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge	45	124.5
Kwessiegat	51	65.5
Draaihoek	66	99
Keerweder	62.5	110
Wolwedans Reception	92	63
Toekoms	79.5	89
Gorrasis	55	55
NaDEET	38.5	119.5
Die Duine	42	55
Stellarine	80	88
Aandster	48	114

In this issue:

Summertime	1
Rain, Glorious Rain	1
Sacred Nature.....	2
Game Rangers Meet on NamibRand.....	3
News @ NaDEET.....	3
NamibRand Conservation Foundation.....	4
Research Centre to be Established at Toekoms	5
Desert Thoughts.....	5
Blackchested Snake Eagle.....	5
The NaDEET Duathlon.....	6
Wilderness in Namibia—Moving Forward	6
Helicopter to the Losberg	8
Vulture Restaurant Underway.....	8
Second Year Nature Conservation Student.....	9
Weather Report.....	9

View of the mountains of Toskaan from Kwessiegat.

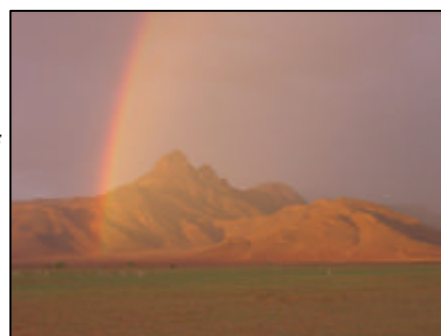


Photo: N. Odendaal

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

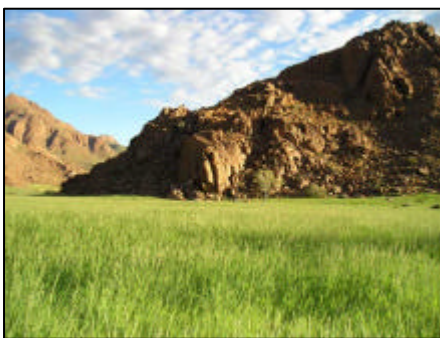
The phenomenal rainfall received on the Reserve in January and February has proven both wonderful and, at times, challenging.

During a storm on 3 January, lightning struck Keerweder, damaging the water pump, telephone / internet system and solar equipment. A few weeks later, NaDEET experienced a lightning strike which destroyed phones and the fax and answering machines.

On the evening of 9 February, Aandster received 44 mm of rain in the span of one hour. Senior Ranger, Andreas Keding said he had never experienced such an intense storm – the winds toppled one of the windmills at the homestead, luckily missing people and infrastructure. Fortunately, this storm was fairly localized and spared NaDEET's visiting school group from a soaking!

During the afternoon of 10 February, Wolwedans measured 65 mm of rain in two hours, leaving reception and the airstrip under water. The following day, flights were unable to land and were re-directed to the Keerweder airstrip.

Rainfall was widespread over the entire Reserve on the evening of 24 February and the Game Rangers Association of Africa (GRAA) meeting was coming to a close at NaDEET. Wardens Nils Odendaal and Danica Shaw were travelling from NaDEET back to Keerweder, along with their dog, when they hit a patch of mud on the flooded Tok Tokkie corridor road. The Land Cruiser sunk up to its belly in the mud. Due to heavy rain, thick mud, flooding and a broken radio (chewed by the dog) they spent the night in the car, only to be rescued the next morning by Andreas Keding and Peter Bridgeford (many thanks to you!). An overlander carrying GRAA participants got stuck several times on the same road as well, while it took the rest of the game rangers extra time and numerous detours to reach a bit of tarred road.



New sour grass
(*Schmidtia kalahariensis*)
near the Boscia water-
point.

Photo: D. Shaw

Outside the Reserve, there have been numerous reports from rivers in flood to stuck vehicles. In late February, a large tour bus slipped off the Tsaris pass after heavy rains – fortunately everyone was fine. Our staff gave the tour guide a lift to Hammerstein to mobilize a rescue crew.

Vernon Swanepoel, Assitant Manager at Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge reports, "Both the Aub and Tsauchab rivers have flowed a number of times this year. In fact, in February the owner of Neu-Onis, where we get our bottled water, said to us that the river had flowed a total of 28 times over his property.

As most of you know, the Aub River does not reach Sossusvlei

at all, and floods out in the valley. This river didn't have any really big floods (as it did in 2000), but did flow a number of times.

The Tsauchab reached the 2 x 4 parking area (about 5km from Sossusvlei) on two separate occasions before it finally reached Sossusvlei on the 27th of February. The last time that the river reached the vlei was in April 2001. That year it dried up in August. In 2000 a much bigger flood reached the vlei in February and dried up almost exactly the last day of that year. Before that the vlei was flooded by a massive flood in 1997. Before that I am not exactly sure, but I believe it flooded in the 87/88 rains, 82/3 rains, 72/3 rains, and some time in the 60's. Maybe someone who was around then can confirm or correct those dates. The point, however, is that it is really special!"



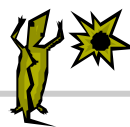
Keerweder Pan with
Jagkop in the back-
ground after heavy rains.

Photo: D. Shaw

All tourism concessionaires have mentioned that guests express an initial disappointment upon arrival, wondering "where is the desert?" Once guests have spent a bit of time here, however, they realize how special our living desert actually is.

THIS IS TRULY A TIME FOR CELEBRATION!

Danica Shaw



Sacred Nature

The night became very dark. The rain surrounded the whole cabin with its enormous virginal myth, a whole world of meaning, of secrecy, of silence, of rumour. Think of it: all that speech pouring down, selling nothing, judging nobody, drenching the thick mulch of dead leaves, soaking the trees, filling the gullies and crannies of the wood with water, washing out where men have stripped the hillside! What is it to sit absolutely alone, in the forest, at night, cherished by this wonderful, unintelligible, perfectly innocent speech, the most comforting speech in the world, the talk that rain makes by itself all over the ridges, and the talk of the watercourses everywhere in the hollows!

Nobody started it, nobody is going to stop it. It will take as long as it wants, this rain. As long as it talks I am going to listen.

Thomas Merton

"Rain and the Rhinoceros," from *Raids on the Unspeakable*



Game Rangers from Southern Africa Meet on NamibRand

Thinking about the Game Rangers Association meeting on NamibRand from 20 to 24 February, a number of songs come to mind. Some are old, popular just after the last Rinderpest outbreak many

years ago, but others even the younger generation will recognise. Apologies to the songwriters, but some words have been slightly changed. The first is the well known folk song, "Where Have All Young Rangers Gone?" followed by Tom Jones, "Green Green Grass of Home" and then Flanders and Swan with "Mud, Glorious Mud." The latter two are what many visitors to NamibRand will remember for a long time.

On Sunday the first visitors arrived, having fought their way through flooded rivers and mud. On Monday they arrived from South Africa, Botswana, Namibia and even one from the UK. The meeting was held at the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET) Centre on NamibRand Nature Reserve. Some pitched tents while others used the NaDEET shelters. The desert was not a desert, everywhere there was green grass and the evening breeze brought the sweet scent of flowers.

On Tuesday, the 72 participants were welcomed by Control Warden Nils Odendaal. During the day and evening, they listened to presentations by leading conservationists on a wide range of interesting subjects. Tim Snow, the chairman of the GRAA gave an overview of the activities and aims of the association.

The next day started with an early morning walk in the dunes led by Marc Dürr. Then we all went on a drive across the dunes, past Wolwedans and down onto Chateau Plains, and returned via Piccadilly and DDR. NamibRand Safaris, Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge and NRNR supplied the transport for the delightful outing in superb surroundings. From the number of cameras I saw, the beauty of NRNR and the many "characters" on the trip, lasting memories will be taken to many parts of the world.

A light shower of rain, a magnificent sunset and the haunting sound of bagpipes made the evening sundowners on the dunes memorable. On our return to camp, we had a braai that had everybody licking their fingers.

Thursday morning the AGM of the GRAA took place. The report back by the various portfolio holders gave the Namibians



GRAA participants at NaDEET, about to set off on a scenic drive.

Photo: D. Straw

a better understanding of the aims, activities and projects in which the GRAA is involved. The Namibians had a short meeting of their own to discuss the possibility of forming a Namibian branch of the GRAA or just being members of the Association. It was decided that at this stage, it was better to join the GRAA without forming a separate branch. The AGM finished at lunchtime, but the committee had a short meeting during the afternoon. Preparations were made for the departure the next day.

The meeting ended with the award ceremony that evening. Certificates, medals and books were handed to several people, but the highlight of the evening was the GRAA Silver Medal awarded to Crispian Barlow for his contributions to conservation under very difficult conditions.

On Friday, the remaining people left after an early breakfast and peace and quiet and rain descended on the desert. Thanks to the hard work and cooperation of many people, the first meeting of the Game Rangers Association of Africa in Namibia was a great success. A special word of thanks to Viktoria Keding of NaDEET and her hard working staff for hosting the meeting and for providing good food and cold beer. The CEO and Chief Warden of NRNR are thanked for their support. Thanks to Jaco and Eben who assisted with the cooking. However, without the attendance and enthusiasm of presenters, rangers and ex-rangers from far and wide, it would have come to nothing.

If I have forgotten to thank anyone, please excuse me and think of the last song, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Around the Old Oke". For more information on the GRAA visit their website at www.gameranger.org.

Peter Bridgeford—GRAA Meeting Co-ordinator



News @ NaDEET

As for many others, the rain has brought a lot of excitement for NaDEET for the beginning of 2006. The decision to waterproof our main building in July last year has already more than paid off with several Centre participants seeking refuge from the rain during the night.

Our first group for the year arrived in early February from Babylon, an informal settlement

in Windhoek. As with almost half of all of our bookings for this year, this school, Frans Indongo Primary School, has made NaDEET an annual destination for their class trips. It is extremely rewarding to know that the programme and facilities we offer are received positively by learners, teachers and principals. Mr. Levine, principal of Frans Indongo Primary

(Continued on page 4)



Frans Indongo Primary School learners fill water tanks

Photo: V. Keding



Photo: V. Keding

*Learner from Frans Indongo
Primary learning about insects*

(Continued from page 3)

School wrote about the group's overall impression: *"Excellent-very holistic approach to teaching and learning. The complete spectrum of the child has been incorporated – good manners, respect for one another, team work, different skills (cooking), subject knowledge, adaptability to a different environment, etc."*

Shortly after this group, NaDEET was proud to host the Game Rangers Association of

Africa (GRAA) Annual General Meeting. It was definitely the largest group with 72 participants and one of the oldest we have had at NaDEET Centre. NaDEET staff worked very hard to provide delicious, solar-cooked meals for tea, lunch and dinner throughout the week. It was a wonderful opportunity for many local Namibians involved in conservation to see NaDEET and to spread the word in their communities. During the GRAA meeting, NaDEET conducted a two hour workshop with some of the participants to develop the content for a *Bush Telegraph* issue on the topic wilderness. The *Bush Telegraph* is NaDEET's environmental literacy project and is in the form of a tri-annual mini-magazine for youth. We are now trying to secure funding so we can go ahead with the development and printing of the wilderness issue. The GRAA was a successful fundraiser for NaDEET as all participants paid full fees for accommodation and food.

NaDEET staff has also expanded this year. Two of our former Nature Conservation students, Bornface Simangolwa and Michaella Phemelo, have joined our permanent staff as assistant environmental educators. Capacity building of Namibians remains an important aspect of NaDEET's work as the future success of NaDEET lies in expanding our team of professional environmental educators. We also have another Nature Conservation student from the Polytechnic of Namibia, Thomas Neema, conducting his in-service training for six months.

The next few months are already fully booked with schools coming from Maltahöhe, Windhoek, Swakopmund and Aranos.

Viktorija Keding

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.



NamibRand Conservation Foundation Active Again

The NamibRand Conservation Foundation (NRCF) met in early December with several aims.

The first of these aims was to revitalize the Foundation. Due to various reasons, the Foundation has recently not been as active as it would like. It is hoped that a revitalization of the Foundation will encourage the adoption of more fairy circles and continue to bring in other funding. With the establishment of the NamibRand Desert Research and Awareness Centre and the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust's (NaDEET) on-going activities, the Foundation has two important efforts on the Reserve to support as well as other activities in the region.

During the meeting, the NRCF also considered two funding proposals. One was the proposal to establish the NamibRand Desert Research and Awareness Centre. This proposal sought funding to furnish and promote a research field base at Toekoms. The second proposal was from the NaDEET for funding to continue its environmental education and sustainable living program. Both proposals were approved and each received N\$60,000. Congratulations to the recipients and many thanks to the Foundation for their support of these deserving projects.



Finally, two new appointments were made. Danica Shaw, Environment & Research Warden of NRNR was appointed CEO for the Foundation, while Nils Odendaal, in his capacity of Control Warden of NRNR, was appointed as Ex Officio Trustee.

For those of you who are new to the Reserve, the NamibRand Conservation Foundation (NRCF) is a not-for-profit organisation. It seeks to promote and assist in any way with environmental conservation, education and research undertaken on the NamibRand Nature Reserve and the south-western Namib region. The NRCF seeks to achieve this aim through the following objectives:

- To support the education of decision makers, the general public and young people in conservation of the environment and sustainable utilisation of natural resources.
- To support and raise funds for environmental research and education targeting ecosystem conservation and the protection of biodiversity.

Funding for the Foundation is raised through the Adopt a Fairy Circle program. Please continue to encourage the adoption of fairy circles as all proceeds from this program go to the NRCF.

We wish the Foundation and its Trustees all the best in their fundraising efforts and their continued support to conservation projects. If you have any questions, please contact the Foundation at nrcf@iway.na.

Danica Shaw



Research Centre to be Established at Toekoms

The NamibRand Nature Reserve, in conjunction with the NamibRand Conservation Foundation (NRCF) is in the process of establishing the NamibRand Desert Research and Awareness Centre at the Toekoms homestead. Many thanks to the NRCF for its generous grant of N\$60,000 which will enable us to furnish the Centre and allow us to actively solicit researchers to conduct scientific experiments on the Reserve.

In order to manage the Reserve both sensitively and sustainably it is imperative to gain a better understanding of the complex ecological processes governing the environment. Research on the Reserve is necessary to help augment management and improve the knowledge base of the environment for the benefit of the Reserve and Namibia as a whole.

It has been the vision of J. A. Brückner for some time to establish a research centre combined with an awareness and education centre for audiences that are not reached by NaDEET, including high level decision and policy makers. Once the Research Centre has proved itself, the potential exists to extend the scope of the Centre to include interpretive and awareness raising programs. The awareness program would target high level decision makers, while the interpretive component could ultimately become a tourist attraction (i.e. interpretive centre or display open to the public).

It is envisaged that the Centre initially function as a “field base,” providing comfortable but simple accommodation. Researchers can use the Centre as a base from which to operate decreasing the amount of time spent directly in the field and also the amount of logistical support they require (i.e. water, firewood, latrines, etc.). The Centre fees will be kept to a minimum and researchers will only be expected to pay for individual services such as accommodation, phone and internet use, logistical support, senior staff time, etc. or any other resources. In this way we will be able to keep costs at a minimum and tailored to specific needs.

The Reserve has certain priority research goals, consisting of key research topics, immediately providing better understanding and management practices (i.e. carrying capacity, vegetation survey, reptile and amphibian species lists, etc.). These projects will be encouraged and receive priority attention, as well as some kind of direct financial support from the Reserve or the Foundation.

The Centre is also seeking strategic partnerships with local and international institutions. An agreement will soon be finalized between the Centre and the Gobabeb Training and Research Centre. This partnership will mutually beneficial – providing alternate or comparative research opportunities for researchers from Gobabeb and ensuring access to any needed technical support as the Centre gets established.

Both the Reserve and the NRCF look forward to a bright future for the Research Centre and encourage your continuing support.

Please encourage the adoption of fairy circles to interested visitors - the Adopt a Fairy Circle project will continue to earn funding for the Centre and other projects. For more details about the Centre, please contact Danica Shaw, Environment & Research Warden.

Danica Shaw



Desert Thoughts

The desert is an arid, scorching, frightening place where everything portends death. But at the same time it is also a place of rest gentleness and life.

In the desert you find friendliness and hostility, anguish and joy, sorrow and exultation, trial and triumph. The desert is the land of malediction and the land of benediction. The desert can be hard and merciless. You might die of thirst there, but if it rains you could be drowned. In the desert nature manifests itself in its extremes: prodigal fertility and cruel barrenness. We wait for years and do not get even a drop of rain. Then, without warning, the rain comes down in torrents; and, with frightening speed, the wadis fill up and overflow, sweeping everything before them. You might come upon an oasis where there is life and vegetation. And a little farther on you could find yourself on a desolate patch where you fear for your sanity.

The desert can be tomb and cradle, wasteland and garden, death and resurrection, hell and heaven. [...] The desert does not delude and least of all does the desert delude those who accept it in its two-sided reality of life and death.

Alessandro Pronzato

Blackchested Snake Eagle

In Volume 6 N° 3 of *The Barking Gecko* I reported on a small Blackchested Snake Eagle (*Circaetus pectoralis*) that was still protected by one of its parents. The chick was located on the 17th of October 2005 in a nest on Aandster. On the 22nd of November 2005, with the assistance of the Aandster staff, we managed to ring the chick with ring number 9-04195. Fortunately the books had it right and the bird had not flown. Steyn (1989) notes that the eaglet shows its first feathers at two weeks and that parental attendance drops off markedly after the first month. The fledgling period is about 90 days. This would indicate that we first saw the bird at two weeks, as it had very few feathers, and ringed it at about six weeks. Unfortunately we did not see the first flight, as that would have given us even better age estimates.

This is only the third Blackchested Snake Eagle that has been ringed on the Reserve. Previous birds were located at

(Continued on page 6)



(Continued from page 5)

Schafsberg, east of the mountain in the dunes, and east of the road at Bushman Koppie.

Should anyone find any bird with a ring on the Reserve, please report this to the Control Warden, Environment & Research Warden or Senior Ranger. If anyone should find a dead bird with a ring outside the Reserve then it should be reported to the nearest conservation official, or e-mail the data to marcdurr@iway.na. Next time you see

a dead bird on the road, stop, and have a look to see if it has a ring. You may be surprised.

The importance of identifying ringed birds cannot be over-emphasised as we only get about a 1% return rate of all the birds that we ring.

Marc Dürr

Reference: Steyn, P., 1989. *Birds of Prey of Southern Africa*. Third Impression. David Philip, Cape Town, South Africa.

Wilderness in Namibia – Moving Forward

There is a perception among some people in Namibia that wilderness is not critical to conservation efforts and that wilderness excludes people. The 8th World Wilderness Congress (8th WWC) took place in October 2005 and addressed some of these misconceptions. Unfortunately, Namibia was not well represented at the Congress and no contingent from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) was able to attend, although the MET is the first-line ministry for implementing wilderness management strategies. At the Congress numerous resolutions were made which highlight the vital role that indigenous people have to play in wilderness and its management.



The 8th WWC recommends that:

- The participation of local peoples must be ensured at each level of wilderness management planning;
- The local indigenous knowledge should be documented only with the informed consent of the knowledge source including the ultimate use;
- Local people knowledge and cultural practices should be given legal protection, full recognition and accordingly accrue proper royalties.

In addition,

RESOLUTION #29 of the 8th WWC recognises that:

- Local people have knowledge and experience like their sacred wisdom, taboos, and cultural practices that could be used by conservation agencies to sustainably preserve wilderness areas;
- This knowledge is waning or disappearing around the world but particularly in developing countries due to the lack of documentation;
- In places where such knowledge is documented, it may be done without any consent and informed participation of local people;
- Local cultural knowledge and practices may be used by researchers and companies without any legal protection, recognition or benefit-sharing with the owners.

This resolutions leads to,

RESOLUTION #2

TITLE: Formation of a Wilderness and Indigenous People Working Group

IUCN Guidelines for Protected Area Management Categories, Category 1b, Wilderness Area, defines a Wilderness Area as a “Large area of unmodified or slightly modified land, and/ or

(Continued on page 7)



The NaDEET Ultra Duathlon



NaDEET is planning a new and exciting fundraising event this year – the NaDEET Ultra Duathlon. I am organising the event with the help of a friend who has just completed the Iron Man competition in Port Elizabeth for the second time.

The event consists of a 50 km run and a 65 km cycle and will take place on the weekend of 2-4 June. We are limiting the event this year to 20 participants, who will stay with their families at NaDEET. By limiting numbers, NaDEET can cope with the catering and entertainment of non-participants.

So, all you fit walkers, runners and cyclists, come and join in the fun! This can be a team event, meaning that you can choose to either cycle or run, provided you find someone else crazy enough to do the other leg.

The response from most of the concessionaires has been overwhelming. They are happy to participate by donating prizes to participants and will also providing logistical support if possible.

Reserve management will be working closely with us in the planning stages to ensure the event is as low impact as possible and will provide logistical support for the event.

Aside from raising funds for NaDEET, the Duathlon will definitely raise awareness among Namibians of both NaDEET and ultimately, the NamibRand Nature Reserve.

Rest assured that a full description of the race and participants will be printed the next *Barking Gecko*.

Elinor Dürr

(Continued from page 6)

sea, retaining its natural character or influence, *without permanent or significant habitation*, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition;” and

It is generally accepted that in many cases indigenous human populations, when present in low densities, have over long periods of time, played an integral role in the functioning of their native ecosystems by means of well-adapted livelihoods and cultures; and

Vast areas of *de facto* wild lands exist throughout the world with permanent indigenous human populations living in low densities and retaining much of their traditional livelihood and cultural systems; and

Areas with important biodiversity, ecological and wilderness qualities may be excluded from protection under wilderness designation, solely owing to the permanent presence of human inhabitants; and

Those indigenous inhabitants of wild areas, who have been and still seek to be stewards and beneficiaries, as well as dependants upon the ecological health and integrity of *de facto* wild areas may, as a result of exclusion from *de jure* protected area status, lack safeguards against exogenous exploitation of *de facto* wilderness areas.

The guiding criteria used to define suitability for designation as “Wilderness Area” should be re-evaluated with respect to the question of indigenous human communities “living at low density and in balance with the available resources to maintain their lifestyle“ on a *permanent* basis within areas that would otherwise qualify for wilderness designation ensuring always that:

1. Their activities do not significantly compromise:
 - The health of biodiversity species and habitats,
 - Ecosystem functioning,
 - The wilderness character of the area.
2. The impacts of their presence are regulated through the mechanism of zonation decided upon through consultative processes with all stakeholders.
3. At the outset of any wilderness area planning initiative, limits of acceptable change or other similar models, including population densities, are defined through a consultative process and agreed upon by the indigenous inhabitants of the area.

RESOLVED: The 8th WWC :

1. Endorses the formation of an *ad hoc* working group on Wilderness and Indigenous Peoples, by interested parties acting on a voluntary basis, for the purpose of consultatively reviewing, issues bearing on *defining wilderness* with respect to indigenous peoples in line with the above provisos;
2. Urges the IUCN Wilderness Task Force, in collaboration with the above group, to review issues bearing on *defining wilderness* with respect to indigenous peoples in line with the above provisos;
3. Requests both groups to present their findings to the 9th World Wilderness Congress.

This is the ideal opportunity for Namibia to make an impression at an international level, and further show its commitment to conservation. Namibia should be part of the discussion as the inclusion of people in the definition of wilderness may make it possible for communal conservancies to proclaim wilderness areas and may even provide the possibility for partnerships where wilderness areas may be extended over park boundaries, and with proper zonation, may prove beneficial for both parties.

Namibians should realise that wilderness is very much part of our country, but we must be careful not to use it only by name when marketing – we must start protecting it formally. The only way that modern society seems to understand anything is when it has been defined by laws, bylaws, clauses and sub-clauses. Our *de facto* wilderness is not safe until such time that we have declared it *de jure* wilderness.

And finally, another resolution with implications for Namibia:



RESOLUTION #4

TITLE: Wilderness – A Criterion for World Heritage Listing

WHEREAS: Under current Operational Guidelines for the consideration of nominated natural area properties, the conservation of important wilderness values of the area nominated for inscription on the list of World Heritage properties is relegated to being either a factor influencing the biophysical integrity or an element of the conservation of the scenery criterion.

THEREFORE: A wilderness criterion is necessary under the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention for natural area properties to reflect the true value and role of wilderness in this increasingly crowded world. Identification, recognition and promotion of wilderness that would follow the establishment of such a World Heritage criterion would provide adequate protection of intrinsic values and more people with life changing experiences and thereby provide the inspiration to work for a more environmentally sustainable society. A wilderness World Heritage criterion would also help to secure a higher priority for nature-focused management for the reserves listed under that criterion.

RESOLVED: That the Eighth World Wilderness Congress requests the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO to include wilderness value as one of the criteria in the World Heritage Operational Guidelines for the assessment of natural areas nominated for World Heritage listing.

Were this to criteria to be included in the World Heritage Operational Guidelines, then the proposed declaration of the Brandberg massif would be strengthened, and again, it would offer better protection to this unique area.

All told, Namibia has a huge wilderness potential which has not been tapped, and as shown by the article in *The Barking Gecko* Volume 6 N3, the private sector may have to be the role

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

model. NamibRand Nature Reserve has a small administrative wilderness area that could be the “detonator” for the wilderness “explosion” that Namibia should experience and Namibians should initiate.

Anyone that is interested in supporting wilderness conservation in Namibia should contact the Namibian Wilderness Association at e-mail: marcdurr@iway.na. For further reading on the 8th WWC, and other wilderness issues, go to www.wild.org or www.8wwc.org. The information used in this article was sourced from www.wild.org and www.8wwc.org, and is acknowledged accordingly.

Marc R. Dürr

Helicopter to the Losberg

We make daily use of our radio system here on the Reserve and like other conveniences, we often take it for granted. The radio repeater on the top of the Losberg requires periodic maintenance to keep it working for us all. Usually Reserve staff hikes up to check connections and battery water levels. Last



Mike and Nils load the helicopter

year however, the repeater needed its batteries replaced. Normally, the hike takes about four hours – it is a climb of 1000 m – but new batteries presented a different problem. The last time the batteries were replaced, it took a crew of 20 two days to get the batteries up the mountain. Each battery weighs 25 kgs and they must remain upright, so they were carried in shifts on stretchers. The group camped mid-way.

This time, we were hoping we could enlist the help of a visiting helicopter. The game capture scheduled for last year was an ideal time to make use of that helicopter, but due to weather conditions and other issues, the capture had to be cancelled. When Wolwedans informed us that a helicopter would be visiting, we hoped we might enlist the pilot’s help.

On 30 December last year Mike Bosman, CEO of TBWA\South Africa flew his family up from Cape Town in a Bell Squirrel helicopter to spend a few days on the Reserve at Wolwedans and Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge. Wardens Nils Odendaal and Danica Shaw approached Mike for his assistance and he whole-heartedly agreed to help.

On the morning of 31 December, we loaded the helicopter with two new batteries, a 25L container of battery water and a tool box. Nils, Danica and Andreas Keding boarded the helicopter for the four minute, that’s right – four minute flight to the top of the Losberg from Wolwedans. There we carried batteries, tools and battery water to the repeater, changed everything out and were back in the air in about half an hour. After a quick flip around the area, Mike returned us safely to the ground.

Mike is an expert helicopter pilot, while he served in the South

African Defence Force he flew helicopters. The Bell Squirrel itself is normally employed in Johannesburg to ferry impure gold ingots from the mines to the refinery. This flight on the Reserve was much lower profile than the helicopter’s regular job, but extremely important for us.



Andreas, Nils and Mike working on the repeater

We would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Mike for his willing assistance. Without it, we would have spent a great deal of time and effort to perform this routine but critical task. Many many thanks to Mike Bosman!

Danica Shaw



Vulture Restaurant Underway



The idea of establishing a vulture restaurant as a conservation tool on the NamibRand Nature Reserve has enjoyed huge support. Outside funding from the Namibia Nature Foundation’s Swedish Local Environment Fund has been secured and construction can now begin.

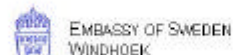
The hide will be built on a koppie overlooking the Draaihoek plains, where it is easily accessible to guests visiting Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge or Wolwedans. The site is located on the small koppie near the Draaihoek turn-off on the main road, yet it is still far enough away that traffic from the road will not interfere.

Raleigh International volunteers will be assisting us with the construction of this hide and the first group will arrive on the 17th of April. We hope to have the structure completed and ready for use by the time the volunteers depart on the 25th of May. To ensure a high quality result, the Reserve has secured the consulting services of prominent vulture expert and Conservationist of the Year 2005 – Mr. Peter Bridgeford. Peter and his wife Marilyn will be assisting on site for a large part of the construction, as well as providing invaluable guidance and environmental educational support for the Raleigh volunteers. Senior Ranger, Andreas Keding has been appointed project manager for this venture and his past experience with Raleigh in both tourism and construction will be useful throughout the project.

We look forward to hosting you at our new vulture restaurant and invite you all to visit this attraction from the end of May 2006.

Nils Odendaal

Namibia Nature Foundation's Local Environment Fund - a joint venture between:



NAMIBIA NATURE FOUNDATION

“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

Second Year Nature Conservation Student on NamibRand

Andrias Sikongo

I'm Andrias Sikongo, from the Kavango region. I was born on the 5th of March 1986 at a small village called Tondoro, about 110km west of Rundu. I've lived with my parents, brothers, sisters and other family members at this village from my birth until present. I spent all my childhood at Tondoro where I learned a lot of things such as fishing, swimming, paddling canoes, making clay toys and playing football with friends after school.

Rukwangali is my home language, but I also speak a bit of Sambyu and of course, English. I believe that good communication is the only link between people of different origins and everything can be achieved through communication.

I completed my secondary education at ELCIN Nkurenkuru High School (ENHS), situated about 35km west of Tondoro at a well known village called Nkurenkuru.

Most of my holidays I spent visiting my grandparents on their farm and that's where I also learned milking cows and looking after cattle and goats. I always enjoyed my stay at the farm. I also used to do a lot of gardening with my father such as planting trees and vegetables. This is where I started learning to respect nature. I enjoyed my stay in the hostel at ENHS, because our school was just in the bush and it was really a nice environment to live in.

I matriculated in 2003 at ENHS and continued furthering my studies in 2004 at the Polytechnic of Namibia. Simply because of the love I developed for nature during my childhood days and all the class tours we made at Etosha National Park and Daan Viljoen which gave me a great view of nature, I was left with no choice but to enrol for a National Diploma in Natural

Resource Management (Nature Conservation).

I'm really happy that I chose this course because I believe and understand that Namibia's future lies with those who have a love for nature and are ready to serve the nation in the field of conservation.

In compliance with my former secondary school motto which says "WE AIM HIGH" I'd like to dedicate this to all those who are involved in the field of Nature Conservation – we can only thrive in this field by AIMING HIGH in what we do.

Andrias Sikongo

Andrias will be a part of the NamibRand team for his six-month practical (January-July). He is currently working on a project to determine the available browse in the Acacia Forest in preparation for the introduction of new giraffe into the area.

Danica Shaw



Weather Report

The Reserve had a hot summer, but temperatures have now cooled down a bit.

The first rain drops since the end of February fell on 22 March. Hopefully this will be as fruitful as the last period of rainfall!

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
Nov	40.5	6.5	35.9	13.8
Dec	45	10	39.2	17.8
Jan	49	18	38.9	20.5
Feb	42	15.5	38.1	19.9
Mar*	43.5	12	37.8	16.7

* March temperatures are through 22 March only.

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

Editor:
Danica Shaw
Environment & Research Warden
P.O. Box 131, Maltahöhe, Namibia
Phone: +264-63-683026
Email: nrrn@iway.na



Windhoek Office
P.O. Box 40704

Website: www.namibrand.com

IF YOU WISH TO SUBSCRIBE TO "THE BARKING GECKO", PLEASE CONTACT THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS.