



THE BARKING GECKO

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



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Fond Farewell

As I prepare to bid farewell to the NamibRand Nature Reserve as an employer at the end of May, I reflect on the past six years and all that NamibRand has brought into my life. So much more than just a job, NamibRand was a lifestyle. The Reserve will always feel like home to me and its beauty, uniqueness and intransience will continue to exert an extraordinary hold on my heart.

My husband Nils and I found our way as both newlyweds and work partners when we were first stationed at Keerweder in 2004 and explored NamibRand as our new home. I have been fortunate to build meaningful and long-lasting friendships through our work. NamibRand is our daughter Hayley's first home and not one any of us are likely to forget - I know certain parts of the Reserve will always remain "my dunes" in her mind. NamibRand provided me with challenging and interesting field experience and an opportunity to be part of fundamental strategic decisions which will continue to influence the Reserve. Surprisingly, the conservation work which NamibRand staff executes so well, is more about working with people than actually managing the environment.

This experience has allowed me to further my professional development.

While I will be moving on to new challenges and experiences in conservation, I will continue to remain both professionally and privately involved with NamibRand. I will retain my position as CEO of the NamibRand Conservation Foundation and look forward to witnessing the continued development of the Reserve and its staff.

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as editor of the Barking Gecko and will miss the opportunity to communicate with all its loyal and interested readers. However, I leave this in the extremely capable hands of the Barking Gecko's new editor, Ann Scott (who says 'hello' on p14). I wish all of you the very best and thank you for your continued support of the Barking Gecko and the NamibRand Nature Reserve.

Danica Shaw



Danica Shaw and her daughter Hayley.

Photo: J. Shaw

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News from the CEO

The past six months have been very eventful for the NamibRand Nature Reserve with several important developments taking place which I feel are important to share with you.

This issue of the Barking Gecko takes a look at both the past and future of NamibRand. Former CEO and custodian of the Reserve, Albi Brückner, shares some of the history of Namib-

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A bird's eye view of the spectacular Sossusvlei-Namib Complex (see p2).



Photo: H. Hambrook

(Continued from p1)

Rand from a personal perspective in a short article. As far as the future is concerned, it is encouraging to see that other land owners in the area, particularly the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, see a bright future for conservation in the area. For more information on our efforts to promote the co-management of the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Complex see the article in this issue. During the past six months an additional four neighbouring farms to NamibRand have changed ownership. We see this as a very positive development as we were informed that these properties are planning to focus on conservation as the primary land use.

Sadly my wife, Danica Shaw, who served as the Environment and Research Warden for the past six years, has resigned (see p1). Danica will, however, remain in her capacity as CEO of the NamibRand Conservation Foundation and continue to offer advice and support to Ann Scott and myself who will be taking over her other duties. She has accepted a position with Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC – see www.irdnc.org.na) and they are lucky to have Danica on their team! Thank you to Danica, whose hard work and dedication to NamibRand over the past years will be sorely missed!

Our Ranger, Corris Kaapehi, has resigned and has moved back into a more active role in research with the National Museum of Namibia. Fortunately we were able to secure the services of Peter Woolfe on a part time basis as ranger for the south of the Reserve. Peter and his wife Franziska Keresztesi are primarily employed by NamibRand Safaris and will be the managers stationed at Aandstêr.

Peter was born in Peru, South America in 1955 and schooled first in America, finishing his schooling in England. He came to Namibia in 1974, and says that he fell in love with this country at first sight. He studied Geology at Rhodes University and then worked as geologist for several large mining companies. Peter then decided that tourism was more his *forte* and began working as an overland guide conducting tours in Southern and Eastern Africa. For the last eleven years Peter has lived on the farm Excelsior as Warden. He was instrumental in developing the relationship with the NamibRand Nature Reserve and the eventual formation of the ProNamib Conservancy. Peter says it has always been a dream to be more closely involved with NRNR (and he is very pleased now to be directly involved).

Franziska was born near Maltahöhe to one of the first farmers in the area and her grandparents opened the first store in Maltahöhe. She studied occupational therapy and art therapy in Germany and spent some time there practising her profession. Peter and Franziska met four years ago at the Lily Festival near



The male cheetahs have honed their collective hunting skills to perfection.

Photo: P. Izseks

Maltahöhe. Peter proudly proclaims that he was the only guy who went to the Lily Festival and came home with a rose! Peter and Franziska are very happy to be at Aandstêr and are looking forward to the challenges involved in becoming constructive members of the team and advancing the goals of the NamibRand Nature Reserve.

NamibRand Safaris have now taken over a lease for the homestead at Aandstêr. The

NamibRand Nature Reserve retains some of the houses at the homestead for its own staff so as to continue in its role of custodians for the land. NamibRand Safaris aims to use the Aandstêr homestead as a base for their Boulders Lodge. Plans, on the cards for some time now, include the eventual construction of another small lodge on the Aandstêr property. A detailed Environmental Impact Assessment and stakeholder consultation will be undertaken and we will keep you informed of developments on this front.

The 22nd of April 2010 marked 500 days of freedom for the Keerweder cheetahs (see previous Barking Gecko articles, available at www.namibrand.org/newsletter.htm). It is interesting to note that vultures in the area have apparently chosen to abandon the vulture hide at Draaihoek in favour of following the cheetahs and to feast on fresh cheetah kills which are now delivered to them once every two or three days.

The 2010 rainy season brought significantly less rain than was recorded over the past few years. 90mm recorded at Keerweder show that we are now back to a more normal precipitation, closer to our annual average of 70mm a year. Due to the wonderful and plentiful rain received in previous years our wildlife population is now at an all time high with an estimated biomass of 11kg per hectare. Although these wildlife numbers require ongoing monitoring to safeguard grazing on the Reserve, we are fortunate in that the large open area as well as improved access to our neighbours' land safeguards these wildlife populations. Animals are able to migrate and this allows for an ecological system that can cope with the high numbers of game.

In a quest to understand wildlife species better that are not adequately monitored, such as mountain zebra and leopard, the NamibRand Board of Directors approved the purchase of four automated wildlife cameras. These cameras, with additional equipment sponsored by Prof. Morris Gosling, will be deployed at waterholes as part of a long term monitoring project. You can read more about this project in an article later in this issue.

Two new boreholes have been successfully drilled. A new borehole on Mr Klein's property at Toskaan will provide water to the "old" red-roofed house as well as augment the water available to wildlife in the area.

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Hammerstein Drilling, hard at work on the new Keerweder borehole.



Photo: A. Scott

Peter Woolfe and his wife Franziska are now based at Aandstêr.



Photo: A. Scott

(Continued from p2)

The second borehole was established at the Keerweder home-
stead and now secures the water supply for the Reserve head-
quarters.

A new upmarket campsite has been completed at the Namib-
Rand Family Hideout. Camping is thus now allowed on the
Reserve and space for up to eight people is provided. Bookings
for this facility can be made through the Family Hideout book-
ing office.

These points highlight some of the strategically important
events for NamibRand that have happened over the past few
months. I hope that you will enjoy this issue of the Barking
Gecko which highlights more happenings on the Reserve and
delves into some of the points mentioned above in more detail.

Nils Odendaal

NamibRand Nature Reserve What has been achieved – and what does the future behold? A special contribution by Albi Brückner – founder and now the custodian of NRNR

Twenty-five years ago I purchased the farm Gorrasis at a price
of SAR2,58/ha, the cost of a second-hand “beetle” in those
days. What made me do this?? I had accumulated some “cash”
and being a “farmer’s boy” I had a longing for land, especially
after my father had sold the family farm in 1964, when my par-
ents returned to Germany. During the 1960s I traversed the
southern parts of Namibia quite extensively, selling pumps,
gensets and pipelines to the farmers there - and I learned to like
that beautiful part of our country, especially the Pro-Namib. So
I jumped at the opportunity and became the proud owner of
some 20 000 ha of barren land somewhere in “the middle of
nowhere” (in those days!!). And I leased the land to a neigh-
bouring farmer named Jacob Jakobus van Lill at no cost to him,
but with the proviso that he would clean up the place, fix-up the
two existing but delapidated pump installations, remove all
fences and renovate the farmhouse, where he stayed for a num-
ber of years when he was grazing his sheep on the farm.

During those years I really learnt to love the Pro-Namib and
when the opportunity arose in 1988 to buy more land, I suc-
ceeded in purchasing the farms Stellarine, Die Duine,
Wolwedans, Jagkop and Kwessiegat. The core for the ultimate
larger conservation area had been procured. A year later Na-
mibia’s independence was on the cards, creating uncertainty for
the future of white landowners - even in the desert - but fortu-
nately their future was assured through Namibia’s Constitution,
by far the most progressive Constitution of an African country.
With our future being secure, I set out to plan the future of the
land in my possession by engaging a consultant, named David
Peddie, who had successfully planned a similar project in Zim-
babwe. The outcome has been what NamibRand Nature Re-
serve is today, the underlying concept being to conserve the
land by making it available for eco-tourism activities by con-
cessionaires, who conduct their business for their own account
within strict Rules and Regulations (e.g. no more than one



Photo: S.R. Brückner

Albi Brückner – founder and now the custodian of NRNR.

guestbed per 1000 hectares and limited to 20 guestbeds in any
one location), paying a park fee to the Reserve on a b-i-b (bum-
in-bed) basis, to generate the needed funds to spend on conser-
vation related activities. This has been going on for more than
ten years and has proven to be a viable system.

What has been achieved since? By inviting like-minded inves-
tors, local and foreign, we have managed to increase the total
land area making up NRNR to over 170 000 hectares, probably
the largest private conservation initiative in Africa. The Re-
serve is made up of 13 previously commercial farms, adjoining
each other and owned by nine different owners, private and
legal persons plus a Trust. We have removed over 2000km of
fences, allowing the wildlife to roam freely over the Reserve.
We have reintroduced giraffe and hartebeest, which were resi-
dent in the area many years ago. In collaboration with CCF
(Cheetah Conservation Fund) and N/a’an ku sê Wildlife Ex-
perience we have successfully reintroduced cheetahs onto
NRNR and also have provided a new home for some leopards
which would otherwise have been euthanized. Through the
granting of concessions for tourism operations we have created
the opportunity for thousands of visitors - local and foreign - to
experience the often desired solitude and wilderness experience
the Pro-Namib has on offer. Through the creation of opportuni-
ties and infrastructure - to name NaDEET and the NamibRand
Conservation Foundation (NRCF) - we have enabled educa-
tional and research facilities to pursue the objective of making
people aware of and appreciating the environment as the basis
for our existence and also to undertake research into anything
remotely related to deserts. All in all a conglomeration of
achievements we all can be proud of.

And what does the future behold? Firstly, that the NamibRand
Nature Reserve will continue to exist and function in accord-
ance with my vision and NRNR’s aims and objectives as writ-
ten into its Constitution for many more years to come and after
I have passed on to “higher service”. I hope and pray that
NRNR will not disintegrate into oblivion, initiated by individ-
ual personal interests and often also because of greed, as has
happened to too many similar projects in the past. Secondly,
that NRNR will ultimately form the core of a larger Conser-
vancy in the Pro-Namib and that the part of the Namib-
Naukluft Park, adjoining NRNR to the west, will become part

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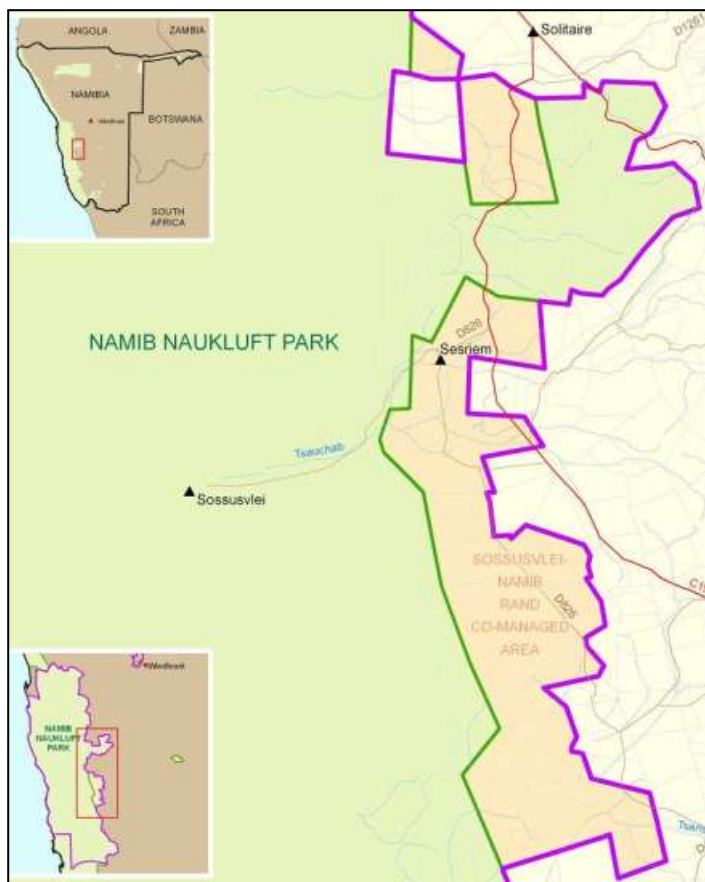
of that Conservancy, once the MET (Ministry of the Environment & Tourism) has formalized its envisaged policy addressing the issue of “Parks-Neighbours relationship” which has been on the cards now for more than ten years. Thirdly, that the origin of the “fairy circles” never be established so as to protect this mystery for years to come, but also to safeguard the “Adopt-a-Fairy Circle” fund raising project in favour of the NRCF which has been and still is a very successful project with 800-plus adoptions so far. Fourthly, that “Nature” will recognize our efforts in conserving this part of Namibia by maintaining favourable climatic conditions for the benefit of our wildlife populations.

And lastly, that many hundreds - if not thousands - of visitors will continue to enjoy the privilege of visiting NRNR and experience its manifold attractions, thereby contributing towards the project’s viability so that it will be safeguarded as a “solitaire” for many generations to come.

Albi Brückner

Co-management and Development of the Greater Sossusvlei - Namib Complex

Readers will recall our ambitions towards creating a large contiguous conservation area, vital toward sustainable conservation in the Pro-Namib region as reported in previous Barking Gecko



The purple line shows the current extent of the Greater Sossusvlei - Namib Complex. Source: Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Directorate of Tourism.

newsletters (see BG Vol. 9(2) and Vol. 10 (2)). In line with this and to paint a picture for what lies in the future for NamibRand we would like to take the opportunity to expand on this theme.

The NamibRand Nature Reserve is playing a key role in helping to establish an association for the co-management and development of the Greater Sossusvlei - Namib Complex (GSNC). The vision of this association is to co-manage the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Complex for enhanced landscape and biodiversity conservation, and socio-economic development, for the sustained benefit of the people within the Complex and the Region.

The reason for doing this is to foster and enhance collaboration and cooperation by the members of the GSNC and, where relevant, to harmonise their planning, management and development at a landscape level, to effectively implement the Vision, Objectives and Activities contained in this Co-Management initiative and its development plan.

Some of the objectives of the GSNC are:

To conserve and wisely manage the biomes, landscapes, ecosystems, catchments and biological diversity of the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Complex (GSNC) and, where necessary and feasible, to restore and rehabilitate degraded systems to their natural, productive states.

To manage wildlife populations and ecosystems to maintain healthy biological diversity and ecosystem stability under hyper-arid and variable climatic conditions and different land-use practices, and to reintroduce and rebuild wildlife populations indigenous to the area within historic times, as might be appropriate under current and changing conditions.

To promote socio-economic development opportunities through creation of appropriate enterprises, partnerships and other relevant mechanisms to foster economic growth and thereby, promote job creation and rural development.

To promote and support appropriate land and natural resource uses that are compatible with the above objectives, with emphasis on sustainable land management practices, well managed tourism, marketing of flagship species, environmental education, awareness and outreach initiatives and research, and to create strategic and focused economic opportunities without compromising on sound conservation principles and practices.

To establish strong co-management partnerships and an appropriate institutional mechanism between the various land custodians, administrators, managers, holders and owners within the Complex, so as to enhance the management of ecological and socio-economic aspects within the GSC to the mutual benefit of all partners.

To harness the ecological, social, cultural and economic viability, sustainability and competitiveness of the GSNC as a model of collaborative co-management that could be further replicated elsewhere.

To explore ways of jointly marketing the GSNC and create synergies between the individual economic and financial activities and initiatives of the partners to enhance the development of the overall Complex to the mutual benefit of all partners.

To explore the further expansion of the current GSNC as new potential partners seek to join the Complex and co-management Institution to manage the Complex.

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It is encouraging to note that the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) has taken note of this development. Recognizing that co-managed, large landscape conservation initiatives such as the GSNC are the “way of the future”, the MET has developed a project proposal to pilot this Protected Landscape Conservation Areas Initiative in five areas throughout Namibia. Members of the Greater Sossusvlei - Namib Complex were able to have input into this project proposal, which was submitted under the MET’s Directorate of Tourism to the United Nations Development Programme - Global Environment Facility. If successful this project will not only facilitate improved cooperation between private and public conservation areas but effectively enhance biodiversity conservation in Namibia.

Nils Odendaal



Photo: A. Scott

Participants at the April 2010 Kgotla at Keerweder.

2009 Conservationist of the Year

Award



The NamibRand Conservation Foundation’s Adopt-a-Fairy-Circle Project continues to be successful with 60 adoptions taking place in 2009. The guides at Wolwedans remain the top supporters of this project, facilitating 59 adoptions. A third of all funds generated by the adoption of fairy circles are donated to NaDEET, a third to the NamibRand Desert Research and Awareness Centre and a third to other conservation and education projects.

The trustees of the Conservation Foundation established the Conservationist of the Year award for the person who encourages the highest number of fairy circle adoptions. The award for 2009 was presented to Wolwedans guide Progress Kashandula in the form of a certificate and prize of two books to help further his guiding skills. The Foundation would like to congratulate Mr Kashandula on his exceptional contribution and to thank all those who worked hard to promote the Adopt-a-Fairy-Circle Project this past year.

In addition to the Adopt-a-Fairy-Circle Project, the Conservation Foundation is also raising funds through the sale of beautiful posters depicting a view of a large herd of NamibRand’s plains zebras running across a plain dotted with fairy circles. This photograph, taken by renowned American photographer George Steinmetz, was featured in an all-Africa edition of National Geographic in September 2005. Mr Steinmetz generously

donated the use of this image for both the Foundation’s brochure and for this fund raising poster.

Posters can be purchased from most concessionaires on the Reserve or directly from the Foundation (price N\$250.00). Please contact nrcf@iway.na or call at NRNR Head Office (36 Bismarck St, Windhoek) for further information.

Danica Shaw

Progress Kashandula—2009 Conservationist of the Year.



Photo: S.R. Brückner

April 2010 Kgotla

Another productive Kgotla (NamibRand’s traditional form of Reserve Management Meeting) took place at Keerweder on 6/4/2010. Thank you to all the participants for their inputs and support – as always, it was good to get together and exchange ideas. The next Kgotla is scheduled for 26/8/2010, at 09h00 at Wolwedans. The final one for this year, on 3/12/2010 at the NaDEET Centre, will be combined with an end-of-year function. This positive spirit is much appreciated.

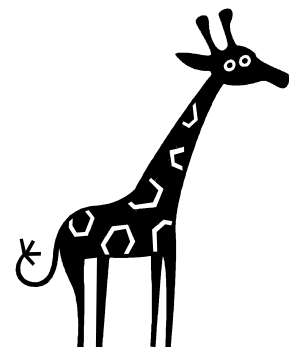
Ann & Mike Scott

Our Archaeological Treasures

NamibRand boasts a number of archaeological sites, and the signs of the presence and activities of the earlier inhabitants of the area hold a universal fascination. However, not everyone is aware that “No pottery, stone tools, grindstones or other archaeological materials may be removed by anyone from any site without a permit. Guides should make this clear to all guests before they visit the sites and should set a good example themselves by replacing all items where they were found.”* Sites that have a low density of artefacts could be quickly stripped of all their authenticity and integrity if visitors removed the stone tools, ostrich eggshell beads, pottery and other archaeological materials. So by all means look and marvel at these remains, photograph them, but please replace them in exactly the same place that you found them.

*Source: Deacon & Deacon 2006 (Guidelines for the management of Stone Age sites at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge).

Ann Scott



Rain ... and Dust Storms

Rain

The average annual rainfall for NamibRand Nature Reserve and environs is around 70-80 mm. We have been looking at the annual average for the Reserve's 40+ rain gauges over the past years. These data are faithfully collected by our three automatic weather stations as well as the 'custodians' of the gauges - a big thank you for your ongoing assistance with this important task! The total annual average for the Reserve was exceptional in 2006 (215 mm), very low in 2007 (42 mm) and again very high in 2008 (204 mm). Last year (2009) got off to a late but good start, although the total amounted to only 96 mm. For 2010 (January to April) the average for nine representative stations (see table below) amounted to 82 mm, and already it has become very dry. Overall, the rainfall pattern remains irregular and patchy. However, just to keep us on our toes, May Day (1 May 2010) was celebrated with steady showers of 8-16 mm throughout most of the Reserve, and the animals are enjoying the green flush!

Place	Total 2008 (mm)	Total 2009 (mm)	Total Jan-Apr 2010 (mm)
Kwessiegat	153	150	72
Draaihoek	253	168	94
Keerweder	230	123	84
Wolwedans	252	-	77
Toekoms	281	90	158
NaDEET Centre	294	113	112
Die Duine	310	103	63
Family Hideout	241	80	31
Aandstêr	213	82	48
Average for the above	247	114	82
Total average (NRNR)	204	96	-

... and dust storms

Dust storms are an occasional cause for wonder in the Namib. A major one hit the Reserve on 6/2/2005 (see BG 6(1), p3), when a temperature high of 45.5°C was recorded. The storm hit Wolwedans first, removing the office roof, then moved on to Keerweder where it engulfed the homestead for an hour.

On 21/2/2010 at 15h00 we witnessed a similar dust storm moving from Bushman Koppies towards Kwessiegat (looking southwards). Although the temperature was lower (36.9°), a wind speed of 49.9 km/hr (NNW) was recorded, and Kwessiegat was soon engulfed in a swirling red mass.



Photo: A. Scott

Ann & Mike Scott



Photos: A. Scott

The passage of rain at NamibRand.



News @ NaDEET

NaDEET Centre

Following the long summer school holiday, NaDEET Centre welcomed its first group only at the end of February. This allowed us to renovate the Centre's bathrooms for the first time after seven years. Fortunately, NaDEET received assistance from the NamibRand team to help complete the bathrooms just before the first children arrived. US artist and volunteer, Jon Leavitt and his partner, Haven, beautified the bathrooms with educational murals about water saving in the Namib Desert. The NaDEET Centre classroom also managed to get some additions to it with a new bench that serves as a sitting place for visiting teachers as well as a storage box for chairs and tables that are not in use.

The first two groups at the Centre this year were both from Lüderitz and were sponsored by the NACOMA Project. This coastal management project awarded the NaDEET visit as a prize for the best work in litter clean-up and recycling along the coast. St George's College also visited NaDEET again for their annual grade 9 outing.

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Luderitz Senior Secondary School learners making recycled fire bricks.

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To broaden our impact and build upon our programmes, we have a new project this year working with five community groups from the Hardap and Karas Regions to mitigate climate change. During the week long NaDEET Centre programme,

these community groups learn basic theory behind climate change and energy use in Namibia, followed by intensive lessons in practical skills in solar cooking and building alternative cooking technologies such as fuel-efficient stoves and solar ovens. With the generous funding we have received for this programme, the course participants are receiving the fuel-efficient stoves, solar oven and solar cooker to take home with them to implement sustainable living in their own communities. They are supported by various guide booklets written by NaDEET such as "It's Time to Solar Cook" and an evaluation visit which will take place in early 2011. The first of these groups has already attended the programme and has given outstanding feedback. Ingrid Kanguatuako from Mariental said, "This is the best workshop I have ever been on!"

Nature conservation students

Once again NaDEET is hosting a new student from the Polytechnic of Namibia. Ruusa Gottlieb is a second year nature conservation student, who is doing a six month in-service training. She has been with us since the beginning of the year and will be doing a project that tests the efficiency of recycled firebricks. This will assist us to market this alternative fuel source in a better way to visiting groups as a viable alternative to wood.

NaDEET in the media

The NaDEET Centre was one of the places on the NamibRand Nature Reserve that was documented by a French filmcrew for the ARTE TV channel in France and Germany. This documentary will be aired in September.

Ruusa Gottlieb and Viktoria Keding

Family Hideout Continues to Wow

This glowing report was received from Alison, Jürgen and Zack Kühl, Jeffreys Bay, South Africa after their stay-over at the NamibRand Family Hideout over Christmas 2009:

"...You are really having a wonderful place at the Family Hideout. We really like what you have done with the place and also the whole set up with the NamibRand Nature Reserve. It is so good to see people that care about the environment and want to preserve a piece of nature for future generations.

We also liked the Education Centre at NRNR. To educate the youth is the best way to change people's attitude towards the environment.

We had a fantastic time at the Hideout and the best Christmas ever. The only big problem was having to leave again after three wonderful days. The gemsbok and springbok came to the waterhole right in front of the veranda every day. Only on the



Endless space on the red dunes at the Family Hideout.

morning when we had to leave no animals came. Maybe they were also sad that we had to leave.

We also read through your info file and looked at the photographs. We also saw your Namibrand Nature Reserve News Letter. Is there anyway that you could put us on distribution?... We will be back..."

Mandy Brückner

Ed: More news about the new Family Hideout Campsite in our next issue!

Photographic Tok Tokkie Trail

Did you ever feel like your pictures lacked that certain something? And some of your "could-be" best shots have that little blur? We all have had this experience and know that there's more to great photos than pointing and shooting. Sunsets look great but what do you have to consider if you wish to capture them in a picture? F-stop, ISO, burst, aperture and shutter speed – what's that all for? Why is it more difficult to take pictures of black than of white faces? The participants of the photographic Tok Tokkie Trail which Scott Hurd led from 20 – 22 March 2010 certainly know the answers to these questions now.

The eight aspiring photographers who set out together with Scott Hurd in order to capture the natural beauty of the NamibRand Nature Reserve on their cameras came from all sorts of backgrounds and their photographic equipment ranged from the good old analogue camera to semi-professional equipment. Also, their motivation for attending the course could not have been more diverse. It ranged from "I hardly ever use my camera as I do not know how to use it. Now I want to learn how to make more out of it" to "I am a dedicated hobby photographer and after this course I will win a photographic competition". Some were also not sure if the scenery would be to their liking: "I am actually not that interested in the south, I like the north more". It is no betrayal of secrets to say that even these sceptics were soon converted into NamibRand enthusiasts.

A perfect sunset on the Tok Tokkie Photographic Trail.



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Photographers line up to capture the natural beauty of NamibRand.

(Continued from p7)

With great passion and energy Scott Hurd explained all sorts of camera functions and their use. He also gave lots of advice on picture composition, views, angles and avoiding the shakes.

Following Scott's entertaining explanations, his trainees took great pleasure in learning that rules must be broken: "Photographic rules were made in the days of film to create really boring photographers". But he also made it clear that no technique or technology, sophisticated as it might be, can make up for the photographer's eye. Well, of course, the apprentice-photographers will now never forget to "stand firm, hold it down and press the button". Luckily, there was no shortage of opportunities whatsoever. And, as it was a walking safari, everybody could take their time on choosing their shot.

Nonetheless, the 3-day trip was not only about photography. When the tired hiking photographers reached camp just before sunset, a sun-downer and a delicious three-course dinner were already waiting for them. Now they understood what their guide, Domingo, had meant when he had said that they would be shown their "rooms". Great surprise! Some had difficulties in finding their rooms when it was bedtime, but all were overwhelmed by the ceiling of stars. Although most of the participants were Namibians, Domingo managed to put forth many interesting stories about the desert and its inhabitants that were new even to accomplished Namibia travellers.

"My children will be impressed when I get home. They will not take the camera out of my hands anymore!", "One should definitely travel more in one's own country!" and "I'm buying a digital camera when I get home!" were some of the comments made after the course. Goal achieved! Everybody was much more confident with using their camera and the beauty of the NamibRand Nature Reserve had made a lasting impression on everyone.

Barbara Wayrauch

Pushing the Frontiers of Science

- inselberg vegetation survey

Literally! As part of my long-term research project on Namibia's inselbergs and mountain flora I was privileged to work on the NamibRand Reserve in early April this year, a few weeks after some good heavy showers on the Reserve, and particularly on some inselbergs. NamibRand and surroundings had long been on my list of potential target areas, as this area is poorly known from a botanical point. Well, not the Reserve itself, as NamibRand plant enthusiasts have put together a fair botanical collection, some of which is also lodged at the National Botanical Research Institute in Namibia. Yet, with the exception of Losberg, the inselbergs and mountain areas were to date poorly studied. For obvious reasons - these need a fair level of time, fitness, preparation and determination, not to forget adequate rains at the right time, to undertake plant recording and collecting. These conditions all met, I set off with Ann

(Scott), one of the Wardens on the Reserve, one early morning to tackle Jagkop - the perfect example of a true inselberg (isolated mountain, for those who may not have heard the term).

Although I have not yet finalized all plant identifications or even started the data analysis (which will take some time), I would like to at least give a preliminary account of the most interesting observations. The most remarkable about Jagkop is the abundance of beautiful, healthy moringa (*Moringa ovalifolia*) trees - all over the mountain, but particularly on the south, west and eastern slopes. I have hardly ever seen so many at one place during my extensive surveys on Namibian inselbergs. Interesting is also that this was the only place where I recorded *Euphorbia virosa* on the Reserve, although this is likely not the only place. But the much more common stem-succulent *Euphorbia*, in this area, is *E. avasmontana*. There are also plenty of *Commiphora tenuipetiolata*, which has to date not found its way onto the Reserve's plant species list.

The inselbergs of the Horseshoe Wilderness revealed a number of exciting finds, such as yet another commiphora, *C. dinteri*, and up in the higher reaches many plants reminiscent of the central highlands, such as hairy zygodium (*Zygodium pubescens*), the perennial turpentine grass (*Cymbopogon pospischilii*) and the fan lily (*Boophane disticha*). This was surprising, and quite exciting as these plants occur here a long way from their centre of distribution. There are also a few elephant's foot plants (*Adenia pechuelii*) on these mountains, quiver trees and gouty vine (*Cyphostemma bainesii*). I suspect there will be some new distribution records amongst the less conspicuous parts of the vegetation, such as herbs, shrubs and grasses, which are still to be identified.

Despite weary legs, Ann and I could not resist a brief reconnaissance of the adjacent escarpment and we dedicated one day to climb up to a saddle above the quiver tree forest at Toskaan to get a glimpse at what is to be found on the Nubib Mountains. Well - these mountains certainly deserve a more thorough look in the future, as even this brief encounter already revealed some exciting plants such as mountain thorn (*Acacia hereroensis*), a dwarf-succulent *Crassula*, an unusual Lamiales not found anywhere else on the Reserve, and I am certain once identifications are

(Continued on p9)



Striking plant species on top of Jagkop, looking north, include a moringa (left), euphorbia and quiver tree (centre).



With the help of former tree-atlas coordinator Barbara Curtis (centre) and the coordinator (Herta Kolberg, right) and staff (Tyrone Tolkess, left) of the Millennium Seed Bank Partnership, the inselbergs of the Horseshoe Wilderness revealed some exciting plant records.



Spectacular views from the mountains above Toskaan. Antje Burke admires a large Bushman candle bush (*Sarcocaulon* sp.).

back to fill the gaps (or some more empty quarter degree squares, as we “atlassers” would say...). Thank you so much to NamibRand for letting me “push the frontiers”!

Dr Antje Burke

New Angle on the Origin of Fairy Circles

A team of biologists from the University of Cape Town visited NamibRand on 10 April 2010 to test a new hypothesis on the origin and nature of the fairy circles. The team comprised entomologist Mike Picker, plant physiologist Mike Cramer, and students Kelly Vliege, Fabian von Hase and Vere Ross-Gillespie.

Previous work done on fairy circles in the Kaokoveld in 2008 showed that they were not associated with the northern harvester termite *Hodotermes mossambicus*, a dominant termite of savanna and grassland. Previous hypotheses had suggested that localised foraging by these termites could result in the denuded, circular patches characteristic of fairy circles. Instead, each fairy circle was found to support an ant nest. Three different species of ant were involved, at Marienfluss, Giribes plain and near Sesfontein respectively. The aims of the study at NamibRand were to confirm a) that fairy circles were in fact ant nests; and b) to establish a mechanism whereby ant activities could result in the exclusion of grasses on the circles. In North America harvester ants of the genus *Pogonomyrmex* are known to clip vegetation, resulting in a bare ‘disc’ surrounding their nests. The hypothesis that the fairy circles are simply ant colonies is supported by other lines of evidence – they are regularly spaced in the landscape (‘overdispersed’), suggesting that some biological phenomenon such as territoriality is the cause of this non-random and even spacing. In fact they have a very similar spacing to that of the giant mounds of the southern harvester termite (*Microhodotermes viator*) which is restricted to the winter rainfall regions.

Fabian von Hase and Mike Picker setting up grass transplant experiments on the circles.



(Continued from p8)
complete, there will probably be a few more.

Every new dot on the map we can add through the surveys, allows us to manage and protect the essential plant resources and biodiversity on the Reserve in a better way. Once this batch of data has been processed, I therefore hope that I will be able to come

with ant nests. If the circles are ant nests, then one would expect them to have altered the chemical and physical properties of the soil. This could result in the observations of a change in grass species, or more luxuriant growth of grasses on the perimeter of circles.

Toekoms provided an ideal base for our work, and we soon fell into a rhythm of starting work before sunrise, taking a break during the heat of the day, and then working until the sun had set. Our primary goal was to confirm that the circles were indeed the sites of ant nests – and this we did by sinking a group of small pitfall traps filled with soapy water both on circles and in the matrix, to trap ants. It soon became apparent that most circles supported a dominant, large black ant, which on our return to Cape Town was identified as the pugnacious ant, *Anoplolepis steingroeveri*. This species is widely distributed across the arid parts of Southern Africa, and lived up to its name, attacking us and other animals without hesitation! Kelly collected ants and other invertebrates using these pitfall traps from the matrix, as well as from the edge and centre of circles. Colonies of the pugnacious ant on the circles were large (around 70 000 individuals were trapped from one colony), and very aggressive towards other ants of the same species from other colonies.

Aggression trials between ants of different colonies showed that while most fairy circles were occupied by a single ant colony, some large colonies occupied more than one circle. This provides evidence for the even spacing of the circles.

The ant nests on the circles had numerous large entrance holes, and an excavation of a single circle showed that large tunnels of the ant nest extended up to 1.3 m deep, when excavation was halted by a layer of rock. In addition to having their primary colony on fairy circles, ant nests were also located under the perennial grass *Stipagrostis ciliata* which grew on the circle periphery. One of the reasons for this is that the ants are attracted to plant sucking bugs (family Issidae) which live on the roots and lower grass stems. These bugs provide droplets of honeydew to the ants. This is a very important carbohydrate resource for the ants. Ants excavated small grasses (*S. obtusa*) to access the bugs, which fed on grass roots. These excavations exposed the roots of the grasses, which eventually died. This provided a mechanism whereby ants could kill yearling grasses colonizing the surface of the circles.

To test this, Fabian set up transplant trials, establishing young *S. obtusa* plants on the centre of circles (with control transplants in the matrix). Ants were immediately attracted to the plants, excavating the roots. In some instances the bugs even

(Continued on p10)



Large pitfall sited on surface of fairy circle, and used to estimate colony size of *Anoplolepis steingroeveri*.



Major workers of the pugnacious ant *Anoplolepis steingroeveri* attacking a non-nest mate during between-colony aggression trials



Lacertid lizard being eaten by major workers of the pugnacious ant, *Anoplolepis steingroeveri*.

(Continued from p9) colonised the transplanted grasses. In some cases transplanted grasses had died by the end of the experiment, and results will be analysed to see if plant death was greatest on the circles (and thus attributable to ants). Further damage to plant roots (especially to the peripheral *S. ciliata* grasses) was caused by an unknown mammal/bird which further excavated the grasses in search of ant prey. Fabian also set up plant transects across the circles to examine the change in vegetation type and height. He took soil samples from the circles, their perimeter and the matrix to see if there were any differences in nutrient levels – soil samples were also taken of ant nests to see if they matched those of the circles. These will be analysed back in Cape Town, along with the rest of the data that was collected.

Working at NamibRand was a memorable experience for the team, and was facilitated by the very helpful and efficient services of Nils Odendaal and Danica Shaw. Unfortunately Mike and Ann Scott were away at the time of our visit, but we hope to be able to revisit NamibRand at some future date, when we can chat to them about our findings. This study was undertaken under research permit 1493/2010 issued by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism.

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Dr Mike Picker

Thermoregulation in Wedge-snouted Lizards

Lizards, like other reptiles, are poikilothermic (cold-blooded), and depend on external heat sources and behavioral reflexes to maintain core temperatures in the physiological range. The endemic wedge-snouted lizard (*Meroles cuneirostris*) which lives in the sand dunes of NamibRand, where the substrate temperature can reach 70°C, has specific thermic behaviors that keep its feet from being burned and its core temperatures from becoming too high.

Barry Dworkin, a professor of neurophysiology at Penn State University and Maria Wilén, a technician from Uppsala University in Sweden with experience from physiological and biochemical research, have been back at NamibRand for a second year. They set up a computerized laboratory at Kwessiegat to study the reactions of the lizards to surface temperature: simulating the hot sand by rapidly changing the temperature of a thin plastic membrane. They also inserted micro-transponders (10 x 1,5 mm chips) into the abdominal cavity to measure the core temperature directly, and relate it to surface temperatures and to the elaboration of specific thermic behaviours.

To avoid getting its feet burned when the sand is hot, the lizard does a “thermal dance”. This is a thermo-protective behavior, in which it lifts the tail, the feet and/or legs from the ground, but often this occurs at the cost of bringing its body closer to the hot surface and, thus, raising the core temperature. In situations of persistently high sand temperatures, survival depends more on preventing excessively elevated core temperature than hot feet, and the lizard displays a thermoregulating reflex: it

does a “push-up”, lifting its body off the substrate, sometimes also lifting one or two feet.

The relationship between substrate temperature and behaviour depends on the size: a small lizard (~ 1 gram) reacts at a much lower temperature than a larger one (~7 g). With a higher thermal capacity the larger body can absorb more heat before the core temperature rises excessively.

M. cuneirostris can tolerate surprisingly high core temperatures; on a surface of 65°C, Barry and Maria have recorded a core temperature of more than 43°C, before the lizard initiated thermoregulating behaviour that rapidly decreased the temperature to less than 41°C.

The Kwessiegat scientists plan to return later this year to continue their studies. Results from Barry’s earlier research on blood pressure regulation in mammals showed that physiological regulation was subject to plasticity or learning, and that this learning occurred in a brain stem structure that is homologous in mammals and reptiles. Barry and Maria eventually plan to determine whether the same kind of learning process also occurs for temperature regulation in lizards.

Dr Barry Dworkin & Maria Wilén



The endemic wedge-snouted lizard can survive dune temperatures of up to 70°C.

Vultures in the Spotlight

On 28 September 2009 two dead adult White-backed Vultures were found by NRNR staff Jakobus Kooper and Corris Kaapehi, apparently drowned in the *Prosopis* reservoir. Sadly, both were in prime condition; neither was ringed/tagged. Poisoning was suspected, as it is well-known that excessive thirst is associated with poisoning in vultures. Samples were forwarded to Liz Komen at NARREC, who was able to confirm on 27 April 2010 that both carcasses had indeed tested positive for strychnine poisoning. Liz comments: “With strychnine we still have an issue of supportive legislation. Strychnine itself is not illegal ... What we managed to achieve was a Vet Council resolution that poisoning is not supported and no veterinarian should prescribe a poison and no pharmacy should have stocks... but there are farmers in the South that are sitting on stocks of arsenic and strychnine. What has to be proved is that “a person has caused the death of an endangered species ...”.

The incident is still under investigation.

At the end of 2009, three Lappet-faced Vultures were also poisoned on the farm Kroonhof Wes, to the south of NamibRand (Peter Bridgeford pers. comm.). The farmer was given N\$1500 bail, later found guilty and

Two White-backed Vultures found dead at *Prosopis* water-hole at NamibRand on 28 September 2009, later proved to have been poisoned by strychnine.



(Continued on p11)



A juvenile White-backed Vulture that showed up at NaDEET in March 2010.

On 13 March 2010 a juvenile White-backed Vulture showed up at NaDEET Base. Viktoria and Andreas Keding reported that it was acting very strangely, and poisoning was suspected. It was given water and drank about a litre, and later it drank more. Overnight it improved and later it flew off towards the north. On 15 March it was spotted again at the Hideout, \pm 2km south of the base, hopefully on the road to recovery. The report of a second sick juvenile White-backed Vulture at Wolwedans a few days later is a cause for concern, which could indeed point to poisoning in both birds. This vulture eluded our various attempts at capture, and eventually disappeared – hopefully having recovered.

Both regurgitation and excessive thirst are known to be signs of poisoning in vultures. Occasionally lone juvenile/first year vultures are also found, malnourished and dehydrated, apparently due to competition for food which is associated with birds this low down in the ‘hierarchy’. Usually they will look better after a bit of feeding up and are able to be released again, but not always with success – some birds are just inherently better competitors/survivors than others. However, having more than one case at the same time would suggest poisoning. Any apparently ailing vulture should please be reported immediately to NRNR staff, who are responsible for investigating.

Both Lappet-faced Vulture and White-backed Vulture are listed as *Vulnerable* on the new Namibian Red Data List; the former species is also *Globally Threatened*. Due to their threatened conservation status, vulture numbers and movements are being monitored all over the world, including by ringing/tagging; any resighting records are always much appreciated.

An encouraging sign is that vulture numbers appear to be on the increase on NamibRand. This phenomenon is possibly associated with the increase in predator activity and the associated restoration of the natural balance. In 2009, around 50 Lappet-faced Vultures were consistently recorded mainly in the vicinity of Aandstêr, compared to a maximum of less than 10 in 2000 (P. Bridgeford sightings). On 30 December 2009, we counted at least 64 White-backed Vultures at Prosopis. Last year only one Lappet-faced Vulture chick was recorded on NamibRand



A “tagged” vulture chick on the nest (Mirabib, October 2006).



(Continued from p10)

fined N\$300. Peter adds, “... it is quite astounding for a farmer to be found guilty of killing vultures ... Incidentally, one of the birds was ringed by Ann Scott at Gemsbokwater [in the Namib Naukluft Park] in 2004.”

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(see BG Dec. 2009, Vol. 10(2) p10); the vultures are again at the start of their breeding season, and reports of any suspected breeding activity are welcome. Please bear in mind that they are particularly sensitive to disturbance at this time. Hopefully numbers of these magnificent giants of the sky will increase as they continue to find a safe haven on NamibRand!

Ann & Mike Scott

STOP PRESS: On 6 May 2010, the remains of 8 Lappet-faced Vultures were found on the border of Excelsior/Spes Bona/Sonop, properties immediately to the south of NamibRand, by Sean Gibson of Drifters Desert Lodge. Poisoning is suspected, as the carcasses were close to one another, and the incident is under investigation.

Close Encounters with Female Leopard N015

In September 2008 N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Experience was tasked with the rehabilitation of two leopards which had been confiscated from atrocious conditions by the MET. The leopards, one male and one female, had been illegally kept on a farm in the north of Namibia. After sufficient recovery time at N/a'an ku sê's sanctuary, both leopards were then collared and released into protected areas in early 2009. With approval from the MET and NamibRand Nature Reserve, the female leopard (N015) was set free at the foot of Bushmann Hill on 25 February 2009. At the time of release she was



The La Motte and Keerweder team recapture leopard N015 at La Motte.



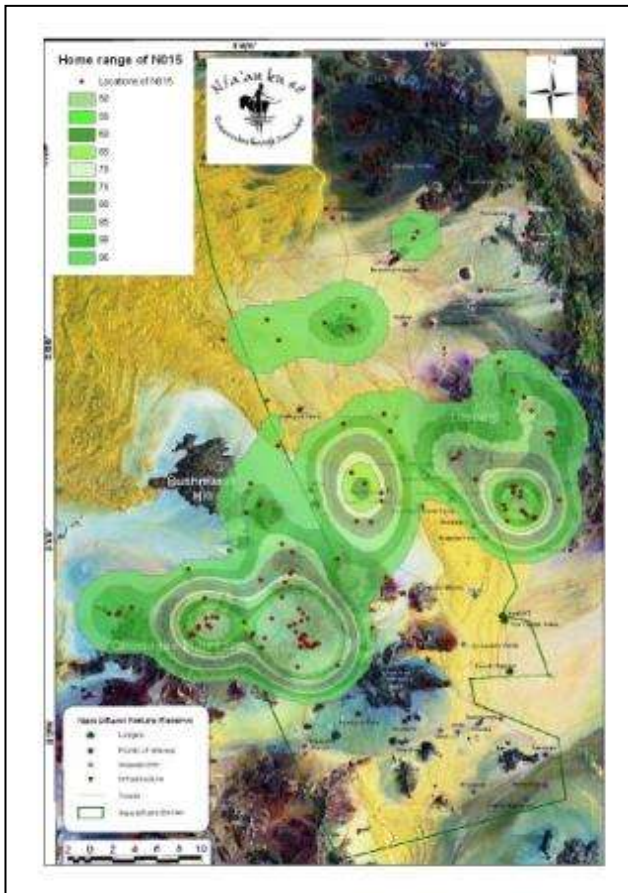
N015 back at Keerweder before being released at Ysterwielnek.

approximately 6 years old, weighed 35 kg and had regained good fitness and excellent health. Prior to her release, the leopard had been fitted with combined GPS satellite and VHF (radio) collar to monitor her post-release progress and home range development closely.

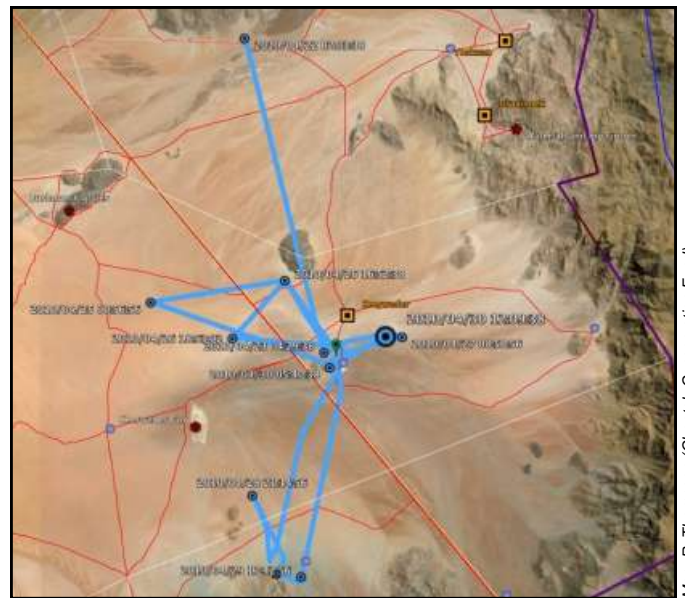
On 3 February 2010 Keerweder received a call to say that a leopard had been trapped by farm workers on a neighbouring property north-east of the Reserve, La Motte, after capturing a blesbok. Its satellite collar was no longer functional, but we were able to confirm that it was N015 by means of the VHF signal. This magnificent, ferocious female was fetched and kept quiet at Keerweder until Florian and a team of volunteers could dart her, replace the collar with a new VHF one and release her successfully at Ysterwielnek, in the south-western part of the Reserve, on 6 February 2010. So far the radio signal has not been picked up again.

Florian Weise & Ann Scott
PTO for map





Recorded home range of female leopard N015 (see p11).



Map: R. Thompson (Cheetah Conservation Fund)

Movements of a satellite-collared male cheetah (Mushara) on days 500-508 at NamibRand, shown by blue lines.

satellite and from there to a ground-station, where they can be accessed via the Internet. This enables us to monitor Mushara's movements directly from the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) offices outside Otjiwarongo, some 500 km away from the NamibRand Reserve.

The information we get from the collar consists of date, time, latitude and longitude. All of these are plotted using Google Earth, and maps are generated on a weekly basis for distribution to the various parties involved in the project and for display on the CCF website: www.cheetah.org

Positional data are extremely useful, but we would not know as much about the males' habits as we do, without the tireless efforts of the ground trackers who followed them around during the first few months after their release. Satellites cannot record when cheetahs eat (see photograph on p2) or sleep, or whether their movements represent a hunt, or just a casual stroll.

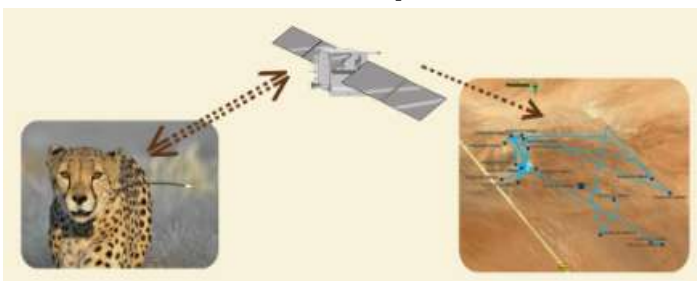
The batteries on the satellite collar are expected to expire in the near future, at which point the collar will be removed. In the

meantime, however, we will continue to monitor the movements of these highly successful hunters as they continue learning what it is to be wild and free.

Rob Thompson



Cheetah Update



As we pass the five-hundredth day of the five "NamibRand Boys" new-found freedom, it seems appropriate to write a little bit about how they have been monitored during that time.

Each of the cheetahs was originally fitted with a radio collar, although the one on Lindt was subsequently removed in order to monitor a female cheetah also placed in the area. Each of these collars emits a pulsing signal on a distinct frequency that can be detected from several kilometres away. Portable receivers and direction finding antenna can thus be used to locate and follow any of the four collared cats, and since they are seldom apart from each other, the entire group can be tracked easily.

Radio tracking however is both time consuming and requires the constant use of vehicles, fuel and personnel in order to build up a detailed picture of daily movements. It was decided from the outset therefore to provide a second, more "hi-tech", method of monitoring - one that could be carried out remotely. To that end, Mushara was fitted with a satellite collar purchased from the New Zealand based company, Sirtrack.

Satellite collars utilise the GPS system to record location on a regular basis. These data are then retransmitted to a second

Conservation Research on Hartmann's Mountain Zebra

Most visitors to NamibRand see groups of the conspicuous plains zebra. Much less commonly, they will see the second species of zebra that lives in the reserve, the mountain zebra. As the name suggests, these zebra spend much of their time in mountainous areas, particularly during the day when they seek refuge in upland areas. When feeding they typically descend along gullies where grasses are most abundant and may come some way out onto the plains. If disturbed they usually run up into their mountain refuges, not at random, but along well used trails.

There are two types of mountain zebra, Hartmann's (*Equus zebra hartmannae*) in Namibia and Cape (*E. z. zebra*) in South

(Continued on p13)



Camera trap image of a bachelor group drinking at Porcupine waterhole (April 2010). Note individual variation in stripe patterns.

(Continued from p12)

Africa. Overall the species is classified by IUCN as endangered and Cape mountain zebra were reduced to less than 100 in the 1940s by overhunting. Since then protection in a few parks and reserves has allowed their numbers to expand again. Hartmann's populations in Namibia are healthier but they still number only about 25 000, mainly in protected areas, conservancies and farms devoted partly or wholly to wildlife. They are Namibia's only large endemic mammal and are classified as a Protected Species.

The Namib Naukluft mountains are a stronghold of mountain zebra in Namibia and the NamibRand holds a valuable part of these populations. But because of their secretive habits we know little about the animals in the park compared to plains zebra. They cannot be counted accurately in road transect counts because they are often hidden in broken habitat and while some are seen during the Reserve's annual counts we are not sure how many there are. For similar reasons they are difficult to watch and so we know little about their ecology and behaviour. To fill these gaps I have started a project on mountain zebras with the initial aim of estimating numbers using mark-recapture techniques.

Mark-recapture estimates of animal populations generally involve marking a sample of a population, releasing the marked animals and then, after an interval, capturing a second sample and calculating the population size from the proportion of the second sample that is marked (i.e. recaptured). In practice, marking can be difficult with large mammals and even when capture is feasible it can be extremely disruptive. Fortunately, this problem can be overcome in our study because all zebras have distinctive stripe patterns. Like human fingerprints each individual is different and this variation can be used in a kind of bar code to identify individuals. I have developed a key of this kind while working in other parts of southern Namibia and have confirmed that it works equally well on NamibRand.

We identify individuals from photographs either taken in the field or using camera traps. The traps switch from normal daylight photography to infra-red flash at night which is vital because most mountain zebra drink at night. Mountain zebras are water dependent and in the dry season they can be sampled as they walk to waterholes. Our plan is to place cameras at main waterholes for an initial period of about 4 weeks, leave an interval of 2 weeks, then sample again for 4 weeks. In the first sampling period all animals where the image is clear enough are identified ('marked'). In the second period all animals are identified again and divided into those seen in the first sample (i.e. 'recaptured') and new individuals, and a population estimate is calculated from this information.

We currently have five cameras that are being deployed at waterholes with any evidence of mountain zebra visits. An example of a bachelor group visiting Porcupine water hole is shown on the left. Most of the fieldwork so far has been carried out by Mike and Ann Scott, Preston Izaaks, a student intern from the Polytechnic of Namibia, and other Reserve staff. We plan to collect the data for a mark recapture estimate in coming months and will report the results in a future issue of Barking Gecko.

Conservation research on mountain zebra in NamibRand is in its infancy but we are optimistic that it will yield important new information about this iconic Namibian animal. Anybody that photographs mountain zebra in NamibRand can contribute by sending copies of the images, with a note of their location, to me (see below). If anybody would like to know more about the Mountain Zebra Project or make a donation to support it, please contact me at the same email address.

Dr Morris Gosling

Emeritus Professor, IRES, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK; and Mountain Zebra Project, Namibia Nature Foundation, PO Box 245, Windhoek, Namibia. Email: l.m.gosling@ncl.ac.uk.

Giraffe Project

The Giraffe Project was decided upon when a concern was raised that the giraffes that are currently using this area as their main area for feeding may be affecting the growth of camelthorn *Acacia erioloba* trees negatively. It has also been suggested that some of these large ruminants should be moved, mainly because the area cannot support the eight individuals that are currently occupying the area. The main objectives of the project are therefore:

- To determine habitat use by the giraffes at NamibRand.
- To determine the daily activity patterns of the giraffe at NamibRand by observing, timing and recording their feeding behaviour, as well as other activities (walking, running, resting, being alert and interactions with each other, i.e. aggression, dominance, sexual and parent-offspring behaviour).
- To determine the impact of browsing by giraffe on *Acacia erioloba* trees, including by means of exclusion plots.
- To compile an identification booklet, to be used by the different concessionaires and their tour guides in the area. This I.D. booklet will also help Reserve management with monitoring.

At present the project is making good progress but the giraffes are sometimes like a needle in a haystack, they disappear for a couple of days and all of a sudden they just reappear.

The use of camera traps for the mountain zebra project (see above) has shown that giraffes drink at night, at random times (e.g. at 18h45, 10h30 and 02h00). For now no other fixed data is available, but keep your reading glasses close by because the final data will hopefully be available in the next issue.

Preston Izaaks



Giraffe browsing on blackthorn (*Acacia mellifera*) at Draaihoek.



Camera trap image of a giraffe at Porcupine waterhole.

Interesting Sightings and Photo Gallery



Photo: C. Alderton

Interesting Sightings

Some of our recent sightings include:

- 6 March 2010: European Golden Oriole at Keerweder office (Mike Scott)
- 22 March 2010: African wildcat at Draaihoek (N/a'an ku sê)
- 23 March 2010: Three warthogs at Ou Wêreldend (N/a'an ku sê)
- 31 March 2010: Adult warthog at Porcupine waterhole (Ann Scott & Antje Burke)
- 31 March 2010: Brown hyaena at its den on Draaihoek on (Preston Izaaks)
- Easter (April) 2010: 40 bat-eared foxes counted on a drive around the northern part of the Reserve (Klein family)
- 14 April 2010: African Crake wandering into the Aandstêr homestead (Peter Woolfe)
- 27 April 2010: Three warthogs reported on Dina (Peter Woolfe)
- May 2010: African wildcat at Kwessiegat (Carole Alderton)
- May 2010: Black-headed Heron at Keerweder waterhole — not yet on the NRNR birdlist (Mike & Ann Scott)
- 2 May 2010: A huge rock monitor at Moringa waterhole/dam the day after 16 mm of rain (Ann & Mike Scott)
- 6 May 2010: Resurrection bushes with bright green leaves at Jagkop after 8 mm of rain on 1 May 2010 (Ann Scott)
- 9 May 2010: A leopard at Toskaan (Preston Izaaks)
- 11 May 2010: Two Lappet-faced Vultures apparently on a nest, north of Zebra Dam (Mike Scott)
- 14 May 2010: An adult leopard at Draaihoek (J. Klein)



Photo: J. Klein

Right: Recent sighting of a magnificent leopard at Draaihoek.



Photo: C. Alderton

Top: A family of bat-eared foxes lies low at Kwessiegat. Below: African wildcat at Kwessiegat.

Hello from the New Editor

Stepping into the shoes of an editor as capable as Danica Shaw is a hard act to follow! Danica, we pay tribute to your dedicated service over the past six years, and wish you every success in this exciting new chapter of your life.

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this issue of the Barking Gecko: Carole Alderton, Albi Brückner, Mandy Brückner, Barry Dworkin, Morris Gosling, Ruusa Gottlieb, Preston Izaaks, Viktoria Keding, Jürgen Klein, Nils Odendaal, Mike Picker, Mike Scott, Danica Shaw, Rob Thompson, Barbara Wayrauch, Florian Weise and Maria Wilén; and to all the other photographers. Your input, stories and photographs are always appreciated! A special thank you to Danica and to Nils Odendaal for your assistance with the production of this edition.

The Barking Gecko is your newsletter. Please continue to send us your news and views, short reports, comic relief, artwork and the wonderful photographs. Any suggestions are welcome!

Ann Scott

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