THE BARKING GECKO

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

September 2010 **Volume 11 Nº 2**

Painting: Hermann Cloete

Swirls of colour on the Namib dunes.

In this issue:

A lively winter at NamibRand

Spring has arrived at NamibRand Nature Reserve, with the promise of new growth and life to the rapidly drying landscape. This issue is packed with exciting winter news and events—first and foremost the joint celebration of our chairperson and custodian Albi Brückner and his wife Antje's 80th birthdays and their 55th wedding anniversary. I'm sure you will all join us in extending our congratulations on this wonderful milestone in the lives of this close-knit family!

The annual game count took place in June, combined as usual with the AGM and a Board meeting; this was followed by a meeting of the Pro-Namib Conservancy in August; and our regular management meeting ('Kgotla') in September. NamibRand management staff have been busy with building an attractive replacement waterhole at Jagkop, and a giraffe capture at Draaihoek. News from our concessionaires includes an innovative adult education programme on sustainable living, focusing on solar cooking, and an exclusive new campsite at the Family Hideout.

No less than three articles provide further insights into the mysteries of our fairy circles, two items bring updates on cheetahs and thought-provoking questions are raised on Hartmann's mountain zebra and Burchell's (plains) zebra.

Finally, a fascinating array of sightings, photographs and artwork from our readers. Taking its place amongst these contributors is a new player—our camera traps.

This is indeed your newsletter, and we would like to thank you, one and all, for your interest and contributions. Please keep sending them in!

Ann Scott

A second-year Verreauxs' (Black) Eagle captured on a Buckeye camera trap at Moringa waterhole in July 2010.

News from the CEO

NamibRand Nature Reserve chairperson and custodian Albi Brückner and his wife Antje both celebrated their milestone 80th birthdays and 55th wedding anniversary on 14 August 2010. The Brückner family commitment toward the NamibRand Nature Reserve featured prominently at this event and it was touching to witness the family pledge to uphold the conservation and philanthropic ideas of the Reserve for future generations. Please read Andreas Brückner's account of the celebration (see below).

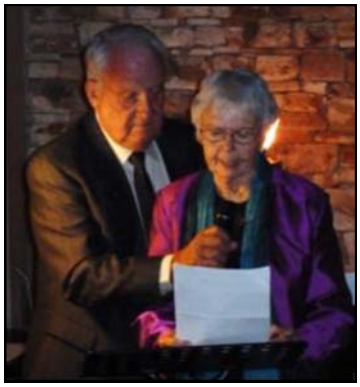


Photo: Hartmut Brückner

Albi and Antje Brückner deliver their 'milestone' speech.

A meeting of the Pro-Namib Conservancy was held on 26 August with NamibRand staff and representatives of the member farms Dina and Excelsior in attendance. We discussed the need for a new conservancy constitution and members decided to abandon the old constitution in favour of a simplified and more conservation orientated one which better incorporates our common vision. The opening of more fences (to allow for better wildlife movements), a common water management plan as well as several possible social / charitable initiatives were discussed. The meeting ended on a high note with members reaffirming their commitment toward this conservation management initiative. Joint resource management for the benefit of wildlife and the environment remains our overall goal.

Photo: Lydia Ellis (Desert Light)

The Pro-Namib Conservancy meeting at Dina.

We continue to support several other conservation initiatives actively and during the past six months have made financial and in-kind contributions in support of the Cheetah Conservation Fund, Vultures Namibia, The Namibia Environment and Wildlife Society and the Namibia Nature Foundation. Reserve staff also serve on the management committees of the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia, the Freehold Conservancy Association of Namibia and the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Management Complex. Promotional talks on NamibRand were held for the Scientific Society who visited Wolwedans in June, for the Scientific Society in Swakopmund in August and for the Rotary Club in Swakopmund in September .

Our website has been revamped and updated and now promotes the Reserve in a "fresh and new way"! Please visit ***www.namibrand.org***, and feel free to send us your comments.

Sadly, we have to take leave of Christine Thiel and Lars Baum, who have spent the past year working for N/a'an ku sê on predator-related projects. We would like to thank them for their hard work and invaluable contributions to our knowledge of the biodiversity of the Reserve, and wish them well with their future initiatives.

Photo: N/a'an ku sê

Farewell to Lars Baum and Christine Thiel.

This past winter has certainly been a busy and exciting time for the Reserve. The AGM was held in June, the results of our last game count have been published, a new water point design has been implemented, we had to translocate four of our giraffe and the mountain zebra ecology project is starting to reveal interesting results. We hope that you enjoy reading about these projects and other "happenings" on the Reserve in this issue of the Barking Gecko.

Nils Odendaal

The Patriarchs of NamibRand turn 80

The creator of our beloved NamibRand Nature Reserve - Albi Brückner - and his ever supporting wife Antje both turned 80 years of age in this year of 2010.

To mark this momentous occasion a grand FEST took place on 14 August (Albi's actual birthday) in the old family house at Windhoek, nowadays housing 'Nice', where we gathered under the wizened old family tree still guarding the courtyard. All four children plus their offspring of eight grandchildren formed a "panic" orchestra of two saxophones, two cellos, a trumpet, clarinet, violin, guitar, piano and accordion (what a combination) to pipe up a "Happy Birthday" and a few more renditions.

At this point of reflection, looking back over the decades, the NamibRand dream featured prominently in the speeches. How it all started way back, when young Albi in his pioneering days travelled the far south with his already then trusted Landrover and fell in love with the Pro-Namib - a secret he guarded for decades, until an opportunity arose to buy the farm Gorrasis in the late seventies (which was immediately coined as a "Sandgat" by his somewhat outspoken daughter)

(Continued on p3)

Photo: Hartmut Brückner

Three generations of Brückners gather at 'Nice' for the celebrations.

(Continued from p2)

– but that's when the NamibRand story started.

The notion of "leaving a spoor", coined by Wilfried Achterfeld (landowner Christopher Braun's father), culminated in a pledge by the next generation to uphold this dream, and to guard the NamibRand project to the best of our abilities, so that one day granny Sophie-Marie (Stephan's daughter) can sit on the dune - and pointing to the peacefully grazing gemsbok exclaim to her grandson – this is what your great-great granddad made possible.

And Albi and Antje may then smile contently in their fairy circle (for this is where they've chosen to have their ashes buried) that the spoor they have laid has not withered.

Andreas Brückner

September 2010 Kgotla

Wolwedans kindly hosted the recent Kgotla (Reserve management meeting) on 3 September 2010. As usual, the discussions were lively and everyone appreciated the opportunity to communicate and seek solutions for matters of mutual concern. Many thanks to Edgar Weber and his team!

Photo: Bennie /Haseb

Participants at the September 2010 Kgotla at Wolwedans.

Ann Scott

Conservation and economic lessons learned from managing the NamibRand Nature Reserve

A comprehensive new review of NamibRand Nature Reserve by Nils Odendaal and Danica Shaw is now available on our website (*www.namibrand.org*—see Library) - the abstract and other details are provided below.

Abstract—The NamibRand Nature Reserve, located in southern Namibia, is a private nature reserve established to protect and conserve the unique ecology and wildlife of the southwest Namib Desert. At 172,200 ha, NamibRand is one of the largest private conservation areas in southern Africa. The reserve consists of 13 former livestock farms rehabilitated into a continuous natural conservation area and shares a 100 km border with the Namib-Naukluft National Park. The reserve is a model for private conservation in southern Africa, as it demonstrates holistic biodiversity conservation balanced with financial sustainability. Innovative approaches to resource management ensure that this critical area bordering on the national park is effectively conserved. Research conducted on the reserve aims directly to benefit management of the reserve and to contribute to the national scientific knowledge base. The project is financially self-sustaining mainly through high-quality, low impact tourism. Partnerships with local and regional neighbours, and government and other organizations, connect the reserve to a larger conservation landscape throughout Namibia, forming the foundation of the national tourism economy.

***Great Plains Research* 20 (Spring 2010): 29-36**

Results of the annual game count (5 June 2010)

The summary below is compiled from a report by Ann Scott and Nils Odendaal; available on our website as a short summary (6 pages) or a detailed report (30 pages). Data collected by participants on the June 2010 game count were collated and analyzed, bearing our three core objectives in mind:

1. Population estimates

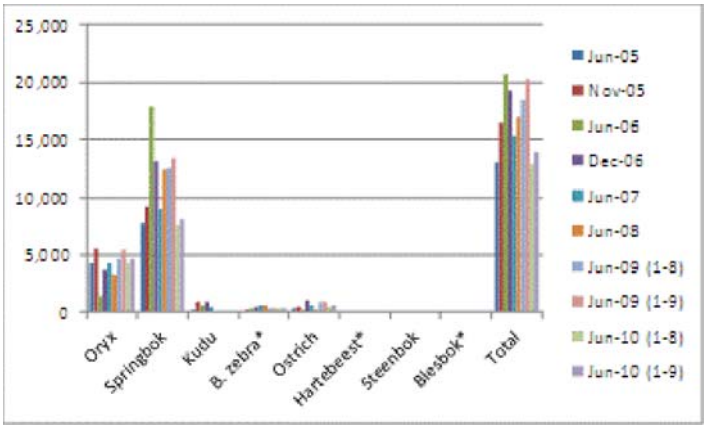
Table 1. Total numbers of game as estimated by the June 2010 game count

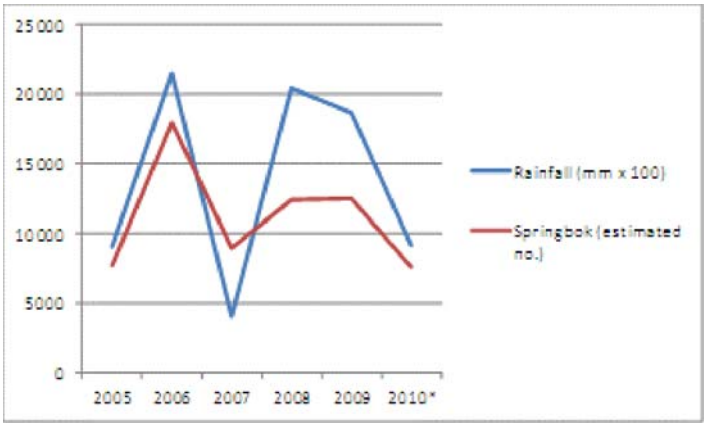
Species	Total estimate (Route 1-9)
Oryx	4 683
Springbok	8 060
Kudu	24
Burchell's zebra*	350
Ostrich	644
Red hartebeest*	110
Steenbok	0
Blesbok*	19
Total	**13 890**
% change	**-31.5**
*Giraffe**	*8*
Ludwig's Bustard	*223*

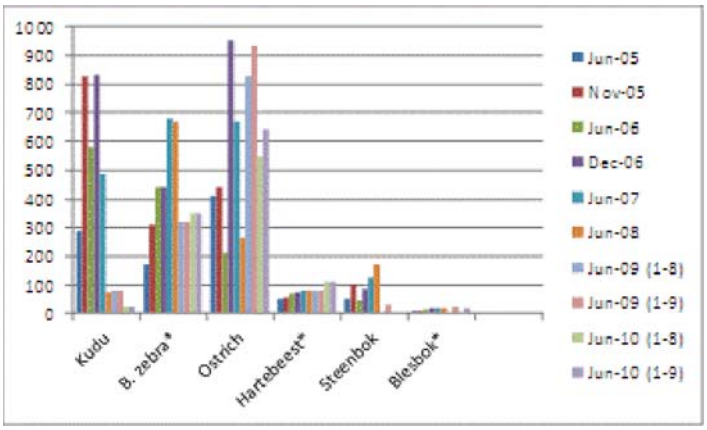
*(*numbers are known)*

- The overall population estimate for all species combined on NamibRand Nature Reserve in June 2010 is 12 887 (Route 1-8). With the inclusion of the Pro-Namib Conservancy, this figure rises to 13 890 (Route 1-9) (see Figure 1 & 2 on page 4) These totals represent a decrease by 31% from those in June 2009, a trend that corresponds with the lower rainfall in 2010.
- The total estimates for numbers of oryx in June 2010 are 4 262 (Route 1-8) and 4 683 (Route 1-9) – a decrease of 14% since June 2009.
- Numbers of springbok are currently estimated at 7 590 (Route 1-8) and 8 060 (Route 1-9) – a decrease of 40%.
- The Reserve appears to be an important haven for a relatively large population of Ludwig's Bustard, recently uplisted to *Endangered.*
- The total biomass of the Reserve has dropped to 9.0 kg/ha in June 2010 (Route 1-8) and 8.8 kg/ha (Route 1-9).

Just a reminder that population estimates are no more than that – an estimate. *(Continued on p4)*







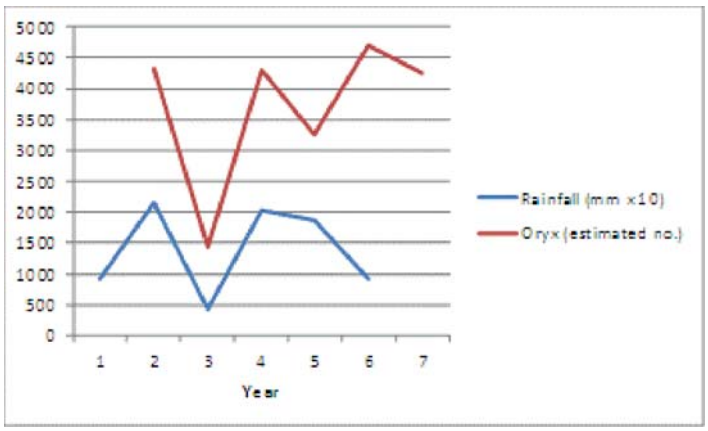


Figure 1 (Above): Total estimates for all game species on NamibRand, 2005 –2010.
Figure 2 (Below): Total estimates for all game species on NamibRand, other than oryx and springbok, 2005-2010.

Figure 4 (Above): Estimated numbers of springbok correlate well with rainfall patterns for the same year.
Figure 5 (Below): In contrast, estimated numbers of oryx show a greater correlation with the rainfall figures of the previous year; Ostrich numbers show a similar pattern.

(Continued from p3)

2. Wildlife distribution/density

- Wildlife distribution/density (animals counted per 100 km) decreased by 33%, compared to June 2009.
- The highest relative densities were recorded in the north/ east and south, whereas densities were lower in the central vegetated dune belt (Figure 3).

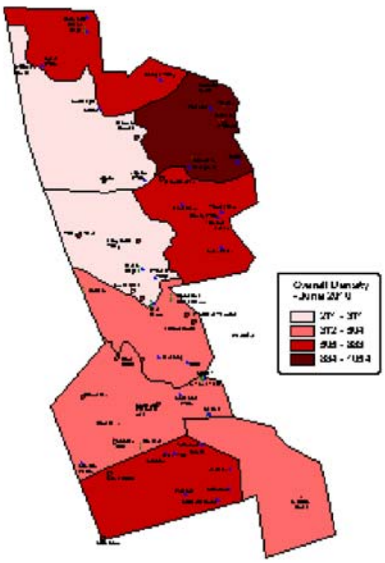


Figure 3: Wildlife distribution (animals counted per 100 km) in June 2010; the higher densities are represented by the darker shades.

3. Population change over six years

- Overall, animal sightings decreased by 33% to 625 animals/100 km in June 2010.

4. Wildlife trends and rainfall

- Correlations between the above results and average annual rainfall figures indicate that springbok numbers respond quickly—in fact, during the same year—to changing rainfall patterns (see Figure 4).
- In contrast, the response of both oryx and Ostrich is more apparent during the following year; in Figure 5 (above), counts of oryx are aligned with the rainfall of the previous year.

The success of our game count effort is dependent upon the participation and generous time contribution from all our stakeholders. NamibRand would like to thank all the participants for their willing and enthusiastic help with these very important game counts over the years! This year, the participants included the Sossusvlei Desert Lodge team (including Namib Sky Balloon Safaris), Mr Klein's team (including the Brauns and NRNR staff), Christiana Berker and her team, Wolwedans (two teams including Albi Brückner, Peter Koep and Swen Bachran), NaDEET, Tok Tokkie Trails, Aandstêr (including the Family Hideout, N/a'an ku sê and NRNR staff) and the Pro-Namib Conservancy (including Drifter's Desert Lodge). Mike Scott is thanked for his inputs regarding this report.

Ann Scott & Nils Odendaal

New waterhole at Jagkop

Quintin Hartung

Resource management is a key aspect in order to achieve the goals of the NamibRand Nature Reserve, one of which is water provision to wildlife. The Reserve holds 26 artificial waterholes spread out throughout the length of the Reserve, allowing the animals, both on the Reserve and from outside (including the Namib-Naukluft National Park), to have access to water from the north to the south of the Reserve.

Jagkop waterhole, in the northern part of the Reserve just east of the Jagkop Mountain, was in a bad state due to trampling and consequent soil erosion around the waterhole. Part of the reason for soil and vegetation loss around this waterhole is the fact that it was built by previous owners who farmed with livestock many years back, on very soft and fragile soil.

Management decided to close down the waterhole and build a new replacement one to the east on harder soil, which might be less prone to erosion. A site on which hard gravel and rock is quite prominent was then chosen, and we began to build the new waterhole on 19 July 2010.

First a hole had to be dug out for the new waterhole. This was hard work as the ground was very difficult to penetrate. Once the hole was deep enough, we started to build the waterhole. This took five days to complete and the waterhole was put into operation on 24 July 2010.

At first the animals were a bit hesitant to use the new waterhole and still went to the old one, which at that stage still had water in it. We then decided to close off the water supply to the old one to try and force the animals to become accustomed to the new waterhole, and it worked. Within a week's time we saw a herd of over 40 plain's zebra and oryx at the new waterhole (a flock of Namaqua Sandgrouse was also seen there on a different occasion), thus confirming that the animals had familiarized themselves with the new waterhole; however, some 'stubborn' oryx still went to the old waterhole in search of water during the first two weeks and sometimes dug out the water pipes there in desperate need of water, but these individuals soon too became familiar with the new waterhole and are now actively using it along with all the other animals in the area.

Photo: Mike Scott

Photo: Ann Scott

Above: Quintin and the NamibRand Nature Reserve team during the construction of the new waterhole.
Below: The new waterhole at Jagkop was soon occupied by the oryx.

As part of my in-service training at NamibRand, I am expected to do a research project; hence I decided to monitor the impact of water provision on the vegetation and soil, whereby I will monitor the change in basal cover and soil depth around the new waterhole as more animals begin to use it.

From these findings I will be able to quantify at what rate the land around the waterhole deteriorates. These data can then be used to predetermine the impacts of waterholes in the area, which can be used to find means to mitigate the more severe impacts of water provision on the vegetation and soil. This can then be applied in the Management Plan of the Reserve for future reference and guidance.

Quintin Hartung

Giraffe capture on NamibRand

Due to a concern regarding the browsing pressure being put on camelthorn (*Acacia erioloba*) trees in the Toskaan/Draaihoek area by the eight giraffes on NamibRand, it was decided at the last Board Meeting that four of them would be translocated. The initial idea was to move them to the southern part of the Reserve, or else to the Duwiseb area within the Pro-Namib Conservancy. H.-O. Reuter, of African Wildlife Services (AWS), visited the Reserve in order to advise us which area would be the most suitable. Of the two, the Duwiseb area turned out to be more suitable regarding food supply. However, after further discussion, it was decided that both areas were too close to 'home' (Toskaan/ Draaihoek) and that the giraffes could easily walk back if they were determined to do so. They would need to be removed from the area completely.

Photo: Ann Scott

Photo: Ann Scott

Above: A Schweizer 300 piston engine helicopter was used for darting the giraffe.
Below: After the antidote had been administered, the giraffe were gently herded into the trailer using a 'cradle' of ropes.

Various conservation entities were approached with the hope that they would be interested in taking the giraffes over from us. Unfortunately the timing was not good, due to the short notice. In the end N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary

(*Continued on p6)*

Photo: Ann Scott

Part of the giraffe capture team at Draaihoek.

(Continued from p5)

offered to take the giraffe over. H.-O. Reuter was approached to do the capture, which took place on 1 September 2010.

The giraffe were darted from the air and loaded into a small capture trailer, then transported and loaded onto the truck. The AWS capture team operated very efficiently and effectively throughout the entire capture period. The NamibRand staff assisted and gained invaluable experience with regard to driving the chase vehicle and using the guiding ropes. H.-O. did the darting and Teddie van Schalkwyk piloted the Schweizer 300 piston engine helicopter.

The truck departed for Windhoek at 10h30, and at sunset the giraffe were unloaded at N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary. The capture time from arriving on site to loading the last giraffe at NamibRand was 3 hrs (0.75 hrs /animal). The whole operation was smooth and well-planned, with excellent team work.

Mike Scott

Photo: Danica Shaw

The four giraffes arrived safely at their new home at N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary, near Windhoek, at sunset.

New Community Education Programme receives four solar cookers from NamibRand Conservation Foundation

It is no longer only school groups who benefit from NaDEET Centre—with our pilot Community Education Programme, adult learners can come for four-day intensive practical training courses that focus on improving household energy habits to help communities cope with environmental changes and improve their quality of life.

With the help of a grant from UNDP's "Global Environment Facility—Small Grants Programme" we were able to design this programme, entitled: "Mitigating Climate Change in Local Communities through Sustainable Living Education and Practices." The grant allowed five groups of participants from rural, impoverished communities to attend NaDEET Centre at no cost. In addition, each community group received six parabolic solar cookers. Thanks to a generous donation from our regular supporters the NamibRand Conservation Foundation, our closest community group—from Maltahöhe—received an additional four solar cookers! Our other community groups came from Keetmanshoop, Mariental and Rehoboth, and the final one will come from Bethanie in November.

Photo: NaDEET

This 64-year-old NaDEET "graduate" can now solar cook for her seven grandchildren on her NRCF donated solar cooker.

In the past seven years of offering environmental education for youth groups, we saw the need to develop a programme for adult community groups from disadvantaged regions of Namibia. There is a lack of awareness of alternative energy use and energy-efficient practices, and a general lack of understanding of the harmful environmental impacts of current practices such as the collection and use of firewood. Climate change is leading to severe environmental hardship and unpredictability, and NaDEET teaches ways to adapt and mitigate it. In this course, we blended theory with practice for a curriculum of holistic environmental education. In addition to classes on the concepts behind climate change and energy efficiency, we taught hands-on skills like solar cooking, reading water meters, making recycled firebricks and constructing fuel-efficient stoves.

Community participants returned home with sustainable living technologies, leading to a greater sense of ownership and empowerment and a reduced dependency on costly and environmentally-damaging sources of energy. Each NaDEET participant received a fuel-efficient stove (made by them!) and our publications, *It's Time to Solar Cook* and *It's Time to Change,* and a lucky individual won the raffled-off solar oven. In this GEF-SGP project, each group received six parabolic solar cookers. We thank the NamibRand Conservation Foundation for donating four to Maltahöhe to bring their total up to ten—one cooker for every two adults!

We are now offering this community course as a weekend programme as well, targeting employed adults who work during the week but still want to learn sustainable living practices. It will be open to Maltahöhe residents, or other members of our closest communities. We currently seek funding to help make this programme a reality!

Elissa Brown

Photo: NaDEET

Proud Rehoboth WAD members pose in their NaDEET shirts with a solar cooker.

News@NaDEET

School groups at the centre

"[NaDEET] is life-changing. We need more learners to know about the environment, the things that damage it and how to limit these effects." ***- Teacher, Schlip P.S.***

NaDEET has hosted eight primary school groups and two secondary school groups since the beginning of the Namibian school year, including six returning schools. We are proud that teachers and administrators find their NaDEET experience valuable and want to make it a regular part of their school year! Of the new schools, two received a free class trip to NaDEET by winning a Coastal Clean Up campaign sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism Nacoma Project, and one was from the Hardap region (furthering our end goal of bringing all Hardap schools to NaDEET). Of all the schools, only one was able to fully fund its trip to NaDEET and all the others received financial assistance. As a part of our open-door policy, we ask schools to pay what they can — or bring items of food to help cover costs.

NaDEET in the Media

On 11 August, at 8 pm, NaDEET was featured on culture and travel channel ARTE in their popular programme: "Les nouveaux paradies" featuring Namibia. More locally, NaDEET appeared on NBC-TV and One Africa in early July as a result of our Media Day. Coinciding with the graduation of the Rehoboth Community Group from our four-day intensive programme, the Media Day was organised by Women's Action for Development (WAD). Fourteen members of different Namibian press and broadcast corporations spent the night at NaDEET Centre to learn more about the programme and the NamibRand Nature Reserve.

Environmental literacy

NaDEET has produced several exciting new publications, intended to spread environmental awareness and literacy to a broad Namibian audience. *It's Time to Solar Cook* is an informative cookbook written in both English and Afrikaans. It features delectable recipes (from stewed meat to pot bread), all of which can be prepared in a parabolic solar cooker or solar oven. The book also includes details about the benefits of solar cooking, as well as details about purchasing solar cooking technology.

It's Time to Identify is a guide to some of the plants and animals found in the Namib Desert. Compiled over many months by Viktoria Keding, Sam Ehrenbold and many others, this informative booklet will be used at NaDEET Centre to help identify dune life and to learn more about desert adaptations. Every programme participant at NaDEET will receive his or her own copy of *It's Time to Identify*. To promote national biodiversity efforts, we are printing 10,000 copies and are also distributing copies to other environmental education programmes throughout Namibia. It is funded by the Country Pilot Partnership for Integrated Sustainable Land Management.

Nature conservation students

NaDEET recently welcomed Daniel Shagama, fourth-year Nature Conservation In-Service Training Student from the Polytechnic of Namibia. Daniel will be at NaDEET for four months and, aside from assisting at the Centre, he will be expanding and continuing the recycled firebrick research of our last in-service training student, Ruusa Gottlieb. Ultimately, the results will be featured in our upcoming publication: *It's Time to be Efficient*—a guidebook to sustainable living

Elissa Brown

Photo: NEWS

Another enjoyable NEWS-NaDEET weekend at NamibRand, May 2010.

On behalf of NEWS (the Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society, I would like to thank NamibRand Nature Reserve for making a vehicle and Reserve staff available during our annual outing to NaDEET over the first weekend in May 2010. We again had an extraordinary good time, with Viktoria and Andreas and the NaDEET team being great hosts and experienced guides, with Mike's presentation on interesting facts and recent information on NRNR and with the friendly student guide and driver Preston for part of the NEWS group during our excursion on Monday. Your support with that is much appreciated. Staying at NaDEET was once again a valuable learning experience for young and old on sustainable living. We are very grateful for this opportunity offered to us and we are looking forward to our next trip to magnificent NRNR.

Manuela Schmidt

Exclusive new campsite at the Family Hideout

In line with the NamibRand Family Hideout's mission to offer affordable entry to the NamibRand Nature Reserve, it had been contemplated for a number of years to establish a low impact exclusive campsite adjacent to the actual Hideout. A formal submission was made to the Board in 2009 and approval granted for two sites with a maximum of 8 pax each.

However, true to the Hideout's motto of ***...only you and the desert*** we decided to build only one site for now—and a good kilometer

(Continued on p8)

Photo: Family Hideout

The attractive new campsite at the Family Hideout nestles under a huge camelthorn tree.

Photo: Family Hideout

The campsite lies at the foot of a dune belt and has the first dune right in its backyard.

(Continued from p7)

away from the main house—"en suite" with an ablution block built of wood and canvas on stilts—like so many other NamibRand structures. Should we ever decide to build the second site, it would be well distanced from this present site to ensure that we uphold this motto.

The campsite lies at the foot of a dune belt and has the first dune right in its backyard—ideal for kiddies' sandpit and sundowner vantage point alike. The elevated view from the dune crest—over the Nubib and Zaris mountains and the southern expanse past Aandstêr—can match any of the many spectacular sceneries that makes NamibRand so dear to the visitors. There is an ancient camelthorn tree for shade, supplemented by a "latte" lean-to (afdak) over the wash-up area and a gazebo that can be shifted as the sun moves. Hot water is at this stage provided by a "donkey" fired by Bushblocks from the Cheetah Conservation Fund.

A stone table and braai-area and a tap complete the "luxuries". The whole site is enclosed with a rope-fence, hopefully to keep the gemsbok at bay.

The site also has its own little waterhole to attract some wildlife, especially birds, as there is a huge Sociable Weavers' nest in another old camelthorn not far off.

For activities the adjacent dunes invite exploration and the official dune sliding area is also not far off. Guests are also permitted on the same circular self-drive route as the Hideout guests. Our man on the ground, Ricardo Tjiho, is ably assisting guests in firing the donkey, and generally attending to their needs, while making sure that they stick to the rules.

The fact that there is only one site has already been praised as unique and is seemingly viewed as an attraction, judging by the level of enquiries received. This combination of solitude with care—this guarded freedom—will no doubt be as much a success at the campsite as it has been at the Hideout itself.

Andreas Brückner

Hummeldumm

'Stupid like a bumble-bee' or 'Daft as a brush'

We do not know how clever or stupid bumble-bees actually are, but "Hummeldumm" is the title of a humorous fiction novel written by Tommy Jaud, which has been leading German bestseller lists since its publication in February this year. Directly translated, "Hummeldumm" means "stupid like a bumble-bee" or, in more proper English, "daft as a brush". In his latest book, Tommy Jaud, who has already written several German bestsellers, takes his readers to Namibia and to NamibRand Nature Reserve.

Photo: Tok Tokkie Trails

"Beach without sea" - endless dunes on the Tok Tokkie Trails.

Matze, the hero of the story is rather unwittingly booked onto a group lodge tour through Namibia by his girl-friend. It turns out that his fellow travellers are a rare bunch of quite eccentric tourists with all sorts of curious behaviours that make travelling with them an exceptional affair. But this is not Matze's only problem. He just cannot sit back and relax, because he forgot to do a very important bank transaction before leaving Germany. Putting this right proves to be difficult. And there is the snag that his girl-friend must not know about his problem, which brings him into lots of awkward situations.

In chapter 19 the group embarks on the Tok Tokkie Trail at NamibRand Nature Reserve. "Beach without sea!" (see p133) – this is what crosses Matze's mind when the group's tour bus approaches the huge private nature reserve. At that time Matze has a short period of relief when he thinks that his problems are solved. During this brief interlude of relaxation he has some time to enjoy Namibia's natural beauties: "Do you know what I like particularly about this desert?" he asks his girl-friend, "That you can see so far" (see p133). After arrival at the first Tok Tokkie Trails camp, a timid member of the nightmare travel group asks Bahee, their tour guide: "But... we do have tents, right?" – "Of course you have a tent! A tent of stars!" (see p135) is the guide's reply. Although the night brings Matze new trouble and worries with his girl-friend, Matze is overwhelmed when he carefully opens his eyes in the morning: "I had to pause for a moment as the landscape that built up in front of me in the warm light of the morning sun was overwhelming" (see p161). He goes on describing that despite the chill of the desert morning it was a very special moment to awaken in the desert and to hear nothing but silence (see p161). A member of the terror travel group manages to rip Matze abruptly out of his dreamful venerations by cutting the peace with a fusillade of unmistakable Austrian dialect coffee instructions.

Not all of this is fiction. Tommy Jaud actually travelled through Namibia on a guided group lodge tour and he also did the Tok Tokkie Trail. This tour probably inspired him for this novel. From reliable sources, however, we know that, contrary to Matze, he fully enjoyed his tour through Namibia and that his fellow travellers were as normal as you and I. What we do not know, however, is how "Hummeldumm" came to be the title of his book. Apologies to the bumble-bees.

"Hummeldumm" was published by Scherz Verlag
www.fischerverlage.de/buch/9783502110378

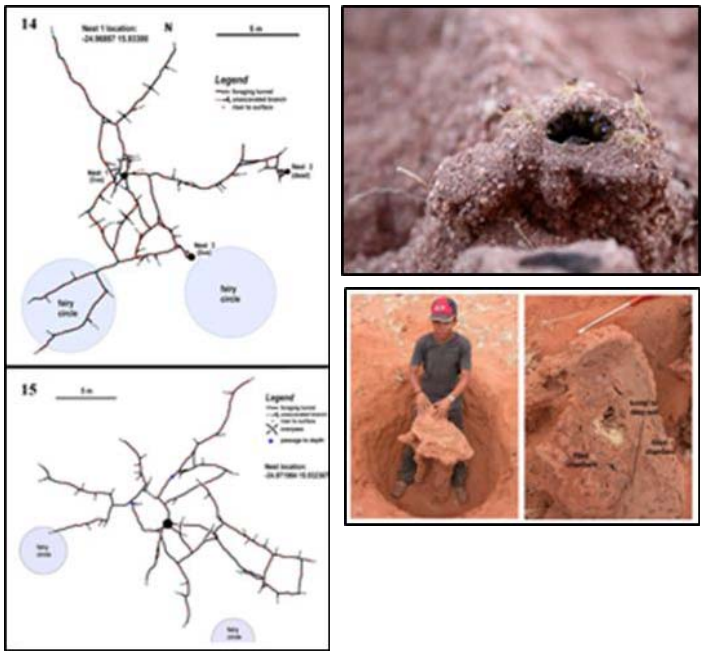
Barbara Wayrauch

Ed: There's a lovely article about Tok Tokkie Trails in the new Travel News Namibia (August/ September issue). The cover picture of the magazine was also taken on the Tok Tokkie Trail.

The foraging tunnel system
of the Namibian Desert termite,
Baucaliotermes hainesi

Research on the Namibian Desert termite in NamibRand by Dr Walter R. Tschinkel, Department of Biological Science, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL 32303 has recently been published. The full paper is available online (see below). The abstract and further information are provided below.

Abstract: The harvester termite, *Baucaliotermes hainesi* (Fuller) (Termitidae: Nasutitermitinae), is an endemic in southern Namibia, where it collects and eats dry grass. At the eastern, landward edge of the Namib Desert, the nests of these termites are sometimes visible above ground surface, and extend at least 60 cm below ground. The termites gain access to foraging areas through underground foraging tunnels that emanate from the nest. The looseness of the desert sand, combined with the hardness of the cemented sand tunnels allowed the use of a gasoline powered blower and soft brushes to expose tunnels lying 5 to 15 cm below the surface. The tunnels form a complex system that radiates at least 10 to 15 m from the nest with cross connections between major tunnels. At 50 to 75 cm intervals, the tunnels are connected to the surface by vertical risers that can be opened to gain foraging access to the surrounding area. Foraging termites rarely need to travel more than a meter on the ground surface. The tunnels swoop up and down forming high points at riser locations, and they have a complex architecture. In the center runs a smooth, raised walkway along which termites travel, and along the sides lie pockets that act as depots where foragers deposit grass pieces harvested from the surface. Presumably, these pieces are transported to the nest by a second group of termites. There are also several structures that seem to act as vertical high-ways to greater depths, possibly even to moist soil. A census of a single nest revealed about 45,000 termites, of which 71% were workers, 9% soldiers and 6% neotenic supplementary reproductives. The nest consisted of a hard outer "carapace" of cemented sand, with a central living space of smooth, sweeping arches and surfaces. A second species of termite, *Promirotermes* sp. nested in the outer carapace.



Illustrations and photos: Walter Tschinkel

Some of the illustrations from the above paper, showing (left) the relationship between termite nests and fairy circles (blue circles); and (right) termite nest structures.

Keywords: foraging, harvester termite, nest construction, architecture, construction
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Received: 14 February 2008 | **Accepted:** 1 January 2009 | **Published:** 14 June 2010

ISSN: 1536-2442 | Volume 10, Number 65

Reference: Tschinkel WR. 2010. The foraging tunnel system of the Namibian Desert termite, *Baucaliotermes hainesi*. *Journal of Insect Science* 10:65

Fairy circles at Jagkop, NamibRand
Nature Reserve – a note for the record

Aerial photographic studies of Jagkop in the NamibRand Nature Reserve, suggested that the distribution of pockmarks (depressions filled with eolian sand; Figure 1, below) on the calcrete substrate of the Sossus Sand Formation (SSF) superficially imitates that of the fairy circles (fc's) on the latter, suggesting a non-biological origin for fc's. On 16 July 2010 we paid a brief visit to this site to investigate this likelihood.

Photo: Syrand de Waal

Sand-filled depression (in foreground) on calcrete-scree substrate.

We found evidence to support the following statements: (**1**) Fc's are not unique to the SSF. They are also developed on sand and gravel in a Quaternary streambed incising the calcrete. (**2**) Fc's are present on the calcrete where it is nearly devoid of sand cover. In several instances, we observed fc's developed almost directly on bedrock. (**3**) Substrate type and surface slope seem to have little effect on the size and shape of the fc's. No obvious relation between fc size and thickness of the sand layer is evident. (**4**) Tall grass growth on the edges of fc's probably has little significance in any argument. Similar growths are developed along the vehicle tracks leading to, and at, Jagkop. We also concur with earlier workers that (**5**) Fc's are short-lived. During our brief visit we observed a wide range of vegetation states on fc's. These include (a) totally bare circles (most common), (b) bare circles with a few, apparently randomly, placed grass tufts, (c) circles rimmed on the outer edges by concentric rings of dead grass tufts, (d) partly, though homogeneously, grass-covered circles, and (e) fully overgrown circles (only the depressions remain). These observations

(Continued on p10)

Photo: Syrand de Waal

Fairy circles on sloping ground on the south-eastern corner of Jagkop. Note the partial grass tuft ring around the remains of a decaying Euphorbia spinosa *(arrow). Does this constitute a 'birth'?*

(Continued from p9)

tally with the detail observable on high resolution on aerial images. (**6**) Fc's are present on sloping land surfaces with little deviation from the circular pattern (Figure 2, left).

Follow-up statistical studies (not detailed here) on the distribution patterns of fc's at Jagkop, the pockmarks in the calcrete substrate of the SSF, doline formation in the Weissrand calcrete near Mariental, and termite mounds in northern Namibia, combined with our observations on different aspects of the fc's at Jagkop, led us to the following tentative conclusions: (**1**) In terms of size, shape and distribution, fc's are substrate invariant, therefore exogenic, and most likely biogenic. (**2**) Fc's are not caused by termite activity – we need another organism. (**3**) The pockmarking of calcrete surface, which may reflect incipient doline formation, is unrelated to the development of fc's. (**4**) Fc's appear to be relatively short-lived. Previous workers suggested lifespans of about ca. 17 years, which support biogenic activity. (**5**) Fc's with diameters less than 3 m are markedly absent and may suggest the rate of seasonal expansion of whatever organism is responsible (photo on previous page).

We wish to thank Albi Brückner, Nils Odendaal and Mandy Brückner for the opportunity to visit Jagkop, and Quintin Hartung who guided us there. Ann Scott kindly agreed to publish this note in the *Barking Gecko*.

Sybrand, Ben and Cobus de Waal (heimat@dewaals.com)

More about fairy circles and ants

Kelly Vliege of the Zoology Department (supervisor Mike Picker) has begun the analysis of her ant sampling on the NamibRand fairy circles. In April 2010 she quantified ant activity in the centre and edge of fairy circles, and compared this with ant densities in the matrix. Ants were sampled using non-baited pitfall traps, with four pitfalls at each over a period of 10 days. Eleven species of ant were collected, including three species of *Camponotus*, one *Tetramorium* species, three *Monomorium* species, one species of *Pheidole*, a single *Ocymyrmex* species and *Anoplolepis steingroeveri*. All of these ant species, excepting *A. steingroeveri* (the Pugnacious ant) occurred in equal (and low) numbers in the matrix and on the circles, although two species had higher numbers on circle edges and circles centres. However, these ants had very low abundances. The hypothesis that fairy circles are very large ant nests, whose activities inhibit grass recruitment on circles, was supported by the results. The largest and most conspicuous ant was the Pugnacious ant. Each circle collected 193.05 Pugnacious ants from its surface, and 276.63 from pitfalls placed amongst the grasses on its edge (in total ca. 450 Pugnacious ants from fairy circles), compared to only 14.56 Pugnacious ants collected from pitfalls in the matrix. This suggests that the fairy circles are sites of nests of the Pugnacious ant.

A single collection of Pugnacious ants from a large fairy circle, using sugar-water baited pitfall traps, produced 7 405 large ants – which would certainly have been derived from a very large colony of these ants situated on a fairy circle. The majority of researchers working on fairy circles have not noticed any ant activity. Kelley's findings show that not only are ants present in very large numbers, but they appear to be centred on fairy circles. This spatial congruence shows a tight association between fairy circles and nests of the Pugnacious ant. This is an arid-adapted species, whose workers are known to swell up with stored water (the 'repletes'). They are thus able to spend considerable time deep underground in the nest, emerging occasionally but being most active after the brief summer rains. Even in April, at the time of the visit, Pugnacious ants foraged only in the cool early hours of the morning and then in the later afternoon. Our traps that were left out from 15h00-10h00 collected large number of ants, which would not have been evident later on in the summer and winter, when the colony would remain largely underground. This might explain why other workers had not observed the Pugnacious ant on circles. Kelley is currently analysing vegetation patterns associated with the circles, and aggressive interactions that she observed and quantified between ant colonies on individual circles.

Photo: Vere Ross-Gillespie

Photo: Vere Ross-Gillespie

Above: Fairy circle pockmarked with the large entrance holes of a colony of Pugnacious ant. Pitfall traps placed on this circle for two days trapped ca. 7 500 Pugnacious ants. Below: Pitfall trap used to quantify ants on fairy circles. Large numbers of the Pugnacious ant were collected from the surface and edges of circles, but not from the matrix.

Mike Picker

Painting: Hermann Cloete

Namib Dunes.

New cheetahs released into the Reserve

In April 2010, a release boma for three new three cheetahs was built within two weeks' time, at the foot of the Aandstêr Mountain range. The enclosure was nearly 6ha in size and provided the new home for three young cheetahs for the next five weeks. The twenty-four month old cheetahs were raised at N/a'an ku sê Wildlife Sanctuary after they had lost their mothers at the age of six months. Two brothers, and one female not related to these two males, were chosen to come to NRNR. These cheetahs were already grouped (bonded) at the Wildlife Sanctuary, so mating in the coming year would be possible.

On 8 May the three new inhabitants of NRNR, N029, N030 and N031, were driven from Windhoek and released into the enclosure on the early morning of 9 May. They stayed in this enclosure to get used to the unknown environment, seeing the game and the movement towards the waterholes. They were fed twice a week with a whole springbok, freshly supplied by NRNR. On 3 June all three were collared. The darting was done by Dr Rudie van Vuuren, with the assistance of Marlice van Vuuren, Florian Weise, Lars Baum and Christine Thiel. A French film crew was present at the time, documenting the work. Darting went very smoothly and all three were fitted with collars, one GPS-satellite and two VHF-radio ones. The collars were fitted loosely enough to prevent the animals from future suffocation as these cheetahs are still young and still growing. Due to this loose fitting one male cheetah, N031, unfortunately managed to get partly out of his collar so that it got stuck in his mouth. Luckily this happened in the enclosure so that we noticed and could help him by darting him again and removing the collar. He came out of this procedure without any harm. We hoped the two male cheetahs would stick together for a little while, so that monitoring of N031 would be still possible by following N030. N030 is equipped with a GPS-collar which allows us to follow his movements in detail. On 11 June the three cheetahs were finally released into NRNR by Cila Venter, Lars Baum and Christine Thiel. All three cheetahs left the safe enclosure together that day, after being baited with a springbok just outside the gate.

The first days of their newly gained freedom all three cheetahs stayed close to the enclosure and to Aandstêr Mountain. On the fifth day they split into two groups; the female stayed at Aandstêr climbing the rocks, while the males went on a long excursion to explore their new neighbourhood. After walking all the way to the borders of Farm Kanaan, crossing the dunes and mountains of Namib Naukluft National Park, we lost their tracks and received downloads only from N030's GPS collar. He decided to come back north. The males hopefully stayed together in the National Park for almost four weeks before entering NamibRand again. Here, we were able to get a visual of the male N030, which confirmed that he is still in good condition. Within these first five weeks of freedom the male had gained weight and size and the shape of the belly proved that he had fed recently. The second male, N031, was not walking with him. We checked for tracks, but so far there is no sign of him. We hope they will meet up again soon.

Photo: N/a'an ku sê

Getting the three cheetahs used to the taste of springbok.

Photo: N/a'an ku sê

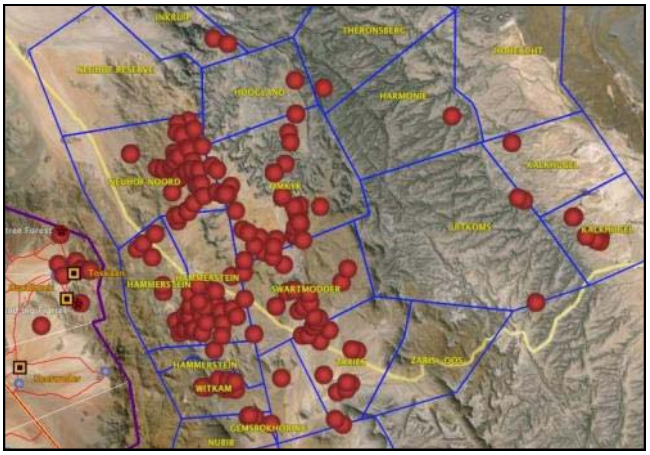
The first of three cheetahs runs into the temporary camp, and home for the next five weeks.

Meanwhile the female explored the dunes around Satanskop, returned to Aandstêr Mountain for two weeks, where she did a lot of climbing again. She then headed north, crossing all the Reserve's dunes at Chateau and Valley of Tears before entering the area of Toekoms and Verweg at the end of July. She was in good condition and had fed recently, too.

N/a'an ku sê hopes that these three cheetahs will become permanent residents of NRNR and contribute to its carnivore population, and that we will hopefully see descendants of this release in the near future.

Christine Thiel & Lars Baum

Ed: N/a'an ku sê has been experimenting with a series of ten camera traps ('stealth cameras') in the south of the Reserve. The leopard below, taken at the Stone Circles on 18 September 2010, provides a taste of the spectacular results that are possible (also see p15 for more camera trap pictures from NamibRand's five other camera traps).



Map: Rob Thomson

GPS positions recorded for the female cheetah released in January 2009—mostly east of NamibRand.

CCF female cheetah update

As regular readers may recall, the Cheetah Conservation Fund released a wild cheetah along with her cubs into the NamibRand Nature Reserve back in January 2009. Since that time we have closely monitored her movements using a satellite collar produced by the New Zealand based company, Sirtrack.

The weekly movements that we continue to receive, give us a fascinating insight into female cheetah movements. In April 2009 she left the reserve, and aside from a short period in January this year, has been living successfully on land to the East of NamibRand ever since. It is clear that she maintains a large range, often crossing through multiple farms in the course of a few days.

Although visual sightings are few and far between, we have had confirmation that she has again had a litter of cubs, although without additional information we cannot be certain of their current status.

The map above shows how far she has ranged, and indeed, continues to range. Our lady is without doubt a very active cat and, unlike the five males that were released at the same time, and who remained firmly inside the park boundaries throughout the time we monitored them, she clearly prefers more mountainous terrain.

Several weeks ago our 'lady' made an unexpected expedition far to the east, crossing the ridge-line that runs through Theronsberg and Harmonie, then heading down towards the C19 on Kalkhugel. At this point she was actually closer to Maltahöhe than Keerweder and we did wonder if she was going to go all the way! Whatever had driven her in that direction however, drove her no further, and after a day or so she returned to the west, roughly following the track of the C19 until she was back on more familiar ground.

These days she spends much of her time on Neuhof Noord, where presumably she has found a good source of the smaller species of wild game that lone cheetahs generally prefer.

Rob Thomson

Ed: Fans of the five males cheetahs (affectionately known as 'the boys') will be interested to know that their collars (VHF and one satellite collar) all stopped transmitting almost simultaneously early June 2010, at a time when they appear to have moved out of the Reserve. Since then there have been no confirmed signals or sightings of this now elusive group of cats.

Mountain zebra and plains zebra in NamibRand

Visitors to NamibRand who watch zebras drinking at the Kwessiegat waterhole may sometimes be surprised to see a mountain zebra stallion in close association with a breeding group of plains zebra. In fact the mountain zebra is a famous character named Stompy. Most mountain zebra spend the daytime resting on remote hills and Stompy is the only one to spend most of his time on the plains, in the company of his adopted social group.

Recent genetic research has shown that mountain zebra (*Equus zebra hartmannae*) and plains zebra (*Equus quagga*) are only distantly related, so why do such associations occur and what are the implications for species conservation if interbreeding occurs? Well, we simply do not know at present but current research in NamibRand and elsewhere is seeking answers. A similar case of a mountain zebra stallion attached to a breeding group of plains zebra has been seen in Gondwana Cañon Park and hybrids have been reported in Etosha NP, so events in NamibRand are not exceptional. The reason for the association may lie in how mountain zebras seek mates after they leave their birth groups at about two years of age and answers may come by following individuals and investigating their mate choice decisions. The question about species conservation is equally compelling. If mountain zebra and plains zebra are separate species, how have they maintained this separation if such close associations occur within breeding units? And does the prospect of interbreeding threaten the integrity of one or both species? This may not be a problem for the abundant plains zebra but it is for mountain zebras which are classified as Vulnerable in the latest IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. If these matters involved only natural processes then the best thing to do is probably to leave well alone. But if human intervention has increased the

(Continued on p13)

Photo: Maria Wilén

The mountain zebra, Stompy (right) appears to be subordinate to the plains zebra stallion (left); photographed at Kwessiegat, NamibRand in February 2010. Note the distinctive 'grid-iron' pattern above the tail of the mountain zebra (right).

(Continued from p12)

chance of interbreeding and the production of hybrids then we need to think more carefully.

As their names suggest, mountain zebra and plains zebra tend to live in different habitats. But there is overlap, for example in the dry season when mountain zebra venture out on the plains as the more limited food resources of the hills become depleted. There is also human intervention that increases the chance of them coming into contact, in particular the construction of fences that prevent the natural movements keeping the species, apart and the attraction of artificial water sources that sometimes draws these water dependent species together. And mountain zebra and plains zebra are frequently reintroduced into relatively small conservation areas where they are forced together.

Interbreeding between species has been much studied by evolutionary biologists because it is relevant to the fundamental processes of speciation. It can result in limited hybrid zones between species that do not invade the two main species populations. Indeed hybrids may be infertile as in the case of mules and so have little impact on the genetics of the two parent species. But when hybrids interbreed with parent populations the genes of each species may pass into the other (a process called introgression) and their integrity is lost. Such events may eventually produce what are known as hybrid swarms and effectively one of both species may thus be lost.

Hybridization is known to occur between many species of equid and there is a relevant case in Kenya where the threatened Grevy's zebra hybridizes with plains zebra. In this case, behavioural and genetic studies have shown that male Grevy's zebra are dominant over male plains zebra so that most mating is between male Grevy's and female plains zebras. Thus Grevy's genes pass into the plains population but not in the opposite direction. This finding gives encouragement to conservationists because plains zebra in Kenya are not threatened and the effect on their large population will be limited.

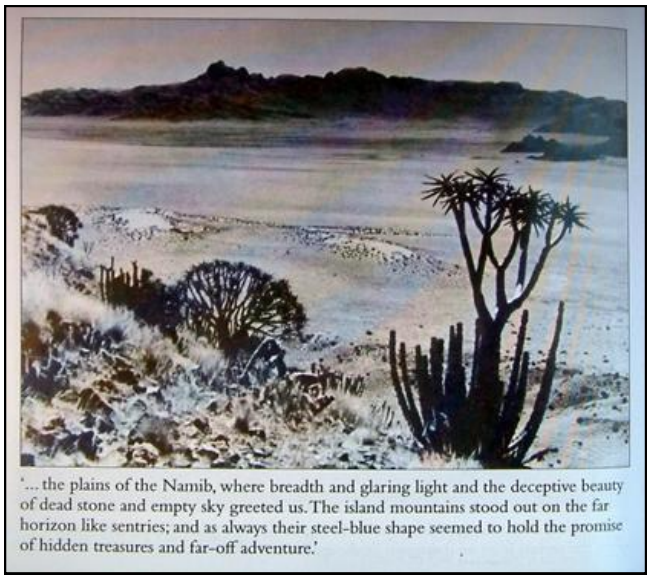
But the conservation implications of the behavioural association between plains zebra and mountain zebra in Namibia are unknown. Hybrids have been reported in places such as Etosha NP but there has been no research to test whether mountain zebra populations are threatened by introgression or to design practical ways to prevent it. Work in NamibRand and Gondwana Cañon Park is a starting point in trying to understand the behavioural mechanisms that are operating.

Stompy is thus an important animal and everybody can help by looking out for him and photographing him and the plains zebra he associates with. If you get this opportunity, try to photograph any offspring in the group so that we can check for hybridization. We think that Stompy is subordinate to the plains zebra herd stallion in the group but there is still a chance of successful mating. Please send your photos and observations to me (l.m.gosling@ncl.ac.uk).

Morris Gosling

Contact details: Morris Gosling, Emeritus Professor, NIReS, University of Newcastle, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 7RU, UK and Mountain Zebra Project, Namibia Nature Foundation, PO Box 245, Windhoek, Namibia.

NamibRand and 'The Sheltering Desert'



'... the plains of the Namib, where breadth and glaring light and the deceptive beauty of dead stone and empty sky greeted us. The island mountains stood out on the far horizon like sentries; and as always their steel-blue shape seemed to hold the promise of hidden treasures and far-off adventure.'

Photo and caption: 'The Sheltering Desert'

We took a closer look at the above photograph in "The Sheltering Desert" (by Henno Martin) and found it to be a view of Toskaan on NamibRand, taken from Jagkop! In the Epilogue, Martin mentions, "... shortly before the end of the war we were taken into government service as geologists, and we went out surveying for suitable well-drilling sites in areas which had been previously uninhabitable. The knowledge and experience we had gained in the desert helped us to provide many a farm with a better water supply and to turn barren spaces into arable land".

Ann & Mike Scott

Albi Brückner comments: What is new to me is Martin's statement that the government started looking for water in the area already before the end of the second world war. I was always under the impression the land in question was state land until after the war, when the government came under pressure to fulfil their undertaking to provide ex-soldiers, who had fought against Germany and Italy in North Africa, with farmland for them to settle on and start farming.

Photographic artwork: Miles Paul

A striking montage of animals photographed over the last years.

Interesting sightings and photo gallery

Thank you to our readers for these interesting contributions—we invite your comments and assistance with species identifications!

*'My favourite plant in the dune' (*Limeum fenestratum*); the species name refers to the transparent 'windows' in the wings of the fruit.*

Maria Wilén

Twelve Ludwig's Bustards were counted at the Keerweder waterhole on 28 August 2010; half of these were juvenile birds, which confirms that NamibRand is an important breeding habitat for this now threatened species.

Ann Scott

What is it? This interesting item (vegetable or animal?) was found in the Duwiseb River bed on Excelsior, one of NamibRand's neighbours. Is it a dried out fungus?

Sean Gibson

(Above & below): This unusual cricket was found on the foothills of the Losberg by the NaDEET game count team in June 2010.

Elissa Brown

Found on the slipface of a dune on Excelsior; is it the larva of a (tenebrid) beetle?

Sean Gibson

'Measurements taken by a camel' (cigarette): (above) antlion larva (lacewing); (below): what is it?

John de Almeida

Black mamba at Toskaan on 25 September 2009.

Quintin Hartung

Horned adder, photographed at the new Jagkop waterhole on 21 July 2010.

Quintin Hartung

Thick-toed gecko (Turner's?) with a solifuge.

Maria Wilén

(Koch's?) barking gecko.

John de Almeida

Two Lappet-faced Vultures, captured with a 'stealth' camera at Vista waterhole on 7 September 2010; Peter Bridgeford reports that the tagged bird (if the number is V820), was ringed on NRNR, near the park boundary opposite Bushman Hill, on 16 October 2007 by Marc Dürr, Lothar Menge & himself.

Christine Thiel & Lars Baum

African Openbill at Wolwedans

One of the Wolwedans guides collected a specimen of an African Openbill (= Open-bill Stork) that was first recorded at the waterhole at Wolwedans in January 2010 and died there a few days later (see photograph above - the head has been scavenged). The species is normally restricted to the extreme north-eastern part of South Africa and northwards into Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe and beyond.

In Birds and People #26 - June 2010 (the newsletter of BirdLife Botswana - www.= birdlifebotswana.org.bw) Pete Hancock mentions that breeding success of this species was extremely high for 2009 and, coupled with high water levels, the young birds were left with no choice but to disperse all over southern Africa – even as far as the Cape Peninsula! The photo of the live bird (left) is reproduced from the above newsletter. There may well be an influx of Openbills back into the floodplain areas in south-central Africa as floodwaters recede and expose an abundance of snails – please send in any observations in this regard to Pete at birdlifemaun@gmail.com.

Ann Scott

An unusual group of four klipspringer adults at Draaihoek (two males and two females), photographed by Aaron Price in November 2009 and spotted again on 23 July 2010.

Aaron Price & Ann Scott

Image of klipspringer hoof scratches on the black limestone rocks on the ridge west of Sossusvlei Desert Lodge. I noticed these last year adjacent to klipspringer fecal deposits and scent marks.

Miles Paul (Astronomer)

Some of the photographs captured by one of our Buckeye camera traps over the past months: (above) two oryx at Moringa waterhole; (below) oryx appear to be fascinated by the cameras, and periodically approach them to rub against the structure, or to lick it or butt it. This has necessitated the construction of a robust encasing to protect the cameras and prevent movement.

More images from our Buckeye camera traps (top to bottom):
- Hartmann's mountain zebra at Moringa
- Leopard at Kuduwater
- Leopard at Draaihoek
- Brown hyaena at Hyaena waterhole
- Aardwolf at Moringa
(See p16 for further sightings)

Mike & Ann Scott & Quintin Hartung

More interesting sightings

Some of our recent sightings (mostly of larger species; in alphabetical order) include:

26/7/10: **Aardvark** spoor east of Kuduwater (N/a'an ku sê)
4/6/10: **Aardwolf** at Aandster, Gorrassis and Dina, also on 9/6/10, 13/6/10, 18/6/10, 30/6/10, 16/7/10, 17/7/10, 5/8/10, 24/8/10, 27/8/10, 31/8/10, 21/9/10, 26/9/10, 27/9/10 (N/a'an ku sê)
22/8/10: **Aardwolf** on Dina (Peter Woolfe)
15/8/10: **African wildcat** on Dina (Peter Woolfe)
17/9/10: **African wildcat** at Die Duine (N/a'an ku sê)
21/9/10: **African wildcat** at Ysterwielnek (N/a'an ku sê)
25/9/10: **African wildcat** at Porcupine waterhole (Quintin Hartung)
26/8/10: **African wildcat** at Dina fence (N/a'an ku sê)
22/8/10: Seventeen **bat-eared foxes** in the Bushmankoppies area; these foxes are seen frequently at present (Ann & Mike Scott)
3/9/10: **Black Harrier** at Aandstêr (Allen Walkden-Davis & Dr Sinclair)
25/9/10: **Black-headed Heron** at Keerweder (this bird has been in the area for the past few months, and sometimes perches on a quiver tree in the garden) (Ann & Mike Scott)
1/7/10: Live **brown hyaena** at Gorrasis at 09h00 (N/a'an ku sê)
11/6/10: **Dormouse** near Aandstêr cheetah camp (N/a'an ku sê)
22/7/10: Two **klipspringer** at Gorrasis (N/a'an ku sê)
21/6/10: Two **Lappet-faced Vultures** on a **nest** on Chateau Plains (Albi Brückner); subsequently seen on 25/6/10 (Mike & Ann Scott) and 19/8/10 (Quintin Hartung); but when the nest was checked again on 26/9/10, all it contained was an abandoned egg (Peter Bridgeford)
4/7/10: Nine **Lappet-faced Vultures** on a mountain zebra carcass at Geluk, one vulture had a yellow/orange tag (Dennis Hesemans)
18/7/10: Twenty **Lappet-faced Vultures** on an oryx carcass at Aandstêr (N/a'an ku sê)
31/7/10: Twelve **Lappet-faced Vultures** on Dina (Peter Woolfe)
3/7/10: **Leopard** killed a springbok outside Draaihoek house the previous night (Jürgen Klein)
3/7/10: Live **leopard** at Toskaan at 13h00 (N/a'an ku sê)
20/7/10: Adult **leopard** at Moringa (Quintin Hartung)
27/6/10: Two **Ludwig's Bustards** and a **juvenile** at Keerweder waterhole—our first confirmed breeding record for this species on the Reserve (see also p14; Ann & Mike Scott)
30/7/10: **Namaqua Sandgrouse chick** near Sandgrouse waterhole (Mike Scott)
19/8/10: Herd of 200 **oryx** at Straussenwasser (Albi Brückner)
25/9/10: Two **Pied Crows** at Keerweder (Ann Scott)
6/9/10: **Red-necked Falcon** at Gorrasis (N/a'an ku sê)
27/9/10: **Red-necked Falcon** (on nest) north of Kwessiegat homestead (Morris Gosling, Ann Scott & Quintin Hartung)
21/7/10: Live **spotted hyaena** at Granite water (N/a'an ku sê)

Photo: John de Almeida

Brushing Bushmankoppies—bird's-eye view from a balloon.

Thank you

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this issue of The Barking Gecko: Lars Baum, Elissa Brown, Andreas Brückner, Sybrand, Ben and Cobus de Waal, Morris Gosling, Quintin Hartung, Nils Odendaal, Mike Picker, Manuela Schmidt, Mike Scott, Christine Thiel, Rob Thomson and Barbara Wayrauch; and to all those who have submitted interesting sightings and photographs. A special thank you to Nils Odendaal and Danica Shaw for their assistance with the production of this edition.

The Barking Gecko is your newsletter, and your contributions in terms of news and views, short reports, comic relief, artwork and photographs are much appreciated!

Newsletter of the

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