



THE BARKING GECKO

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



April 2015

Volume 16 N° 1



Photo: Porcupine Camera Trap

Top: Giraffe captured on a camera trap at the Porcupine waterhole on Draaihoek.

2015...

I am once again pleased to edit our first Barking Gecko edition for the year. Seems like yesterday when we were still celebrating the new year and now we are almost halfway through it.

There has also been quite a few positive developments on the Reserve and in the landscape. Amongst these a very special achievement from Wolwedans on obtaining five flowers from the Eco Awards. We would hereby like to extend our sincerest congratulations to Wolwedans and the team for their outstanding work.

Our local pre-school Little Bugs, now also have a new primary addition to the school (Grade 1). This is a very exciting time for Little Bugs. More can be read on page 6.

We are now already approaching our winter season and are all getting ready for a cold and dry Namib.

On a warmer note I would like to thank everyone for sharing all their good news, developments and interesting pictures with us. Your contributions are always highly valued and appreciated.

Warm wishes to all from beautiful NamibRand.

Vanessa Hartung

In this issue:

Editorial.....	1
Wardens Report.....	1-3
April Kgotla	3
News from the South.....	3-4
Weather Report.....	4
News @ NaDEET.....	5
Tok Tokkie Trails Update.....	5
Little Bugs News.....	6
Interesting Pictures.....	7

Wardens Report

This year started rather disappointing as far as rainfall received goes. We were all hoping for a good rainfall season, but that was not to be and are now moving into the winter and parts of the Reserve is still very dry and barren. The rainfall has been very isolated and sporadic. Please see rainfall figures on Page 4:

We have also started to invest in and install automated rain gauges at various remote locations to save on driving expenses and get more accurate rainfall records.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)



Top: Promising weather conditions captured from Keerweder.

We started the year with a 12 hour waterhole count. We sat at various waterholes in the northern section of the Reserve. Unfortunately we did not see/count as many interesting species as we wanted to, with 2 spotted hyena seen at Porcupine waterhole being the highlight of the evening. We started the count at 6pm on the Monday afternoon and stopped counting at 6am the next morning.

In March we hosted a fire drill at Keerweder. The drill was enthusiastically attending by staff members from Namib Sky, Tok Tokkie Trails and Family Hideout. At the fire drill, I presented a theoretical power point presentation after which we all participated in a practical session. The fire drill gave us a good opportunity to reflect on our machinery, knowledge and skills. We also reported on recent fires on the Reserve, which included a fire on Springbokvlakte which was rained out soon after it started, a fire on Stellarine, and a fire on Die Duine, all in January, with the later having been the biggest of the three. The Die Duine fire spread through the Tok Tokkie house camp but likely was a fast spreading fire, and rushed through the house camp without causing too much damage to the infrastructure. The fire was monitored until it was rained out. The fire close to the Hideout House on Stellarine was put out by NaDEET and NRNR staff as it came quite close to the house.



Left: The practice session of the fire drill held at Keerweder.

The NamibRand Family hideout officially opened their new campsite in January. The campsite was built west of the old campsite and is furnished with a solar hot water geyser and solar panels for electric (fully shaded, IDA approved) light fixtures in the camp. The camp was beautifully built in a dune valley with an exquisite view of the open plains to the south. It is truly every luxury camper's dream.



Photos: Quintin Hartung

Top: The new Family Hideout campsite.

In February, scientists from around the world, who have an interest invested in solving the mystery behind the creation of the fairy circles, all come together on the Reserve to attend the world's first fairy circle symposium. The event, brilliantly organized and directed by our CEO, Nils Odendaal, was hosted by Wolwedans. On the first day of the two day symposium, the different scientists, gave presentations and talks of the respective theories and related experiments. The Wolwedans workshop where the presentations were hosted got quite heated as discussions wore on and emotions began to run high as each theory was thoroughly discussed and dissected. After the day's discussions and presentations, everyone was treated to a sundowner at the Wolwedans chateau viewpoint sundowner spot, after which we all sat down around one big table to have a delicious meal at the Wolwedans village, catered by Wolwedans. On the next day, we went out to the field to look at some of the experiments that some of the scientists were working on. Even though, none of the theories could be anonymously agreed upon, the symposium provided a platform for everyone involved to share their work done on this topic and to interact with other scientists in the field, and hopefully form more collaboration to uniformly try to solve the mystery.

In December 2014, we participated in a landscape-wide game count organized and ran by the NamPlace project. This game count served as a recce for the upcoming Greater-Sossus Namib Landscape game count scheduled for June this year.

The Reserve remains to be a fully pledged member of the GSNL, and even though the project funding is due to end in 2016, the landscape committee is busy sourcing private funding. For this reason, our CEO, Nils Odendaal, who also serves as the chairman of the landscape committee went to Washington DC in March to give a presentation at the Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty to try and get funding for the GSNL project to continue and become self-sustaining. The committee is also busy finalizing the sustainability and exit strategy for the project.

A terms of reference is being drawn up through the GSNL to handle certain environmental offences better in the future. These offences include illegal camping, off-road driving, etc.

In February we installed 6 x 200watt solar panels at Keerweder to get the SQFlex 1.2-3 pump off the Keerweder batteries,

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

which it was running on before, and running on its own solar system. The new system is working perfectly, and we are now saving a lot more diesel, as we do not need to run the Generator to charge the batteries as much as we used to.

I attended an ESRI accredited ArcGIS training course in Cape Town in March, during which I learned and developed valuable GIS mapping skills and knowledge and I will be able to use in my job as the Control Warden of the Reserve.

To end the report off, I would like to congratulate Wolwedans of being awarded five flowers by the Eco-awards. This is a remarkable achievement! Well done Wolwedans!

Quintin Hartung



April Kgotla



Photo: Quintin Hartung

Top: Everyone who attended the recently held Kgotla at Namib Sky, Little Bugs School.

We held our most recent Kgotla on the 2nd of April 2015. The Kgotla was kindly hosted by Namib Sky. This created a very good opportunity for everyone to see the Little Bugs school and all its developments.

The meeting was relatively well attended by NRNR, NaDEET, Namib Sky, Tok Tokkie Trails, Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, Wolwedans and Neuhof.

Matters discussed at the meeting included an update on predators, the birding big day, recent research and filming activities, rainfall monitoring, water installations, driving and vehicles, training and courses and recent updates from concessionaires.

There were a lot of reports of predator sightings all over the Reserve. Leopard, cheetah and hyena sightings have been reported by Wolwedans guides, and these predators have also been seen on camera traps more often now than before. This indicates a very healthy predator population on the Reserve.

There was no birding big day held this year as we have not yet

receive any significant rainfall for the season.

Research and filming activities continued and researchers and filming crews have been hosted on the Reserve in the past few months.

A brief update from the GSNL coordinators were given and more information was discussed at a GSNL meeting which was held on 11 April 2015.

Updates by concessionaires were given by all concessionaires present. Everything was reported to be going well and a promising high season which awaits all our tourism concessions.

After all items on the agenda was discussed, the meeting was closed and Quintin thanked Namib Sky and the team for hosting the meeting. Some delicious snacks were served after all formalities.

Everyone departed and we look forward to seeing every one again at our upcoming AGM and Game Count briefing on 29 & 30 May 2015.

Vanessa Hartung

News from the South

Greetings to all from the south of the Reserve. Already a quarter of the year gone we already put the clocks back for winter and the days are noticeably shorter. Where does the time go? Where ever it has gone it seems to have taken the rain with it!

Some optimists I have spoken to said the rain will come end of April. Whatever patches of veldt we have as a result of last seasons rain are fast disappearing as large numbers of game concentrate on these areas. Strangely there are still Gemsbok calves and Springbok lambs being born. As to be expected the situation is also putting pressure on certain waterholes and damage to feed pipes is a common occurrence. I suppose on the upside veldt fires have not been much of an issue this season.

Boulders guides have reported relatively frequent sightings of leopard and cheetah in the area and this has contributed to numerous vulture sightings of sometimes as many as 30 to 40 birds. Also significant is the visibly noticeable drop in the jackal population. There have been numerous incidents involving rabid jackals around homesteads and if one extrapolates this across the Reserve it would explain the drop in jackal sightings. Bat eared fox and aardwolf have also fallen victim to the disease and there have been two cases of humans being bitten by infected animals. These cases were attended to immediately and are now well under control.

The Aandstêr Suzuki Gypsy has also been fitted with railings and a cab, making it more versatile and solving the dust problem experienced with the original canvas top.

We have also now completed the task of removing the entire obsolete infrastructure in the south, and what a difference it

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

makes!

The reservoir and engine room at Grootpomp are now gone, as with that at Horseshoe and Straussenwasser. Thanks go to Cornelius and his team who really changed the perception of casual labor.

Excelsior now has a new manager whom I have briefly met on a couple of occasions. His name is Keith. Let me extend a warm welcome to him and wish him many happy years in the Namib. I am sure with time he will get to meet all of you.

Well until the next issue we wish you all a great second quarter and look forward to connecting at the upcoming AGM and Game count.

Cheers from the south!



Top: The Suzuki Gypsy with the newly fitted railings looking all geared up.



Top: The work done on Grootpomp.



Top: A few zebras were seen on Aandstêr.

Peter Woolfe

Weather Report!

Keerweder Climatology Summary

Month	Max Mean (°C)	Min Mean (°C)	Mean (°C)	Max >=32 °C	Max <=0 °C	High Temp Days (°C)	Low Temp Days (°C)
January	36	19.7	27.6	28	0	40.1	13.2
February	35.1	16.2	25.5	24	0	38.7	11.8
March	35.4	17.9	26.5	28	0	39	10.3
April	32.1	16	23.4	16	0	34.3	9.9

NRNR rainfall summary - 2015

Rain gauge	Jan	Feb	March	April	Total
Hyena waterhole	16.5	0	2	25	43.5
Sossusvlei Desert Lodge	13	0	14	13	40
Kwessiegat	20	0	0	18	38
Moringa	15	0	0	11	26
Bushman koppies	20	0	0	1	21
Porcupine	32	0	0	7	39
Keerweder	32.5	0	1.5	16	50
Boscia	20	0	3	4	27
Jagkop	18	0	0	18	36
Toekoms	17	8	8	24	57
Karl's dam	13	0	0	25	38
Wolwedans lodge	15	0	0	9	24
Chateau	6	0	0	12	18
Die Duine base	15	0	6	36.5	57.5
Family Hideout	3	0	0	16	19
Schafberg	17	0	0	30	47
Horseshoe waterhole	19	0	1	26	46
Tweepompe	22	0	20	4	46
Swartkoppies	43	0	1	10	54
Gorrasis	62	0	1	7	70
Straussenwasser	13	0	4	5	22
Satanskop	15	0	0	20	35
Aandster	29	0	17	5	51
Prosopis	18	0	10	4	32
Saffier house	17	0	5	2	24
Springbokvlakte house	15	0	5	4	24
Park border - Springbokvlakte	10	0	8	0	18
Average:					37.15



News @ NaDEET

Sustainable living can be achieved one household at a time. This is an observation that NaDEET sees every time we visit our RUG for Sustainability participating communities. In these remote communities where hardship is a daily reality, changes are small but steady. Earlier this year NaDEET visited over 200 households in the communities of Rietoog, Uibes and Gochas where at least half of these community members have at one point or the other worked with NaDEET either in their community or during a visit at NaDEET Centre. This evidence dates back to 2011 when NaDEET planted 365 trees in the Hardap Region to celebrate the Year of International Biodiversity. Uibes was already one of these communities and despite its rocky terrain and limited water supply; community members have kept their trees alive.

With our new RUG outreach programme community members are now also recycling paper and reusing it to make recycled firebricks, using fuel efficient stoves to cook their food and in many occasions their solar cookers. Wood is a very scarce resource and electricity is not a commodity that everyone can afford. The appreciation that communities give for receiving these sustainable living equipment and education and especially seeing the people using them, makes me think if they can change towards sustainability then so can we all.

“Thank you for the seed you have planted in us this past week.” – Frederika Swarts from Gochas

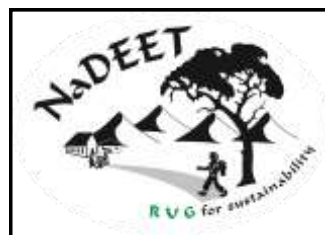
It is truly growing into a wonderful plant and it will only grow bigger from here on.

In addition to our work in the communities, NaDEET Centre is running as usual and in-fact is once again fully booked for the year. School learners, youth and adult alike have booked for their groups.

The Ministry of Education Hardap Region has again pledged to transport for all schools from the region and we are very thankful for their continued support. To date we have had 3 secondary groups (2 from one school) and 3 primary school groups, all of which but one are returning schools. The highlight of all these groups was St Georges College which this year marks the 11th year they have visited NaDEET since 2005.

NaDEET is in the development phase to expand its operations into other regions to meet the demand for high quality environmental education. Please visit our website to learn more and support our efforts.

Viktoria Endjala



Top: Johanna from Uibes showing off her homemade recycled fire balls.



Top: One of the NaDEET planted trees is already towering Uibes residents.



Top: Katrina's fuel efficient kitchen.



Top: St George's College boys group saying "Thank you!"

Photos: NaDEET Photo Library

Tok Tokkie Update.

“The unforgettable Tok Tokkie Trails experience under the beautiful starry heaven and clear sky of the unique NamibRand Nature Reserve will be more endearing as we soon will replace all our paraffin lamps with solar light's. This should make our guests experience even more outstanding.”

Silke Reiff



Little Bugs

Little Bugs News!

Primary is Open

Our Little Bugs are growing, so is the school!

This year we are very proud to open our first primary classroom. Our classroom has a capacity of twenty children but is currently made of ten pupils who will be soon joined for a few hours a week by the five years-old students. Our aim is to facilitate the transition between preschool and grade one.

Children will face new challenges such as learning to read, write and calculate. They are excited about it and dived in the school year with pleasure. We are also keeping some of the activities that they loved in preschool such as science experiments, arts and craft and cooking.

Every few weeks revolve around a theme that is used to teach not only environmental studies but is also integrated in all the curriculum areas.

Charlotte van Cutsem

Our New Teacher!

My name is David. I am from a small but beautiful city called Ourense in the north of Spain.

I first graduated in economy and 4 years ago decided to change career. I had spent 4 years giving technical support in a multinational company. Thinking about my future, I realised I was happier with children around me, helping people and be with kids was my dream. Their curiosity and simplicity makes them unique. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to be a teacher, a preschool teacher.

In September 2010, I went back to university and got my diploma. Last year I decided to go to Africa and I taught for 6 months in Burundi. I fell in love with Africa. The people do not have many material resources but they always keep a smile on their faces.

Last July, I finished my studies. Last year, while in Belgium looking for a job opportunity, I heard of a position as a preschool teacher at Little Bugs in Namibia. My first experience in Burundi was hard but interesting. I read more about this nice project and was impressed. On the 26th of December the decision was made and now I am here to do my best every day for the little ones.

I put all my energy to help every child to be happy. Education in preschool is really important. Education is not repetition of contents, be the centre and protagonist. They are the ones. You need to listen, be available all the time, solve conflicts, enjoy them, present interesting activities and try to explore this strength that all of us have. They are a demanding crowd but when they look at you they use their heart. I believe that every day I learn a new lesson from them. Thanks for this nice opportunity; I promise to do my best.



David Bobillo

We have a bus, help us run it!

Our beautiful school is now in full swing and many happy students attend the classes on a daily basis. However we are still not able to give all the children in the community the education that they deserve. Especially the children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, who lack the transport means to come to school. The distances in the desert are vast and we have children that would like to attend the school from more than an 80km radius! Although parents are carpooling and no vehicle arrives at school without the maximum amount of passengers inside, there are still children waiting for the day that they will be able to come to school.

With the generous help of David & Debra Berges we now have enough funds to purchase a school bus.

Parents and surrounding communities are joining forces and are making a huge effort to arrange the fuel costs, a driver salary and accommodation for the driver. Any help with the running costs is hugely appreciated!

Ingrid Baas



Left: The grade ones with their teacher Miss Charlotte.

Right: The learners are enjoying their Wednesday afternoon classes.



Left: Little Bugs enjoying their class.

Interesting Camera Trap Pictures from Porcupine Waterhole



Top: Red hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*) sighting at the Porcupine waterhole in a while.



Top: Quite an unusual camera trap picture of this rock monitor (*Varanus albigularis*) also at the Porcupine waterhole.



Top: Three young cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) were captured at Porcupine waterhole.



Top: Another interesting image of the same group of cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) at Porcupine waterhole.



Top: Tall giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) reaching for the highest green leaves.



Top: Huge kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) bull on his way to have a drink.

Photos: Bukeye Camera

Photos: Bukeye Camera

Thank you

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this issue of The Barking Gecko by providing articles/information: Ingrid Baas, David Bobillo, Viktoria Endjala, Quintin Hartung, Silke Reiff, Charlotte van Cutsem and Peter Woolfe

We would also like to thank all those who so generously share their photographs and interesting sightings!

The Barking Gecko is your newsletter and, as always, we invite you to keep on sending us your contributions of news and views, short reports, sightings, artwork and photographs.

KINDLY NOTE: Photographs are under copyright and may not be reused without the permission of the photographer.

Newsletter of the

Editor:
Vanessa Hartung (Warden)
Reserve Office
P.O Box 131
Maltahöhe, Namibia
Phone: +264-63-683 026
Email: vanessa@namibrand.org



Head Office
36 Bismarck Street
PO Box 40707
Windhoek, Namibia
Phone: +264-61-224 882
Email: info@namibrand.org
Website: www.namibrand.org

IF YOU WISH TO SUBSCRIBE TO "THE BARKING GECKO", PLEASE CONTACT THE EDITOR AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS
NOTE THAT PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THIS NEWSLETTER ARE AVAILABLE ON THE NAMIBRAND WEBSITE