

THE BARKING GECKO

September 2022

Vol. 23, No. 1



**JESSICA AND ANDRE
JOIN NAMIBRAND**

GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

WORD FROM THE WARDEN

NEWS FROM THE SOUTH

**HISTORY OF
GORRASIS & STELLARINE**

NEWS @ NaDEET

INDEX

EDITORIAL	4
WORD FROM THE WARDEN	5
2022 GAME COUNT RESULTS	8
GREETINGS FROM THE CEO	10
JESSICA AND ANDRE JOIN NAMIBRAND	11
NEWS FROM NADEET	12
HISTORY OF GORRASIS	
AND STELLARINE	14
10 YEARS OF DARK SKIES	16
LEARNING EXPERIENCES ON	
NAMIBRAND	18
A SHORT LIFE	20
REMOVAL OF ALIEN SPECIES	21
WOLWEDANS VISION 2030 -	
RURALREVIVE	22
THE FINAL WORD	24

*“Heaven is under our feet
as well as over our heads.”*
- Henry David Thoreau,



Jessica Steyn



Sunset over Nubib mountains

EDITOR'S INPUT

The first half of 2022 has moved quickly and so much has happened already. The Reserve received higher than normal rainfall and there is a new management team at Keerweder. Given the amount of rainfall, there was some flooding of roads and houses, but that is a small challenge when compared to the thankfulness for so much rain in the desert. Grass turned the Reserve into a green oasis and everyone enjoyed the transformation. Rainbows were to be found everywhere, making the desert look like a picture book. We have even received some winter rainfall, so the blessings continue.

During the first half of the year, we've had numerous visitors including film crews, students

and researchers. They all engaged in their passions while visiting NamibRand and left happy. Tourist numbers are increasing with many more vehicles on the roads, but more importantly, more visitors to all the tourism establishments on the Reserve.

Everywhere you look there are oryx calves and zebra foals. A cheetah was spotted in the northern part of the Reserve. Spotted hyenas have been sighted in the dunes and three leopards were seen close to the Keerweder homestead. Bird numbers increased as well.

We hope you will enjoy this latest issue of the Barking Gecko.

Jessica Steyn

A WORD FROM THE WARDEN

Water gathering between Satanskop and the dunes

By Jessica Steyn

NamibRand doesn't look the same as it has for the last year or two. There are cars on the road again and the tourism establishments are busy. The Reserve has changed into an oasis after the rain. All parts of the Reserve received rain, some areas more, others less, but everywhere it was green and flush. Please see the table below for rainfall details.

The rain also brought some challenges. Die Duine base was flooded with a big downpour. Staff houses at Keerweder were flooded with the massive run-off from the mountains. On Dina roads were washed away by sudden rivers. Keerweder also experienced strong winds and rain in another storm and the veranda roof of the guesthouse was blown off. Once things dried out some big repairs needed to be made.

Another outcome of the good rains was that they created a great opportunity for the botanist, Antje Burke, to come and survey the Reserve's plant life. So many plants were blooming as a result of the rain, including things only seen rarely. Dr Burke and some staff members hiked up the Losberg to look at the vegetation which is very different than the rest of the Reserve. The hike also gave the staff a chance to check the

radio repeater on the Losberg. With Dr Burke's help, a new updated vegetation map for the Reserve is being produced.

Between February and June NamibRand hosted three students from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). Their work on the Reserve forms part of their Work Integrated Learning (WIL), the practical aspect of their nature conservation training. They assisted the staff with various work in the field and conducted individual research projects to help them put their theoretical learning into action.

A film crew from Germany visited the Reserve for a few

days to film the fairy circles from the air, get some nice landscape shots and film oryx interacting in the wild. Overall they were happy with the footage they took, especially because there was so much green grass and it contrasted with the fairy circles. We look forward to seeing the final production.

Two new camera traps have been installed by NamibRand for the Hartmann's mountain zebra (HMZ) project. The HMZ Project, run by Dr Morris Gosling from Newcastle University in the UK, aims to help support the conservation of this sub-species in Namibia and to study population processes using an individual-based approach. Hartmann's



Andre installing a new camera trap at Porcupine

Looking east onto Losberg from the dunes

mountain zebra are a protected species in Namibia and of global conservation importance. The project at NRNR has been running since 2009. The research focuses on the identification of individual animals (individual-based approach), using camera traps at strategic waterholes, to monitor population size and key processes such as birth and death rates. The HMZ

Project has received grants from the Gaia Nature Fund and Montpellier Zoo. Not only do the camera traps produce some nice photos of zebra for research purposes, but they also capture more elusive and nocturnal species including cheetah, spotted hyena and bat-ear foxes.

The Reserve also hosted some fairy circle researchers continuing their existing research and contemplating new projects. A university group visited as well and the team shared the Reserve and the work that is done. NamibRand continues to draw all kinds of people, interested in its beauty and its secrets as well. Everyone seems to leave happy and wanting to return.



Oryx gathering in green grass by Keerweder Pan

2022 RAINFALL FIGURES

Property	Rain gauge	January	February	March	June	Total
Kwessiegat	Kwessi Dune Lodge	19	62	0	0	81
	Cobra dam	18.5	26.3	0	0	44.8
Toskaan	Moringa	60.5	69.9	28	5	163.4
	Kokerboom	62	108	75	9	254
	Toskaan borehole	40.5	119	58	2	219.5
	Porcupine	43.5	106	58.8	0	208.3
Draaihoek	Draaihoek house	47	107.5	80.3	2	236.8
	Bushmankoppies	32.5	15.7	4	0	52.2
Keerweder	Keerweder house	45.3	100.8	41.5	2.1	189.7
	Boscia	37	43	0	1	81
Jagkop	Jagkop	57.5	60	0	0	117.5
Verweg	Zebradam	30.8	49.3	8	3	91.1
	Verweg house	41	58.5	11	5	115.5
Toekoms	Toekoms house	73.8	32.3	52	6	164.1
	Kuduwater	35.4	31.3	28.5	3	98.2
Wolwedans	Wolwedans village	0	52	21	0	73
Die Duine	Schafsberg	9	47	2	0	58
	DDR	9.5	22	30	0	61.5
	NaDEET centre	10	72.5	0	4	86.5
	Die Duine house	11.6	89.8	77	3	181.4
Stellarine	Horseshoe camp	8.5	33	18	0	59.5
	Hideout house	7	51.8	9.7	3	71.5
Gorrasis	Gorrasis house	41	33	0	0	74
	Straussenwasser	38	81.5	4	0	123.5
Aandster	Swartkoppie	20	32	9	0	61
	Vista	17	50	6	0	73
	Twee Pompe	12	59	37	0	108
	Aandstêr house	0	63	31	4.3	98.3
	Kalkpomp	6	52	20	0	78
	Prosopis	20	74.5	3	0	97.5
	Grootpomp	19	65	16	0	100
	Satanskop duine	19	56	0	0	75
	Satanskop	2	69.5	0	0	71.5
Springbokvlakte	Satanskop south	0	43	0	0	43
	Springbokvlakte house	0	110	12	0	122
	Two pumps	0	50	17	0	67
	Four Tanks	0	85	8	0	93
	Park border	0	80	0	0	80
Saffier	Aandster water	0	40	8	0	48
	Excelsior Turnoff	0	35	20	0	55
	Saffier House	0	20	20	0	40
	Sonop water	0	20	21	0	41
Dina	Dina north reservoir	0	26	0	0	26
	Dina middle	0	66	4	0	70
	Dina house	3.5	59	3	0	65.5
	Dina south reservoir	11	72	2	0	85
	Dina border	0	26	18	0	44

2022 GAME COUNT RESULTS

By Jessica Steyn & Nils Odendaal

On 28 May NamibRand conducted our annual game count. NamibRand stakeholders attended the game count briefing at NaDEET the afternoon before the game count. At this briefing, Nils Odendaal and Jessica Steyn explained the count methodology and divided the participants into their different routes.

This year's result show that the gemsbok total population increased by 58.28% and springbok increased by 168.87%. A much higher number of springbok were counted than last year, and animals were sighted closer to the road and easier to see. The distribution of gemsbok and springbok was wide spread across the Reserve. The highest concentration of animals was seen in the north of the Reserve and most gemsbok were seen in the dune areas, while almost all springbok were counted on the Keerweder plains.

The Burchell's zebra population is concentrated on the plains at Vremdelingspoort, on the Keerweder Pan all the way to Wolwedans, on the Chateau

Plains and the plains on Springbokvlakte. Their population increased by an astounding 556.27%. In previous years many of NamibRand's plains zebra wandered outside of the Reserve's boundaries and were not counted.

Only three hartebeest were counted. Unfortunately, the prolonged drought over the past eight years has taken a heavy toll on these animals, whose population was once estimated to be around 200. While most animals have likely succumbed to the drought, some have migrated outside of the Reserve, searching for better grazing. Hartebeest have been seen on properties with higher rainfall and closer to the escarpment.

The increase in rain this year gave the wildlife a boost, which would indicate why there are such high numbers this year. Not only are we seeing many young animals being born, but favourable grazing from the abundant rainfall is also attracting animals from the surrounding areas into NamibRand.

TABLES AND GRAPHS

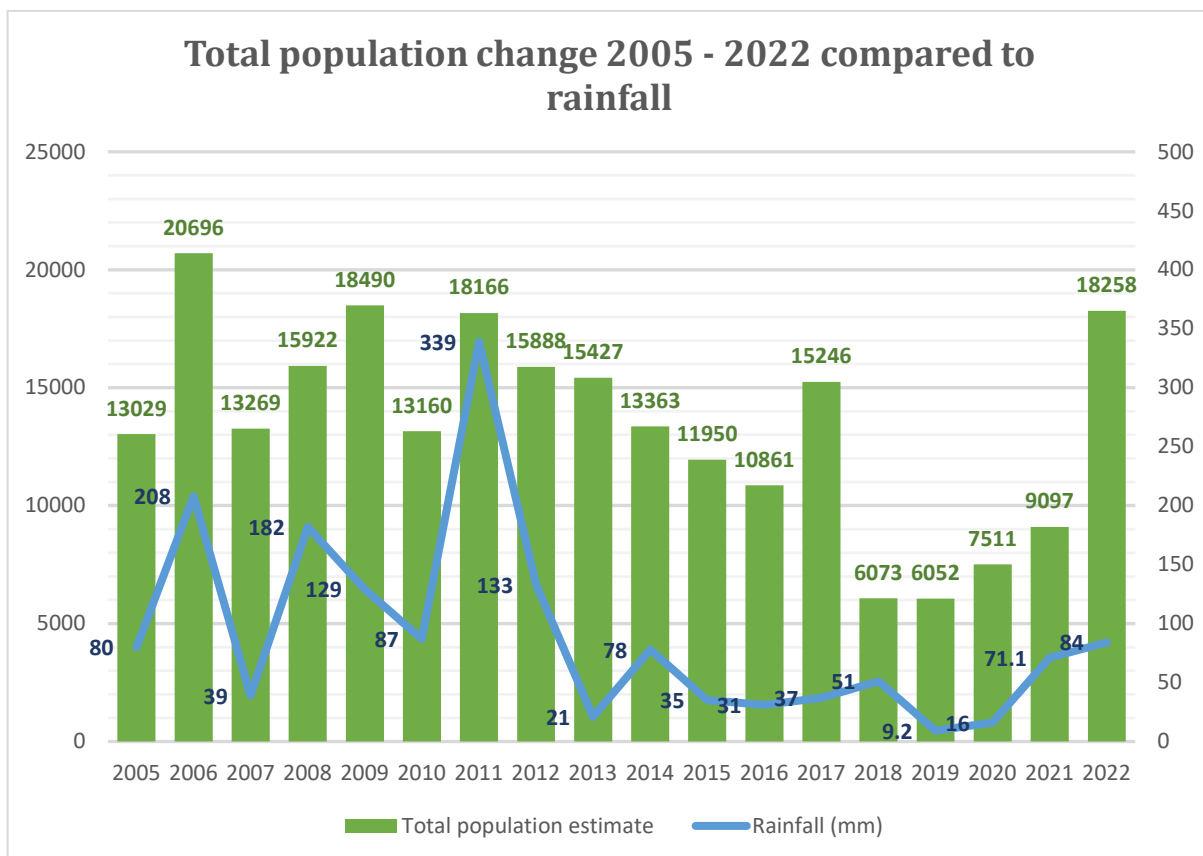
Comparison of total estimated numbers of game between 2021 and 2022

Total estimated numbers of game (Zone 1-10; May 2021 - May 2022)					
Species	May-21		May-22		Percentage change
	No. Counted	Total estimated number	No. Counted	Total estimated number	
Gemsbok	1890	6323	1168	10008	58.28%
Springbok	366	1693	529	4552	168.87%
Kudu	1	4	1	80	1911.98%
Ostrich	83	217	114	431	98.62%
Ludwigs Bustard	31	266	66	780	193.23%
Ruppel's Korhaan	25	285	28	443	55.44%
B. zebra	177	296	235	1943	556.27%
Hartebeest	0	2	3	8	286.33%
Total	2573	9086	2144	18244	100.80%
Giraffe*	10	10	13	13	30.00%

The total numbers seen and counted for the 2022 Game Count

Total of Species					
Mammals		Carnivores		Birds	
Giraffe	3	Bat-eared Fox	13	Black-chested snake Eagle	1
Ground squirrel	5	Black-backed Jackel	15	Crow	7
Hartebeest	3	Hyena	1	Greater Kestrel	8
Kudu	1			Lanner Falcon	3
Hartmann Zebra	94			Lappet-faced Vulture	13
Oryx	1,428			Ludwig Bustard	66
Burchell Zebra	235			Martial eagle	2
Scrub Hare	1			Ostrich	122
Springbok	563			Pale Chanting Goshawk	9
Warthog	2			Rock Kestrel	1
White tailed mongoose	2			Rock Pigeon	39
				Rüppel Korhaan	28
Reptiles				Southern Hawk	1
Sand Snake	1			Spotted eagle owl	1
				Vulture	3
				White-backed Vulture	1

The figure below shows the total population change from 2005 to 2022 compared to average rainfall





Nils Odendaal handing over a small token of gratitude to Lee & Murray Tindall for their six years of service from 2016 to 2022



Nils Odendaal handing over a small token of gratitude to Elswie Rooi for her 23 years of service from 1999 to 2022

GREETINGS FROM THE CEO

By Nils Odendaal

2022 has been a blessing for NamibRand – the Reserve received good rains and wildlife populations are recovering nicely after the last eight years of drought.

The devastating impact of COVID-19 and the loss of income from tourism revenue seems to be abating. Our tourism partners are reporting good bookings for the main tourism season and we hope to be taking steps towards our financial recovery. I would like to personally thank all of those who have so generously helped us over the last two years, your support is truly appreciated. That said, we still have a long way to go before we are back on our own feet again and our debts are repaid. Any additional help from you would be highly appreciated in our ongoing mission to conserve the fauna and flora of NamibRand.

Sadly, we have to inform you that our wardens, Murray and Lee Tindall, have resigned from the NamibRand Nature Reserve. We have been extremely blessed to have such a capable

management couple as part of the team. They put in six years of hard work, dedication, passion and enthusiasm for NamibRand and we wish them all the best for the future. Thankfully they are not going far away. The Tindall's are now heading up the new, neighbouring ProNamib Nature Reserve. Please visit the website at www.pronamib.org.

Unfortunately, Elswie Rooi, who managed our headquarters at Keerweder since 1999 has also resigned and taken up a new post as head of the Nubib homestead on the ProNamib Nature Reserve. Elswie has been the cornerstone of Keerweder for five generations of wardens and without her, operations would not have run as efficiently. Thank you Elswie for your hard work and unwavering support to NamibRand over the past 23 years.

NamibRand welcomes Jessica and Andre Steyn to the management team at NamibRand. Jessica, who holds an honours degree in Nature

Conservation from the Namibia University of Science and Technology and Andre, who has many years of experience in the tourism industry, are based at our headquarters at Keerweder. Jessica takes over as Nature Conservation Warden for the northern parts of NamibRand in partnership with Martin Verwey from Aandstêr, who continues to manage the southern parts of the Reserve. Andre is the new Maintenance and Operations Manager. We wish them the best of luck and many happy and rewarding years at NamibRand.



Jessica and Andre Steyn

JESSICA AND ANDRE STEYN

JOIN NAMIBRAND

By Jessica Steyn

In January, Jessica and Andre Steyn joined the NamibRand team. They are excited to be a part of the team and live at Keerweder.

Jessica Steyn is NamibRand's new Nature Conservation Warden for the northern part of the Reserve. She grew up in Windhoek but spend all her free time with her dad, heading to farms all over Namibia with him when he repaired windmills. When she was older she later spent holidays assisting at the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF). Jessica studied Nature Conservation at the Namibia University of Science and technology (NUST). During her studies, she undertook two internships. The first internship was in Damaraland with the NGO Elephant and Human



Family photo with Jessica's family at the Chateau Viewpoint

Relation Aid (EHRA) where she worked with volunteers and learned a lot about elephant behaviour and conservation. The second internship was at Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research & Education Centre (NARREC), an animal rescue, care and rehabilitation centre outside Windhoek which provides public education opportunities for school groups.

Andre Steyn is NamibRand's Maintenance and Operations Manager. Andre brings a broad experience to the team. He grew up on a farm near Kōes and learned his field skills through sheep farming, wildlife management and conservation. He had an opportunity to learn new skills overseas, when he spent time in Texas working on a farm. In addition, he picked up experience from various jobs along the way, repairing trailers and running shops in Keetmanshoop.

Jessica and Andre met at the Gobabeb Research and Training Centre in the middle of the Namib Desert. Jessica worked there as a research technician for three

years, when Andre joined the team as a site manager. From there their paths stayed together.

After they left Gobabeb, they spent four years in the tourism industry working as lodge managers. Even though they were living in the bush, they decided tourism was not their true passion. They were keen to return to conservation and were excited to take up the opportunity with NamibRand.

After starting their new jobs and moving to a new home, they got married in a small ceremony on 22.02.2022 in Windhoek. A date to be remembered. They celebrated with a big family gathering at Keerweder over the Easter holiday and were able to share their new home and work situation with everyone. In May, to keep their lives busy, they adopted a puppy, Leia, into their family.

Jessica and Andre enjoy going for hikes and watching animals and feel that living in the veld is the best place to be. They are enjoying their time on the Reserve and can't wait to see what the rest of 2022 has in store.



Leia enjoying the Jakop dune



NEWS @NADEET

NaDEET Base Office 2021

By Viktoria Keding

NaDEET Centre Programmes

Visitors from as far away as Katima Mulilo visited NaDEET Centre this year. After the summer break, NaDEET Centre staff were excited to once again host participants at our sustainable living centre on NamibRand. After a group of home-schooling families, NaDEET welcomed a small private school from Katima. This school was started by a local tourism couple who wanted to establish a school that focuses on teaching about the environment. Most of the children had never been this far South and the experience to travel over 3000 km round trip was exciting. Only a few weeks later, with funding from the NNF/Go Green Fund, NaDEET was able to host another group from the same region – this time Wildlife Ecology students from the University of Namibia's Katima Mulilo campus. NaDEET

Centre, and more importantly our approach to sustainability, is now known in northeastern Namibia. Our Centre programmes are off to a good start and are now being managed by our long-time staff member, Jonah Ndeuludila who was promoted to Operations Manager in January this year.

NaDEET Base

Visitors to NaDEET Base (Die Duine Homestead) on NamibRand are heartedly welcomed at our renovated operational base. Together with our neighbours, Tok Tokkie Trails and the NamibRand Family Hideout, we were able to make some strategic changes over the past years that allowed us to make space for a small joint reception area. NaDEET also offers a small curio shop and tours of our small, but productive garden. Last year we were also fortunate to receive a grant from the German Embassy which enabled us to build a separate office and much needed storerooms for our food and equipment. NaDEET is now much better equipped to continue with our programmes and we soon hope to get back to pre-COVID levels.

Intern for ESD Programme

NaDEET has launched a new internship programme for post-graduate students focused specifically on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The programme aims to give young people the skills and experience in ESD, combining theory and practice. We welcomed three ESD students, Festus Awene, Elizabeth Namulo and Veronica Lasarus in early April at NaDEET Base. Our newly modernized NaDEET Base, including our new office sponsored by the German Embassy in 2021, provides the ideal working space to implement this



Intern for ESD 2022

programme. Festus, Elizabeth and Veronica are involved in all aspects of NaDEET activities to gain practical working experience and have on-line ESD training with Alisa, our education programme developer based in Cape Town, over the course of the year. We look forward to developing this programme with our sponsors, the Pro-Namib Conservation Trust, to increase the number of qualified environmental educators and jobs in conservation landscapes focused on education.

NaDEET Urban Sustainability Centre

Our NaDEET Urban Sustainability Centre in Swakopmund has fully launched. With the start of the new school year, local Erongo Region schools have access to transportation from the Ministry of Education Regional Office. This enables us to implement our new three-



NaDEET Urban Centre

day school programme for grades 5-8. We have already hosted 16 schools in four months. Our team truly gives their best effort and goes above and beyond. The programme

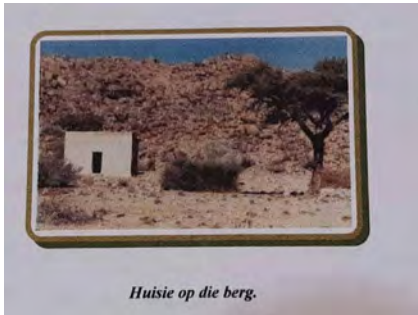
addresses sustainability issues from an urban perspective, but maintains our key topics such as the importance of biodiversity and changing our behaviour to address climate change.



Teach4ESD NaDEET Centre

HISTORY OF GORRASIS AND STELLARINE

By Mandy Brückner



For those of our readers who are interested in the farm history of NamibRand, I have just compiled a short document, containing anecdotes written by the van Lill family, the previous owners of the farms Gorrasis and Stellarine. From 1956 until 1974, the family of Attie and Aggie van Lill, including their three daughters, lived first in a little concrete house in the Gorrasis Mountains (pictured above) and then moved to the Stellarine (Family Hideout) farmhouse.

The main anecdotes were

written in Afrikaans by Aggie van Lill (nee Fouché). Aggie was born 13 March 1930 and died 01 March 2017. In December 2014, Aggie wrote her stories and sent them to my father-in-law Albi Brückner. Shortly thereafter, they were copied to me. In 2014, Aggie was living in Keetmanshoop, as was one of her daughters, Martha Poller, and her family. In June this year, Martha gave me permission to place Aggie's original Afrikaans version together with my English translation and a couple of pictures, in the farmhouses at Gorrasis and Stellarine.

The van Lill family initially had a hard life at Gorrasis, living a very basic existence in the tiny concrete structure. They worked hard to keep a small herd of sheep alive in the arid environment and managed to send their three daughters away to boarding school when they were old enough. They moved



Photo courtesy of Martha Poller, taken here in their garden at Stellarine, in the 1960's

to the vastly superior Stellarine house when their youngest daughter was five years old, and lived off the now lucrative Karakul sheep farming industry. They created an oasis in their garden, planting lawn, cannas and privet hedges, and fruit trees and vegetables, which they watered daily.

When Attie's parents unfortunately became too ill to



The farmhouse at Stellarine (Family Hideout), before renovation by the Brückners in 1999



The NamibRand Family Hideout Farmhouse in 2020

care for themselves, Attie and Aggie left Stellarine to live on the family farm Vanlillsville, around 1974. Attie bought Vanlillsville and rented out Stellarine for a minimal fee to a relative. The plants and trees died because they didn't receive water every day. The eventual decline of Stellarine, forced him to sell.

Gorrasis was the first farm purchased by Albi Brückner in the area, after it was put up for auction in 1981. The idea of a nature reserve and tourism

operations were born there. Albi and Antje used Gorrasis extensively with friends and also hired it out. It was the first attempt at luring and accommodating mainly local tourists.

Today the house at Gorrasis is unoccupied, but still contains all the furnishings left there by my parents-in-law. In June 2022, we had the house cleaned and some water driven there. On entry, it looks and feels as if Antje and Albi never left. It



is almost like a museum. We left the original guest book, my history file and a photo of the two of them, and hope they would approve.

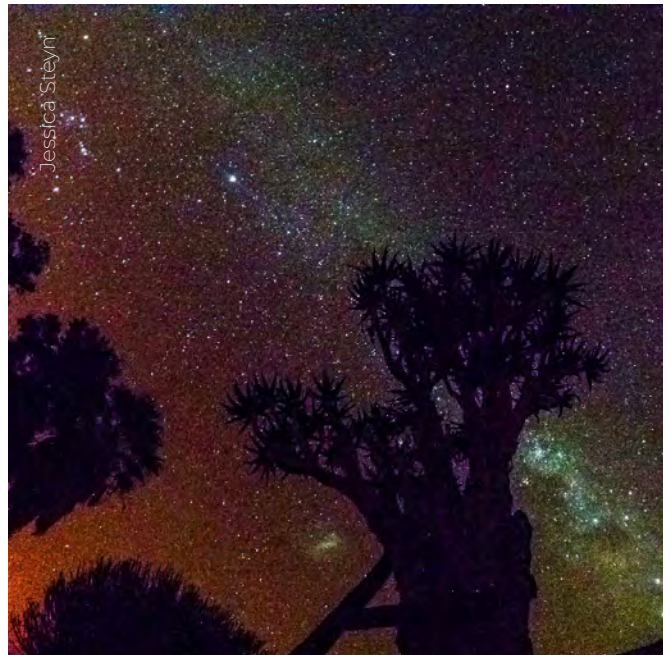


Gorrasis in 2021 after good rains

10 YEARS OF DARK SKIES

By Jessica Steyn

This year NamibRand is celebrating its 10th anniversary as an International Dark Sky Reserve. In 2012, the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET), with support from Dr George Tucker, submitted a proposal to the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) to designate the NamibRand Nature Reserve as an International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR). The



NamibRand's beautiful dark sky



Celebrating NamibRand's 10th anniversary as a Dark Sky Reserve

NamibRand International Dark Sky Reserve was only the second place on Earth designated with Gold Tier status, due to its exceptionally dark skies. NamibRand is also the first International Dark Sky Reserve in the developing world, in the Southern hemisphere and in Africa.

NamibRand is extremely proud of this achievement and to be part of such an important conservation initiative. NaDEET is the educational core of the NamibRand Nature Reserve International Dark Sky Reserve. As part of their curriculum, they offer hands-on, fun evening programs where they educate and raise awareness with visiting learners about NamibRand's amazing sky.

In addition, a Sky Quality Meter (SQM) with a USB interface is working at Keerweder. The SQM monitors the sky and gives a regular live interval of updated readings throughout the night. The program has recently been updated and is downloading data and sharing the data on two websites. These websites display the data and can be viewed by a global audience. Maps on the websites display the current reading of the device, if it is night time, while during the day it provides a mean reading for the night before.

The websites displaying the readings are:

Knightware: https://knightware.biz/community/public/sqmmmap/sqm_map.php

Globe at Night – Sky Brightness Monitoring

Network: <http://globeatnight-network.org/map.html>

NamibRand is also listed by Globe at Night on their news and station pages.

News: <http://globeatnight-network.org/news.html>

Station list: <http://globeatnight-network.org/global-at-night-monitoring-network.html>

The NamibRand team also need to take manual readings with an SQM periodically and they use a phone app to upload the data to the Globe at Night website (<https://www.globeatnight.org/map/>).



An example of manual SQM readings taken on the Reserve

Dr Andreas Hänel visited NamibRand in early June to compare SQM readings. Dr Hänel, from the Fachgruppe Dark Sky der Vereinigung der Sternfreunde in Germany was pleased to confirm that NamibRand's skies are extremely dark, some of the darkest in the world and that there is no influence from artificial light.

Data on dark skies is important for monitoring light pollution and supporting astronomy research and stargazing. We are happy to be able to contribute to global data collection efforts and to showcase NamibRand's exceptional dark skies.



LEARNING EXPERIENCES ON NAMIBRAND

Zebras at Keerweder waterhole

By Megan Snow &
Elizabeth Simcox

In order to succeed in life, one has to learn how to take risks. In a way, taking risks is the only way we can get to know ourselves. I would never have known how much I wanted to work in conservation if I had not taken a risk and started volunteering at a zoo as a young child. Even today as a young adult studying Conservation Biology and Environmental Education at university, I have learned even more about myself through taking risks. One risk that I will be forever grateful that I took is applying for an internship at NamibRand Nature Reserve. I called my mom the night I sent the email asking about an internship possibility, and I told her that I doubted I would be selected. The next week I called her, screaming in excitement because I received reply that

NamibRand would be happy to have me.

I had so many expectations for the internship, while at the same time I had no idea what to expect. Were we going to work with animals? Were we going to track down poachers? Were we going to work on excel sheets? All of the possibilities seemed exciting and I had a hard time not talking about it to everyone I met. The reality of the internship was that it was even more incredible than I could have ever anticipated. Learning what it takes to run a reserve on a day-to-day basis was fascinating, and I was very happy to get to be a part of the process. Every activity, from organizing excel pages filled with data, to painting a building or two in order to keep things looking nice, to driving around and checking on the

waterholes, all provided a new and completely unique insight into life on the reserve. I took a risk, and I am so insanely glad that I did because it paid off a hundredfold. I cannot wait to come back to Namibia – to live, to work, to visit, or whatever the future holds.

Elizabeth Simcox

Two weeks is all I had at NamibRand, and I greatly wish that I could have spent more time there. I got to meet two absolutely amazing people - Jessica and Andre - who showed me around the reserve and what it takes to run it on a day-to-day basis. Of course we also can't forget about Leia. Leia is a 15 week old puppy, who was a blast to be around. I loved Leia because she helped bring a sense of home to the reserve. I have two dogs at home and was greatly missing my fur babies

since I hadn't seen them for almost a month and half.

NamibRand is a truly beautiful place. During our time on the reserve there was something new every day. I learned what it's like to prepare for important guests and even the occasional film crew. During the time I spent there, I learned so many things that I know will help me in the future. One thing in particular, that I definitely won't be forgetting anytime soon, is that you cannot use a toaster when you are relying on solar for power. I experienced beautiful sunsets from amazing viewpoints and, surprisingly, it even rained during my internship. One day we were tasked with moving fish from one dam to another in order to help control the algae. It was a fun experience trying to capture fish with three people and two broken nets. Eventually, and with a lot of luck, we managed to catch a few. We were able to relocate them to a new home, without anyone falling into the dam to join them.

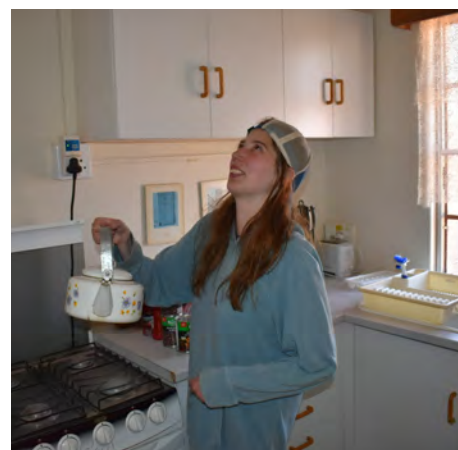
I'm currently a student in the USA majoring in Fisheries and Wildlife, focusing on Conservation, and NamibRand was a great experience for me. My internship was an important learning opportunity to see the world and better understand how other countries practice conservation. My time at NamibRand has helped me to gain a deeper understanding of how I may be able to help shape the future of conservation, field work, and our world as a whole.



Leia helping with the work



Leia photobombing Megan



Megan and Elizabeth at the Keerweder guesthouse



Megan, Elizabeth, Jessica, Leia and Andre at Keerweder gate

A SHORT LIFE

By Jessica Steyn



Vulture leg with ring

On 31 May, a Wolwedans guide picked up a vulture leg with a ring on one of his drives. The NamibRand team sent the picture and the number of the ring to vulture conservation experts Holger Kolberg and Mark Boorman. We received a response that the vulture (V104) was ringed as a chick on the 3 October 2020 south-west of Solitaire in the Escort area. The vulture spent most of its life in the Sesriem area till he died in 2022 on NamibRand due to unknown causes.

Valuable information can be gained from the reporting of tagged and ringed vultures.

Please be sure share your vulture sightings with us and any of the following conservationists:

Peter Bridgeford:

pmbbridge@iway.na

Mark Boorman:

felix@afol.com.na

Holger Kolberg:

holgerk@mweb.com.na

Liz Komen:

lizkomen@fastmail.fm

Dirk Heinrich:

dheinrich@az.com.na

Also, please upload the information and pictures (if you have any) onto the www.vulturesresightings.crowdmap.com website.



Data on vulture (V104)

Tag	Ring	Date	Species	Locality	Co-ordinates	Elapsed time since tagging	km from last record
V104	G24374	03-Oct-20	Lappet-faced Vulture	Escort, fossil dunes	-24.09356 15.83665	Tagged	
V104	G24374	06-Nov-20	Lappet-faced Vulture	Escort, fossil dunes	-24.09356 15.83665	0 Years, 1 Months, 3 Days	0
V104	G24374	06-Feb-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Tsamsvlei	-24.34311 15.77441	0 Years, 4 Months, 3 Days	28
V104	G24374	21-Feb-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Vito, Vito waterhole, Namib Naukluft Lodge	-23.97199 15.84274	0 Years, 4 Months, 18 Days	42
V104	G24374	23-Feb-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Vito, Vito waterhole, Namib Naukluft Lodge	-23.97199 15.84274	0 Years, 4 Months, 20 Days	0
V104	G24374	24-Feb-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Tsondab Valley, Lorentzposten	-23.91170 15.84495	0 Years, 4 Months, 21 Days	7
V104	G24374	04-Mar-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Tsondab Valley, Lorentzposten	-23.91170 15.84495	0 Years, 5 Months, 1 Days	0
V104	G24374	14-Mar-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Vito, Vito waterhole, Namib Naukluft Lodge	-23.97199 15.84274	0 Years, 5 Months, 11 Days	7
V104	G24374	15-Mar-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Tsondab Valley, Lorentzposten	-23.91170 15.84495	0 Years, 5 Months, 12 Days	7
V104	G24374	16-Mar-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Vito, Vito waterhole, Namib Naukluft Lodge	-23.97199 15.84274	0 Years, 5 Months, 13 Days	7
V104	G24374	29-Mar-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Tsamsvlei	-24.34311 15.77441	0 Years, 5 Months, 26 Days	42
V104	G24374	15-Apr-21	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Tsondab Valley, Lorentzposten	-23.91170 15.84495	0 Years, 6 Months, 12 Days	49
V104	G24374	31-May-22	Lappet-faced Vulture	Farm Wolwedans NRNR	-25.09200 15.98000	1 Years, 7 Months, 28 Days	132

REMOVAL OF ALIEN SPECIES

By Lee Tindall

After the beautiful rains this season, which allowed the drought stricken Namib to catch its breath and to grow once more, many small rivers flowed. Some flooded and created new flood plains, while others simply carved out new paths to follow. The flow of this water brought many things – it brought catfish from farm dams upstream, it brought endless amounts of sand and debris and it brought seeds that have lain dormant for years.

As the desert settled and the clouds rolled away, the rain slowed and shoots of vegetation started appearing. The realization quickly dawned that amongst the grass and the tsama melons (*Citrullus ecirrhosus*) were some less than welcome alien invasive plants. The most threatening culprits discovered on Farm Dina (NamibRand Nature Reserve) were the fierce or spiky thorn apple (*Datura ferox*) and castor oil (*Ricinus communis*) plants. Ricinus plants are easily identifiable by their big, dark green and slightly rubbery leaves, while Datura has a slightly crinkled edge, oak-leaf shaped leaf attached to a thick stem. Once the seeds develop identification is easier. Ricinus has small round seeds that are clustered, while Datura seeds are large, spiky and fierce looking.

The ProNamib Nature Reserve (PNNR) and NamibRand Nature Reserve (NRNR) teamed up to tackle the invasion. PNNR provided funding for mobile teams to remove these invasives, and took part in the logistical and practical planning. The NRNR and PNNR teams collaborated on removing these plants as quickly as possible – the big ones and the tiny ones. A team of 12 unemployed men from



Some of removal team with an enormous example of a castor oil plant

Maltahöhe worked and slept in the veld for ten days to clear the worst affected areas on Dina. As they cleared the plants, trailers were filled and removed to an old dam. Plants were left there to dry out, and then burned to avoid any dispersal of seeds.

Alien invasive species pose a serious threat to indigenous plant life. If given a slight chance these invasives will encroach and take over any habitat, leaving no space for indigenous species to grow. It is important to stop the plants before they mature and produce seeds, which can be dispersed by wind and rain. One plant can propagate another hundred more, which would eventually lead to the total domination of alien vegetation. This could change important habitats and threaten multiple species. Identification and clearing of these invasives will continue to be an ongoing and highly important project for PNNR with the goal to minimize and eventually eradicate invasive species.



Plants being thrown into the dam

While loading the bakkie and trailer a Reddish-grey Musk Shrew (*Crocidura cyanea*) was picked up. It was later discovered on the back of the bakkie during the offloading and then returned to its home area. This was a first sighting of this species by the NRNR and PNNR teams.



Reddish-grey Musk Shrew



RURALREVIVE IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

The slow road to Maltahöhe...

By Lisa Scriven

Characterised by uninterrupted vistas, vast horizons, and expansive open spaces with surprising variation, the Namibian travel experience might be difficult to describe without referring to a sense of remoteness. Days usually involve long journeys on seemingly endless gravel roads, with refuelling and refresher stops in charming, if often dusty and seemingly forgotten, little *dorpiés* along the way. En route to and from NamibRand Nature Reserve and the iconic Namib Desert, one such stopping place might be the village of Maltahöhe.

Maltahöhe is one of those places that is slightly larger than the “blink and you might miss it” kind, but it is small and sleepy enough for one to wonder where everyone is. Villagers recall better days when droughts weren’t as frequent nor as severe, when the Karakul sheep farms were thriving, and when youth weren’t forced to seek greener pastures in the country’s larger centres.

Yet just down the road (by Namibian standards), the oldest desert in the world and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Sossusvlei draw travellers by the thousands. With travel and tourism contributing nearly 15% to the nation’s GDP and accounting for a similar percentage of total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2019), one can’t help but wonder how much is benefitting the people of Maltahöhe and surrounds. For example, tourism business supply chains cross right through the village on their way

to and from Windhoek for supplies, yet little, if anything, is sourced in this strategically located potential distribution hub.

In response, the Wolwedans Foundation has embarked on an initiative in partnership with the people of Maltahöhe: RuralRevive – Building a Desert-based Economy. The overall objective is to revitalize the local economy through a number of development opportunities that match the demands of the tourism economy in the region. Although RuralRevive will, and has, already evolved organically, the planning and implementation phases will initially focus on:

Maltahöhe Laundry: The laundry will be solar powered with grey water recycling to enhance sustainability and will offer services to tourism operators in the area.

Horticulture: Activities will include capacity building for local farmers and youth, as well as the provision of greenhouse and irrigation infrastructure to grow organic, fresh produce both for the tourism market and to improve local food security.

The Barn: The Barn will function as an essential distribution hub and physical marketplace to centralise supply and demand, combined with a digital app to communicate what is on offer (or in demand) and provide a cashless trading environment.



Maltahöhe community consultation



Seedling nursery taking shape

Clean-up: Efforts will focus on reducing landfill and landscape pollution through a “Trash-to-Treasure” concept to re-use and re-purpose discarded items into marketable goods, simultaneously creating a healthier living environment and small-scale livelihood opportunities.

Desert Runner: This transport service will “connect the dots”, providing compartmentalised delivery and collection of laundry, fresh produce, and waste.

Overarching activities include enterprise development and diversification as well as EconoMix training – a tailor-made, entry-level business basics training programme which will empower aspiring entrepreneurs in the emerging desert-based economy.

It’s an ambitious undertaking and one that will call on the support of tourism operators across the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Landscape. In an age of increasing economic inequality, RuralRevive presents an opportunity to

collectively shift our focus as tourism stakeholders and do things differently, creating more resilient, inclusive conservation tourism economies along the way.

RuralRevive updates will be available on www.ruralrevive.org, while requests for more information, ideas, and offers of support can be directed to info@arideden.org.

Author: Lisa Scriven on behalf of The Arid Eden Project – Wolwedans Vision 2030



Trash-to-Treasure in practice



The editors would like to thank all the contributors to this edition of the Barking Gecko. Many thanks to Vicky Human for her support and layout skills.

This newsletter is for the readers, friends and colleagues of NamibRand. We welcome any ideas, input and feedback you may have.

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Editors:

Jessica Steyn, Nature Conservation Warden
& Danica Shaw
Reserve Office
PO Box 131
Maltahöhe, Namibia
Phone: +264-63-683 026
Email: research@namibrand.org

Head Office:

76 - 68 Frans Indongo Street
PO Box 40707 Windhoek, Namibia
Phone: +264-61-224 882
Email: info@namibrand.org
Website: www.namibrand.org



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