




April 2001



The Barking Gecko

 Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve

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Dawn Patrol—A Ranger's Life

As the sun's burning rays peep over the horizon, a bleary-eyed unshaven figure totters from the house. Clad in regulation, albeit lirty and tattered khaki uniform and unpolished boots, he makes his way to the out-buildings. He grunts a greeting to his two trusty sidekicks (not to be politically misinterpreted to mean he kicks them regularly) and they mount their trustworthy Stallion.

Twenty metres further, this magnificent specimen of manhood stops, goes into the house and returns with the ubiquitous equivalent of a city yuppies mobile phone — his mobile radio. The Stallion departs in a cloud of dust and ozone-depleting exhaust fumes.

At the first reservoir that is overflowing, the three show the first signs of animation. Driving along the water pipeline, their eagle eyes looking for the faintest sign of leaking water, they come to a scene of utter devastation. Pieces of chewed, black, plastic pipe lie around like so many plugs of discarded chewing tobacco.

A large pool of water has formed where Greybacked Finchlarks are drinking. Muttering derogatory remarks about the parent-

age of the hyaena that ravaged the pipeline, they set to work. Tools are brought out, the offending holey pipe removed, the trench re-dug and connectors assembled. Then Murphy strikes again. No pliers!!!!!!!!!!!! Muttering once more, (possibly politically incorrect thoughts about kicking), our hero comes to the rescue.

His hand flashes to the holster at his side and he whips out his 44-tools - in - 1 Magnum portable workshop (made by L.man). With a practiced flick of his wrist he bares his tool and selects the pliers. In no time the pipe is repaired, the trench refilled, equipment loaded and they continue their favourite pas-time.

As the sun climbs higher into the cloudless sky our hero continues his patrol, adjusting ball-valves, cleaning drinking troughs, removing disintegrating bird carcasses from a reservoir with a smell to equal that of his socks and starting dirty, recalcitrant engines to pump life-giving water.

After a long lunchtime siesta, like typi-

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The Tree of Life

A Herero's view of the shepherd's tree
(*Boscia albitrunca*)

The Shepherd's Tree is relatively common on NamibRand, and well used by game for shade and browsing. It was interesting to find out its importance and significance in other parts of Namibia.

The Shepherd's tree is referred to as the "Tree of Life" because of its invaluable

shade, immense nutritional value and various medicinal properties. For the Hereros, it is an important part of their culture and traditional way of life. They regard the tree as sacred, and the wood must not be burnt. To do so, would cause only male calves to be born, thus preventing the cattle herd from increasing.



Hereros use many parts of the tree: The fruit is boiled with water and sugar, then left to cool, to make a juice, which can be drunk as cold drink, or left to stand and ferment for four days to

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Concessionaire Profile

Elinor's first introduction to Namibia was on the NamibRand Nature Reserve in 1992, while working in Johannesburg for Afro Ventures. The agents stopped at Wolwedans where Mark and Charlie Paxton were at the time and they drove everybody up to Gorrasis – a brand new destination that Stephan was marketing.

The next visit was the deciding visit – Elinor had to live in Namibia. She got a job with Wilderness Safaris in the Namib Travel Shop and there she met Marc and within two minutes decided this was the man she was going to marry. It took Marc a few months to realize that Elinor would make a good wife.

Marc's first introduction to NamibRand was while working as a tour guide for Wilderness. We both agreed that NamibRand was probably one of the most beautiful places in Namibia. While living in Windhoek Marc and Elinor spent a few weekends on NamibRand mostly visiting with Eric and Nancy at Camp Mwisho.

Two years later they were living at Camp Mwisho – Marc learning to fly balloons and Elinor learning about running a camp. They got married at Jagkop in 1995 with only the parents and the Hesemans family present.



Marc's dream had always been to take tourists walking – and we realized that this was a marketable idea from our French clients and agents, many of whom had been trekking through the Sahara desert. One also comes to a stage in one's life that one wants to work for oneself,

Tok Tokkie Trails

make one's own decisions and not have to work for a boss.

Die Duine was standing empty and after some market research the Dürs put a proposal to Mr Brückner to start a low impact activity, i.e. walking trails, from Die Duine. We really liked the idea of the Reserve, the potential as a conservation area and tourism development and felt that we wanted to be part of this project for the long term.

Our friends, family and the bank thought we were crazy, but still gave us all the support we needed. Tok Tokkie Trails was born and in October 1996 Elinor went off to France to market the idea. In fact Elinor went to France with absolutely no product knowledge, as no-one else had anything remotely similar in Namibia.

France was the easiest place to do the marketing as the French understand the idea of walking in the desert – they've done it in north Africa in the Sahara, for years. With the British and the German market, one first had to sell the idea to them and then sell the product.

For the first three years we struggled. We knew we had a good product, but we were struggling to get the finances right and to get enough people. Our price was really low to attract a larger market. Having never run a company before, we struggled with financial management, staff management, where one could cut costs and where one couldn't compromise and just trying to make ends meet. Looking back this is not a bad experience to go through. If one's marriage can survive in times of financial and emotional crisis, then it can survive anything!

The most learning we have done was in the first three years at Tok Tokkie. These three years taught us more about life in all spheres than 12 years at school and between us 6 at University.

I'm not going to write a lot about what Tok Tokkie actually does – this you all know. What is important to realize is that walking in the wide spaces of the Reserve and seeing all the adaptations of desert life really close-up is what makes Tok Tokkie successful.

It is an in-depth look at the desert. We have had many NamibRanders on our walk, including Mr. Brückner senior, who did the tough walk over the Gorrasis Mountain. The route's got easier, so come again!

Our future plans and dreams are to develop the NRDARC (NamibRand Desert Awareness and Research Centre) to further both the research and the education of this fragile ecosystem. This is our major project for 2002!

Living at Die Duine is a quality of life many people dream of. We have a richness in our soul and in our marriage and relationships with friends that comes from living in an area such as this. Many of the clients that come to Tok Tokkie leave here feeling that same richness in their soul. On arrival they ask how on earth we can live here, and don't we get lonely. When they leave they understand that although there are many times here one can be alone, one is never lonely.

Marc and Elinor Dürr,
Tok Tokkie Trails

Out-reach Clinic

The word "out-reach" literally means: to reach out to its people. This mobile clinic was initiated many years ago by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to visit, on a monthly basis, those people who really live in the "sticks".

People who live in or near town can regularly visit the clinic to go for check-ups and pick up medication especially for High Blood Pressure, birth control and immunization for the small children.

As soon as one lives far away from town this can become a problem. Many of the people do not have transport or the opportunity to visit the clinic on a regular basis.

Such a clinic was started on the farm Toekoms about three years ago. First the various concessionaires were ap-

proached who supported the idea that a monthly clinic be held on the NamibRand Nature Reserve. After that discussion were held with the Head of the clinic in Mariental who was prepared to give it a go, since at that time about 50 people were working on the Reserve.

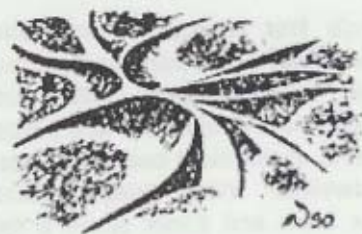
Now three years later it is time to take stock, whether the clinic is still viable on the Reserve. Things again have changed during the last two years. There are now regular transfers for NamibRand Safaris, Namib Sky Adventure and the Tok Tokkie Trails to Malthahöhe or even Windhoek.

At the same time people needing to attend a clinic can then make use of such an opportunity and visit the clinic in town. This was also the reason while during the past year only

few people attend the monthly clinic at Toekoms. The out-reach clinic felt very unhappy about travelling all the way from Mariental for only a handful of people, since the only people still making use of this service are the employees working on the Reserve side.

At the Kgotla it had been decided to inform the Out-Reach clinic in writing about the changes having taken place during the last two years and to let them decide whether the clinic should be continued or not.

As it is human nature to often complain only after a service has been discontinued, we need to remember that a service rendered is viable only when supported by the majority of the people. *Ursi Lenssen*



What a Day!

On board with guests, Brauda (Germany), Borreman (Belgium) two couples and a young British man, Mr Guy Phillips married with two daughters, three and five years of age. Issy was behind the wheel and Guy the copilot.

We stopped at the "singing Rocks" on Draaihoek for some sound lessons. Suddenly we saw an Aardwolf jogging towards the Nubib range. This was rather unusual to spot an Aardwolf during the late morning hours. However, they can devour up to a good 130,000 termites an hour.

Next we saw a Lesser Grey Shrike, not often seen. As always the White-browed Sparrow Weavers were the guests of honour. After a lovely picnic we spotted a White-faced Owl roosting in a *Ziziphus Mucronata* tree on the Draaihoek riverbed.

It would be their most appropriate habitat, but I've never seen one around before. Next to a "*Picidirodia Idont Knowensence*" (beside the road, I don't know it) shrub (new species) we found a pair of Steenbok, commonly seen solitary.

A family group of five Bat-eared fox

were not bothered during "siesta" time. Generally we saw quite a number of Oryx and Springbok antelopes including the common Ludwig's Bustard "Ludwig se Pou".

Issy's sharp eyes made it possible to observe a small Namib Sand Snake manoeuvring its way across the track. I should say this was a remarkable day.

Issy Karaerua, Nature Friend Safaris Tourguide

Re-introducing Cheetah on NamibRand-Another Try!

Following the unsuccessful releases of "Pirate" and "Bullet" in 1999 as well as "Castor and Pollux" in 2000, we have decided to give it another try.

This time it will be a pair - reportedly quite infatuated with each other, hence let's them "Romeo & Juliet". They are presently on a farm in the

North of Namibia.

The well-known cheetah-man Matto Barfuss has pledged his support while filmmaker Rolf Joost will shoot a video on the project for screening on German television. Both gentlemen have been to NamibRand before.

The project is scheduled for later in the year, probably August / September. Let's all pray that it will be a success this time.

Albi Brückner

The Survivor

Two frogs fell into a can of cream,
Or so it has been told.
The sides of the can were shiny and
steep,
The cream was deep and cold.
"Oh, what's the use," said number one,
"It's plain no help's around.
"Good-bye, my friend, good-bye, sad
world"
And weeping still he drowned.
But number two, of sterner stuff,

Dog paddled in surprise.
The while he licked his creamy lips
And blinked his creamy eyes.
"I'll swim at least a while," he thought,
Or so it has been said.
It really wouldn't help the world
If one more frog were dead.
An hour or more he kicked and swam,
Not once he stopped to mutter.
Then hopped out from the island he

had
Made of fresh churned butter.

(Author Unknown)

Wonderful rains fell over most of
the Reserve during April and early
May this year. In parts, the plains
could now well be mistaken for
wheat fields! In the next issue,
we'll publish the rainfall figures.

/Gurun di /gora/uis xa : Why a Zebra Has No Horns

/Gui-tse i ge koma /gurun xa ge hâ-e
i. //Na-tin hâ hi-ab gao-oab Xamma mi/
gui-e ge u, in mâ /guru i hoa-e mi-ma e
ge hais !naga /hao. //Nas ge !nau-//goa-
ga ge i sa. //Na-loen ge#kham /nu /
gurun hi-a !garise !gu //aona //in !na
mi/gui tsi ge /gu-/gusen tsoa-tsoa. !
Gore-gomas oatse, O ge koma a mi-/gui
e, ti ta ge hoan xa #guro //nawa ni si. //
Ari !nau-//goaga koro kamagu !khau
ha hi-a /gui !khoe tsoa-tsoa, tsi //i xa
ge //napa ha o, on ge /nai nau /
guruna //in !oa /gau-hâ xuna u tsi ge ū
besen e. Tsi-xa ge !goreb xa mâ he tsi
ge ko-!nahe, tare-i //ib !oa /gau-hâ !
khaisa. Ai titse!, /gui xu-i tsin sakhe !
oa /gau tama, timi tsi-i ge ge oa-he. //
Na-tses tses ge !goreb //na-e u ha tama
sa.

One day the animals were together.
Then King Lion decreed that all the
animals should meet under a tree,
very early in the morning. That eve-
ning the young and slow already
started gathering.



minutes left, started running. Getting
there, the other animals had already
taken their gifts and Zebra searched

The Zebra
child said he
would be
there first.
So very early
the next
morning,
with five

for his.

"Oh man!" he said. "There's nothing
for me", and he left.

That's the day Zebra did not get his
horn.

Told by: Bianca Swartbooi

Translated from the Nama by: Jimmy
Bassingthwaighe (Wolwedans)



fruit of the rose, *Acacia senegal* (Wolwedans)

Eco-tourism Corner-The Mountain Chat (*Oenanthe monticola*)

I hardly think that this bird needs
any introduction as most of us living
in Namibia and on NamibRand will
know him.

Yet for the reader who has not come
across this endearing bird - he is a
fairly common resident. Males:
Black or grey; wrist patch, rump and
outer retrices white, and some have
a white "hood". The males indeed
are very beautiful. The females:
sooty black or blackish brown, rump
and outer retrices white.

These birds are early risers and are
often still seen flying around after
sunset. They become tame very eas-
ily, so much so that they enjoy fre-
quenting a house to look for any

crumbs or other eatables.

At Keerweder a pair of mountain
chats were brooding in the garage
some distance from the house. After
the young had hatched mother chat
was flying around all day to satisfy
the hunger of her three chicks. As
our kitchen door is mostly open she
quickly discovered our cat's food: Wis-
kas. This seemed to be the ideal food
for her young, since from that day on-
wards she was flying in and out of the
house either by way of a door or
through the window as often as she
could. When the young started to fly
they were brought right up to the
kitchen door and mother had an easy
lot to still their enormous appetite.
Small wonder that a couple of days

later not one but two to three moun-
tain chats were seen continually
hopping in and out of the house.
Very often Wiskas was found all
over the house. This usually hap-
pens when someone unexpectedly
enters the kitchen and the bird flies
in the wrong direction and with all
the flying to and fro to find an open-
ing it often loses its food.

Many might wonder how our cat,
known to all as he is big and beauti-
ful, can accept the birds to share his
meal. He does become excited at
times when the mountain chats are
near, yet for unknown reasons he
has accepted that the mountain
chats share with him his Wiskas.

Ursi Lenssen, Keerweder

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"The wildlife of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust and must account for it to those who come after us."

NamibRand Facts

How many Fairy Circles have been sold so far?

Concessionaire	Number Sold
Wolwedans	105
Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge	9
Tok Tokkie Trails	6
NR Family Hideout	4
NamibRand Nature Reserve and JAB	16
TOTAL	140

The Last Laugh

Coming home from Windhoek the other day, we reconfirmed our belief that all tourists should travel through Namibia having booked through an agency rather than trying to do it all themselves.

On the 826 just opposite Camp Mwisho we came across a Microbus with four German tourists looking rather lost. They told us a long story how they had got two flat tyres and two of their party had gone off with some local chaps in a pick-up to have their tyres fixed. They had no knowledge of where their party was and they were afraid of what would happen to them while standing on this deserted piece of road.

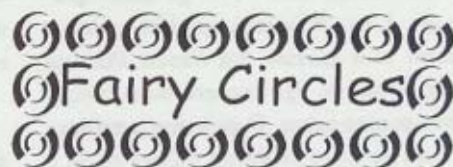
We assured them that they were quite safe and that their party would return at some stage. They had plenty of water and food as well as tents. Their next explanation really cracked us

up – "Wir haben zwei "Handies" aber wir stehen warscheinlich in einem Loch weil die „Handies“ funktionieren nicht!" Marc explained that this „Loch“ that they were standing in was rather big – the closest place they would pick up reception was Maltahöhe!

They had gaily sent off their friends with the parting words – "we'll phone you when we know what's happening". Had these people actually been to a reputable travel agent they would have known that their handies were no good! The car hire company should also have briefed them better on where their telephones worked as well as explaining that two spare tyres are essential!

Marc Dürr, Tok Tokkie Trails

Websites:
www.wolwedans.com
www.ccafrica.com
www.members.mweb.com.na/nrthideout



Many thanks to the following guests for Adopting a Fairy Circle since the last issue:

Do Ponte (3x)	Hawaii	Wolwedans
A. Niklas	Hawaii	Wolwedans
C. Pecora	Hawaii	Wolwedans
J. Ryan	Hawaii	Wolwedans
K. Boxhammer	Hawaii	Wolwedans
U. Kantelberg	Germany	Wolwedans
A. Fender	Germany	Wolwedans
S. Leis	Germany	Wolwedans
Schueberger (2x)	Germany	Wolwedans
E.&P. Lochner	Austria	Wolwedans
U.Schmiz-Lenders	Germany	Wolwedans
Anne Schmitt	Germany	Wolwedans
Paul Beecham	England	Wolwedans
H & S Elser	Germany	Wolwedans
Fitzgerald Family	South Africa	SML
D & C Fox & Brown	South Africa	SML
Farah Damji	U.K.	SML
Eggers Family (4x)	Germany	JAB
Ruth Dodds	South Africa	JAB
Hoffmann (2x)	South Africa	JAB
Windhoek Wino's	Namibia	NRFHO