



THE BARKING GECKO

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



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Photo: NamibRand Safaris (Pty) Ltd

Wolwedans is leading the way in sustainable tourism by implementing a new solar-hybrid power system that further reduces carbon footprint.

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High summer at NamibRand

Greetings for the new year! January 2012 found us with temperatures of over 40°C and very little rain as yet, as the incredible resilience of the desert system is tested yet again.

Sadly, we have to take our leave of Antje Brückner, beloved wife and mother of the Brückner family and one of the first NamibRand pioneers and supporters—one who "marvelled at the beauty of God's creation, so preciously evident on NamibRand" (see the family's tribute on page 2). We congratulate the Odendaal family on bringing a new baby daughter, Amelie Grace, to the NamibRand family. These felicitations are also extended to three milestone anniversaries: a 20th for both Namib Sky Balloon Safaris and &Beyond, and a 15th for Tok Tokkie Trails.

These natural human cycles are accompanied by a new awareness and appreciation of the cycles of the heavenly bodies in our immensely dark skies—some of the darkest in the world—with NamibRand's application to become an International Dark Sky Reserve. Visiting astronomer, Dr George Tucker, informs us that current knowledge of physics has allowed astronomers to conclude that—apart from hydrogen and helium, with trace amounts of lithium and beryllium (which were present when the first stars were formed)—most of the other elements that make up our bodies were created by the nuclear processes, including explosions, that occurred during the lives and deaths of stars. "So we really are made of stardust".

These thought-provoking insights bring us a reminder of our inter-connectedness, both with one another and with all things created. So it is not really strange to see a renewed and intensified commitment to conserving our fragile planet on all fronts: Wolwedans leading the way in sustainable tourism; NaDEET promoting sustainable lifestyles and an EcoAward accreditation for the Family Hideout (more of this in the next issue); and on the wider front, the exciting NamPlace project and a World Heritage Site submission for the Namib Sand Sea.

Well done to all, and may these achievements go from strength to strength!

Ann Scott

Tribute to Antje Brückner



Antje Brückner

The NamibRand community and particularly the Brückner family is mourning the loss of our beloved wife and mother Antje Brückner, neé Eggers.

She passed away unexpectedly, but thankfully with little suffering, in the Swakopmund family flat on 19 December 2011, at the age of almost 82 years, after a fulfilled life with four children, nine grandchildren and even a great grandchild.

She dedicated her life to her family and to the less fortunate - always concerning herself with the plight of others above her own. This made her dear to many people but especially her immediate loved ones.

Antje can be regarded as one of the true NamibRand pioneers. She supported her founder husband Albi right from the start, despite much doubt about this "Sandgat" venture in the formative years. She carried the vision of her husband as her own, and together they laid the foundation for the deep roots the family have anchored in this land.

Our mother was a deeply spiritual person, and so she marvelled at the beauty of God's creation, so preciously evident on NamibRand. This connectivity will then also have culminated in her embracing Albi's wish to have their ashes buried in their special fairy circle in the dunes on Wolwedans overlooking the Chateau plains – a view from the seventh heaven. One day they will together stand guard over NamibRand from there.

We are consoled in the fact that our dear mom was not afraid to go. She had prepared herself for the day that she would move on, and we are assured that she was ready and at peace with it. Amongst many other indicative writings she left a poem that translates as:

*The Beginning, the End – oh LORD they are thine
The span in between - LIFE - that was mine
And if I was lost in darkness
Not knowing what to do
With you LORD is peace
And light is the house
That is home to you*

Yet we will all sorely miss her kind, gentle and caring presence, never boisterous, but always strikingly present, radiating harmony and understanding.

This way she will be fondly remembered by all NamibRanders.

Andreas Brückner

News from the CEO

We are now at end of January and although it is too late to wish you all a Happy New Year, we can still extend you our best wishes and hope that you have a wonderful and successful 2012!

In December 2011 the NamibRand family welcomed its newest member. Amelie Grace Odendaal was born in Windhoek on 2 December 2011 to very proud parents Nils Odendaal and Danica Shaw. She weighed 2.58 kg and was 51 cm long at birth.

Amelie can't wait to join her sister Hayley in eating large amounts of red dune sand and enjoying the wonders of NamibRand!



Photo: Nils Odendaal

Amelie Grace Odendaal—the latest addition to the NamibRand family.



Photo: Pat Rehorn

The Odendaal family celebrated the baptism of baby Amelie on 29 January 2012.

We were very sad to say goodbye to Antje Brückner who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on 19 December 2011. We continue to keep Albi and the entire Brückner family in our minds and prayers during this difficult time. We will miss Antje's smiling face and warm and friendly nature, NamibRand is certainly a better place because of her enthusiastic and passionate support over the years. Please read the eulogy on Antje on page 2 for more details on the life of this remarkable woman.

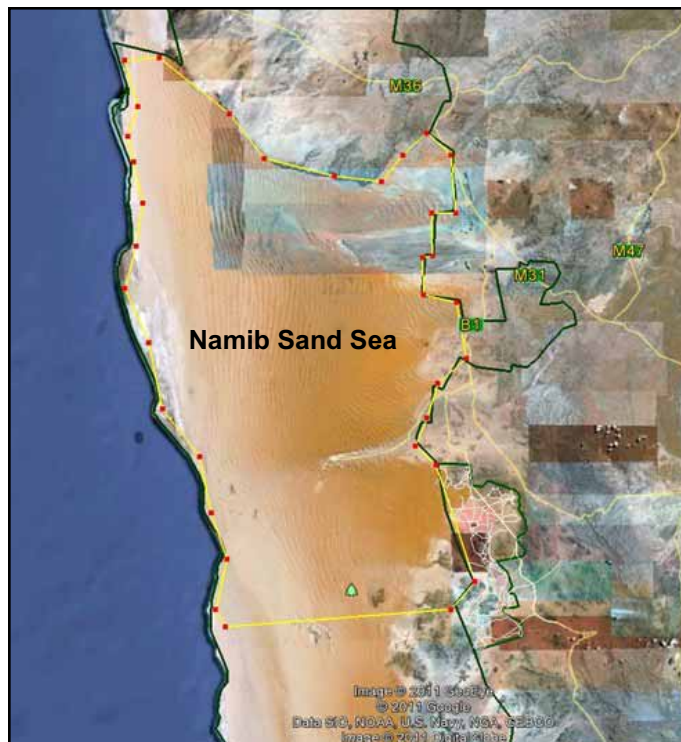
As part of our commitment toward the training and education of young conservators, we continue to host in-service training students from the Polytechnic of Namibia's nature conservation course. The latest second-year intern to experience life and work on NamibRand is Johanna Nghishiiko. Johanna is based at Keerweder where she will be working from January to June 2012. Welcome to the team, Johanna, and we hope that you will enjoy a successful time on the Reserve.

Good progress is being made with the Protected Landscape Conservation Areas Project (NamPlace). At a meeting held at Sossusvlei Lodge on 11 November 2011, the NamPlace project was introduced to local stakeholders. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism has been appointed as the host implementation organisation by the United Nations Development Programme on behalf of the Global Environmental Facility. Project staff acting as the secretariat have been appointed and the project manager, Michael Sibalatani, and the landscape specialist for the south, Jonas Heita, presented information on the project.

We are very excited about NamPlace, as it is designed to look at environmental conservation across broader landscapes. It is hoped that, through this project, large landscape conservation barriers will be overcome and partnerships between the public and private sector can be fostered. This practically means that people who practise conservation and tourism as a land use will work together to co-manage the greater Sossusvlei-Namib ecosystem. Some of the issues we hope to address include actions such as the opening of fences, joint water management, joint fire management, joint research and joint re-introduction of wildlife (for more details see <http://www.thegef.org/gef/node/3452>).

At the same meeting, Dr Mary Seely (from the Desert Research Foundation) and Dr Eugene Marais (from the National Museum) gave a detailed presentation on Namibia's World Heritage Site submission (to UNESCO) for the Namib Sand Sea. After Tywyelfontein, which is Namibia's first World Heritage Site, this will be Namibia's second site submission (see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1746>). The area in question

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Namibia is busy with a submission to UNESCO for declaring the Namib Sand Sea (enclosed in yellow line) as a World Heritage Site.

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is the core dune area inside the Namib Naukluft National Park.

In summary:

i) The Namib Sand Sea application will be submitted under the following criteria for selection:

- to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for *in-situ* conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of

outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

ii) The site falls completely inside the National Park and will therefore be managed by the government of Namibia (MET).

iii) There will be significant international protection from industries such as mining, agriculture etc. once the site is registered.

All stakeholders who attended the meeting seemed to support these two worthy initiatives that are conservation milestones, both for our area and for Namibia. NamibRand is proud to be part of these programmes.

We would like to thank everyone for their interest in and support of our conservation efforts here on the Reserve – we cannot do it without you! Our team achieved a great deal this past year. There are some exciting developments on the cards for 2012 and we look forward to all that the New Year has to bring, in our efforts to conserve and promote this exceptionally beautiful corner of our world.

Nils Odendaal



Photo: Tanya Brückner

Participants at the December 2011 Kgotla (Reserve Management Meeting) enjoy the idyllic surroundings at the Family Hideout.

December Kgotla

The last Kgotla (Reserve Management Meeting) of 2011 was held at the Family Hideout as a joint venture with Tok Tokkie Trails. The meeting was very well attended, with representatives from almost every concession. Mike Scott led proceedings with a warm welcome to all with special reference to the Chairman of the Board, Albi Brückner. Minutes of the previous meeting were then adopted and matters arising discussed. Highlights included the organisation of regular NamibRand Birding Big Days, an update on the predators on the Reserve and updates on the International Dark Sky Project, the NamPlace Project and the World Heritage Site submission for the Namib Sand Sea. To end proceedings, Mike thanked the Family Hideout and Tok Tokkie Trails for hosting the meeting and NaDEET and Wolwedans for their contributions towards a wonderful meal afterwards, and for organising the spectacular full moon.

Quintin Hartung

Mayté Emergency Medical Clinic launched



Photo: Jean-Charles Hayoz

The late Mayté (Maria Theresa) Hernandez, in whose memory the Mayté Emergency Medical Clinic at Sesriem was established.

The Mayté Emergency Medical Clinic was launched at Sesriem on 21 November 2011.

The centre was constructed in memory of the late Mayté (Maria Theresa) Hernandez, who passed away tragically as a result of a motor vehicle accident on the C27 gravel road north of Toekoms in the NamibRand Nature Reserve on 21 November 2010. Her fiancé, Jean-Charles Hayoz, survived but with injuries to his leg. As part of his effort to keep her name alive and to make some meaning out of her death, Jean-Charles has established the Mayté Hernandez Foundation, registered in Switzerland, which will make an investment of N\$10 million to promote road safety in Namibia over the next five years.

The Foundation has signed a partnership agreement with the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund (MVA) to engage in road safety awareness activities and establish an emergency centre at Sesriem. Construction of the centre, which consists of a 10-bed fully equipped clinic and a six-room fully furnished house for



Photo: MVA of Namibia

The smart paramedic team pose with one of their new ambulances at the clinic.



Photo: MVA of Namibia

The clinic is officially launched by Mayté's aunt, Theresa Hernandez and Jerry Muadinohamba, CEO of the MVA of Namibia.

staff, as well as two off-road ambulances, has been completed and the centre was launched amidst great celebrations.

It is envisaged that the centre will provide not only the much needed emergency service to one of the major tourism areas in Namibia, but also clinical and medical services to the local community. Six paramedics will be stationed at the clinic, working on a rotational basis, and the hope is eventually to have a doctor and a nurse stationed at the clinic as well, to provide a service to the area. In time, satellite centres are also envisaged at NamibRand and Solitaire.

The partnership will also ensure that 100 000 copies of a road safety brochure are printed annually for the next five years, in five international languages, and distributed throughout the world in order to promote road safety in Namibia amongst tourists and potential tourists, especially self-driving visitors.

Jean-Charles was accompanied by about 25 persons including his and Mayté's families to attend the launch of the centre. The prestigious event was attended by high-ranking government officials and a variety of local stakeholders. Dignitaries were welcomed by traditional dancers.

The launch was followed by a moving church ceremony on NamibRand near the site of the accident at sunset, accompanied by the harmonies of the choir.

Ann & Mike Scott

Contact numbers for the Mayté Emergency Medical Clinic

Tel. (063) 293 056
Cell 081 312 8842 (Fransina)
Cell 081 612 9956 (Lorenzo)

**MVA general motor vehicle emergencies
081 9682**

NamibRand to apply for designation as an International Dark Sky Reserve

Photos: George Tucker



Left: The Large and Small Magellanic Clouds, satellite galaxies of our Milky Way Galaxy; Centre: the seldom seen zodiacal light, sunlight reflected from dust in space; right: the Rho Ophiuchi cloud complex, a stellar nursery region in our Milky Way Galaxy.

Light pollution, the adverse effects of artificial light, is an increasing problem throughout much of the world. Its effects include causing harm to ecosystems by upsetting the life cycles of nocturnal animals and in turn threatening the fauna that relies on these animals for its life processes, wasting energy and spoiling the night sky view for astronomers and laypersons alike.

In an effort to address this problem, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) was formed in 1988. Today it has over 11,000 members worldwide and is considered the recognised authority on light pollution. In an effort to develop public awareness of areas that have made efforts to combat light pollution, the IDA began a programme called IDSPlaces to certify locations that have undertaken programmes to improve their lighting and preserve their dark skies. One class of IDSPlaces is the International Dark Sky Reserve (IDSR), described by the IDA as "public or private land possessing an exceptional or distinguished quality of starry nights and nocturnal environment that is specifically protected for its scientific, natural, educational, cultural, heritage and/or public enjoyment". To date, only two locations worldwide—one in Canada and one in England—have qualified as IDSRs.

Namibia is famous in astronomy circles as being one of the best places in the world for viewing the night sky. In part this is because it is cloud-free for much of the year and its extremely dry air does not absorb much light so the stars, especially those close to the horizon, shine more brightly than they do in most locations. An equally important factor is that in those parts of the country far removed from urban areas there is still an almost complete absence of exterior lights, the main source of light pollution. This results in an extremely dark sky,

allowing thousands of fainter stars to be seen. Views of this magnificent sky inspire awe and wonder in modern people, just as they did in their distant ancestors who devised myths and legends to explain what they saw. Viewing the Milky Way from NamibRand, one can understand how the legend that it was created by a girl who threw ashes from a fire into the sky became part of the cultural heritage of Namibia.

As an IDA member and six-time visiting astronomer at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, I was aware of the IDSR programme and also very familiar with the pristine night sky of NamibRand Nature Reserve (NRNR). I approached the IDA to see if the NRNR might be a candidate for IDSR status. After extended correspondence, the IDA concluded that the Reserve was indeed a potential IDSR. An initial presentation about the IDSR programme was made at the 27 May 2011 Kgotla (see the September, 2011 Barking Gecko). Recognising that a naturally dark night sky is an essential component of the NRNR's ecosystem and that future development may have a serious negative impact on it, at the 4 June 2011 AGM the Reserve's Board of Directors decided to make the preparations necessary to submit an application to the IDA to have the NamibRand Nature Reserve declared an IDSR. The area surrounding the NaDEET Centre will form the core of the IDSR, with the remainder of the NRNR forming a buffer zone around it. Having IDSR status for the Reserve will help greatly in developing public awareness of the value of a dark night sky, the threat to it posed by light pollution, and the need for protecting it. Potential benefits to the Reserve include lower energy costs, a reduced carbon footprint, preservation of a healthy ecosystem, international recognition as a leader in this area of environmental protection, and increased tourism.

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The response of the entire NamibRand community to this initiative has been very supportive and enthusiastic. As a result, the following actions that are required before an application could be submitted have been accomplished in eight months, rather than the one to two years that IDA initially estimated would be necessary:

- An inventory was made of all exterior lights on the entire Reserve. The results showed that, for its size, the NRNR had relatively few lights; however, a substantial number of them were not fully shielded, meaning that their light was not only going where it was needed but also in directions where it could cause undesirable effects.
- A survey of sky darkness at various locations on the NRNR was made using a special meter. The measurements indicated that the sky above the Reserve is extremely dark, one of the darkest yet measured in the world.
- A comprehensive Lighting Management Plan was developed that identifies potential threats to the night sky and provides plans for addressing them.
- As part of the Lighting Management Plan, exterior lighting guidelines were formulated and adopted by the Reserve's Board of Directors. These guidelines are exceedingly strict and include requiring all exterior lights on the Reserve emitting more than 500 lumens to be fully shielded.
- A programme of improvements to existing lighting was formulated and initiated. Some lights were removed from service, some were fully shielded, and some had their bulbs replaced with lower wattage ones. Upon its completion, all of the lights on the NRNR will comply with the exterior lighting guidelines.
- To improve its educational outreach, NaDEET expanded the astronomy section of its programme with increased emphasis on light pollution and ways to prevent it. NaDEET also devoted one issue of its biannual magazine, the "Bush Telegraph", to the night sky and light pollution and distributed 15,000 copies to Namibian schoolchildren.
- The NRNR began an outreach to its immediate neighbours to discuss the proposed IDSR and the role they can play in protecting it. At their request, the NRNR assisted a neighbouring property, Excelsior, to assess its lighting by performing an exterior lighting inventory on site.
- The NRNR has also begun a regional outreach. At a recent meeting of the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Complex, the NRNR raised the issue of light pollution and distributed educational material on the subject.

By early January, 2012 only a few letters of support were outstanding and some minor lighting improvements remained to be completed. It is anticipated that the NamibRand's IDSR application will be formally submitted by the end of the month. A decision from the IDA is expected 60-90 days after it receives the application. If approved, the NamibRand International Dark Sky Reserve would be the largest and darkest IDSR, only the third in the world and the first in Africa, and point of pride for all Namibians.

George Tucker

NRNR staff Christmas party

NamibRand's staff celebrated their annual Christmas party in style on 10 December 2011. The menu included a delicious mutton "potjie" (stew), cooked in two large pots on the fire in the traditional manner by our master chef Quintin; two pots of rice - starting a new tradition by being cooked on our recently acquired solar cookers by Elswie; and cold puddings. All of this was expertly dished up by Sara, Jakobus and Elswie to feed almost 40 hungry mouths. The children also sang beautifully and performed a short Christmas play (under Sara's direction and translated by Jakobus). Albi kindly delivered a short end-of-the-year address, emphasising the need for team work. The staff then received their presents, with sweet packages for the children.

Well done and thank you to all, especially Martin Schütze and Thomas Stepp, friends of Sabine and Christopher Braun (through the Deutsch-Namibische-Gesellschaft [DNG]) for their generous contributions to the party.

Ann Scott



Photos: Ann Scott

The NamibRand staff Christmas party made use of solar cookers (above) for the first time, to help feed 40 hungry mouths!

Update on waterholes and boreholes in the north



Photo: Ann Scott

The Grunfos pump (in blue protective sheath) ready to be replaced down the 165m Keerweder borehole.

With temperatures reaching well into the 40s in January 2012, the regular provision of water for the animals is critically important. The maintenance of boreholes and pumping systems is an ongoing priority.

Hyena water: Plans are in place to move and upgrade this waterhole. We are still driving water to the tanks at this point.

Kwessiegat: The new waterhole is working well. Some erosion is starting to occur around the waterhole and rehabilitation work is planned.

Moringa: The new Grunfos pump is still performing well and the tank is full almost every day. This is a key waterhole for the mountain zebra population.

Draaihoek and Porcupine: The Draaihoek Grunfos pump has been pulled and sent to Windhoek for servicing. It is now back in the borehole.

Boscia: The ground around the waterhole has been eroded, but we have filled it with rocks and gravel. The Grunfos pump is pumping a very good supply of water into the dam. The water is distributed by means of an interesting process (see diagram below): from Boscia it is gravity-fed to Bobbejaan dam. From there the water flows down to the tanks at Keerweder (4 x 10 000lt) and Dino (assisted by a booster pump at times), and subsequently to the Sandgrouse and Jagkop waterholes.

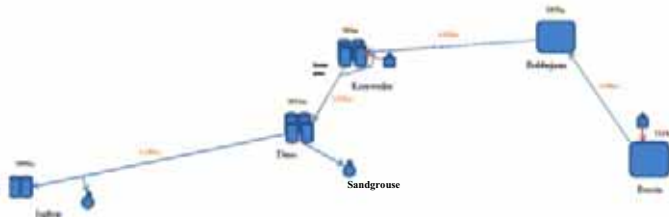


Diagram: Quintin Hartung

The water supply system at Keerweder: water is gravity-fed from Boscia to Bobbejaan and Keerweder, then gravity-fed to Dino (assisted by a booster pump), Sandgrouse and Jagkop.

Keerweder: Four new 10 000lt tanks have been installed which are filled by the Grunfos pump in the Keerweder main borehole as well as gravity-fed water from Bobbejaan dam and Boscia (see Boscia above). The Grunfos pump in the 165m Keerweder borehole was pulled out (with much effort) at the end of 2011 for repairs, but is back in the borehole and working well.

Sandgrouse and Jagkop: We have packed rocks and gravel around the waterholes to try and counteract erosion by the animals' hooves.

Verweg: A new Grunfos pump was installed which feeds water to the Verweg dam, Donkey water, Verweg house and subsequently Zebra dam.

Kuduwater: The waterhole was broken, and had to be repaired. We are still driving water to the tanks here.

Quintin Hartung

News from Aandstêr

Greetings to all and all, and best wishes for a wonderful 2012, may all our expectations be delivered and may we have the strength to do what it takes to make it happen.

The festive season in the south of the Reserve lived up to its reputation as being the period during which every thing that can break down does, everything that can be broken gets broken and so on and so forth. All perfectly timed in accordance with when businesses in Namibia close and the country goes into a state of dormancy for a month. We did, however, survive to fight another year.

We have also endured some of the hottest weather I have ever experienced in the Namib, with the temperature being 47 degrees one Sunday! One needed a knife and fork to breathe.

Developments in the south include a new solar installation at Prosopis with its own new bird-friendly waterhole. We still have to remodel the large drinking trough for the bigger

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Photo: Peter Woolfe

The new wildlife-friendly waterhole under construction at Prosopis.



Photos: Peter & Franziska Woolfe

Above: The new solar installation at Tweepompe.
Below: Peter burying building rubble at Aandstêr - a mammoth task.

(Continued from p8)

animals, but in the mean time they too are happily using the new drinking trough. Good progress is also being made with the new solar installation at Tweepompe.

At the Aandstêr homestead we have started the task of burying all the building rubble created by the demolition of the stoep and the numerous structures that populated the backyard area. This project will go a long way to improving the look of the homestead in view of its function as a reception area for Boulders.

On 3 January 2012 we were treated to a spectacular leopard sighting, returning from sundowners in the dunes west of Prosopis. As we came over the last rise before the descent to the waterhole we noticed a group of five springbok standing in the shade of a small camel thorn tree. When they saw us they started to run towards the waterhole, and then between us and the tree we saw a shape moving to the north. Only one thing moves like that! It then stopped and sat down and looked at us again. It then ran further north and stopped again to look at us and continued in this fashion until it reached the dunes, some 100-150 m north of where we had first spotted it; in all a good five-minute sighting of one of the biggest male leopards I have seen. Unfortunately no-one had a camera ...

Peter Woolfe



Photo: Theo Shungu

Lightning fires are a natural phenomenon at the start of the rainy season, and are in fact beneficial for removing moribund, unpalatable grass. If such fires are not a threat to property or life, it is Reserve policy to leave them to run their course.

More lightning fires

On 17 January 2012 we had a small fire, detected at about 14h45; the fire started at Chateau area about 100m from the Chateau House and spread towards the south-east. At about 15h30, it started to rain over the Chateau area, going towards the south-west. Eventually the fire moved to the north towards the Namib-Naukluft Park and died out after 45 minutes. At the same time another fire started, spreading towards Boulders. By about 17h00 that fire too was extinguished.

Theo Shungu



The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2012 the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, recognising that "... access to modern affordable energy services in developing countries is essential for the achievement of ... the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development."

This initiative will engage governments, the private sector, and civil society partners globally with the goal of achieving sustainable energy for all, and to reach three major objectives by 2030:

- ensuring universal access to modern energy services
- doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency
- doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

Wolwedans sets bold example in sustainable tourism

Reducing carbon footprint the classy way!



WOLWEDANS

NamibRand Safaris operates Wolwedans Collection of Camps, a portfolio of timeless and elegant safari camps located in the heart of the NamibRand Nature Reserve. Wolwedans is more than a collection of safari camps; our ethos lies in setting an example in sustainable tourism, the empowerment of our employees and our commitment to the conservation of NamibRand Nature Reserve.

The logistics of running a hospitality set-up such as Wolwedans take a lot of planning and effort, and cost even more. We have never been on the power grid and thus for the past 15 years have powered the Wolwedans base via a diesel generator, i.e. supplying the main area's laundry and water pumping, and powering the general workshops (mechanical and carpentry). The generator ran for at least eight hours a day, at a consumption rate of approximately 60 litres of diesel daily.

Green thinking - sustainable tourism

One of many definitions of ecotourism is, "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." The world as we know it evolves as technology advances. In the mid 1980s, the ecotourism concept was developed and later became "fashionable". It basically represents a form of tourism that involves visiting natural areas—mostly in remote wilderness environments. Ecotourism, responsible tourism, jungle tourism and sustainable development have become prevalent concepts since that time, and ecotourism has experienced arguably the fastest growth of all sub-sectors in the tourism industry. The popularity represents a change in tourist perceptions, increased environmental awareness and a desire to explore natural environments.

A new way at Wolwedans

In the last century, solar energy was becoming so popular that (given the fact that Namibia has on average 3,300 hours of sunshine) the Ministry of Mines and Energy developed a master plan in 2005, which looked into removing the barriers that still existed to promote the use of renewable energies.



"Solar lizard" in its new home.

Solar energy was "born" although it proved to be very expensive to set up. Wolwedans started implementing solar power several years ago, first by installing solar geysers and removing the electric geysers supplied by diesel generated power. Re-wiring of all

buildings was done and all old light fittings were removed in the process. The Wolwedans camps and Lodge are now entirely solar operated, with all chalets having their independent solar systems and solar geysers. The system comprises two solar panels on the roof and two batteries that power the room lighting.

In 2011, an innovative concept was tested, resulting in a new solar-hybrid system being installed at the Wolwedans village. Comprising 140 solar panels, producing 26.6KW and feeding a battery bank of 6000Ah capacity, the DC power is being inverted by the 50KVA inverters to a three-phase power distribution. This impressive solar installation, which was designed and implemented by Engineering Centre, is backed up by a 125 KVA generator that runs for three hours a day, instead of 9-11 hours as in the old days. This system is able to run the whole Wolwedans village operation. The installation is set to reduce fossil fuel consumption by 65% and is setting a bold example to the local hospitality industry in Namibia.

GER certification

As a business entity Wolwedans has developed a comprehensive sustainability strategy, used in conjunction with our new adaptive management approach to ensure we keep our focus. One of our big successes of 2011 is the completion of our sustainability strategy and becoming a "Long Run Destination" - Global Ecosphere Retreat®, certified on 16 November 2011. The Long Run Initiative is the flagship programme of the Zeitz Foundation, recognising leaders in sustainable development, that work on sustainable, mostly tourism-driven enterprises, whilst fostering community development and cultural stewardship (see website <http://www.zeitzfoundation.org>).

Wolwedans has grown to become a leader in sustainable tourism both nationwide and internationally. We practise high quality/low impact tourism, designed to provide the financial means to support and uphold the vision of conserving this ecologically unique corner of Namibia, the NamibRand Nature Reserve. Although the implementation of responsible tourism comes at a price, the rewards far outweigh the input costs, and the recognition of our efforts is of immeasurable value.

Pinnacle

What a peaceful environment we have now, with no diesel generator sounds at night or in the early morning, no infuriating fumes, no diesel stains – but instead, the twittering sounds of birds and the barking geckos.

Jefta Ampueja

Breaking news

Wolwedans has been nominated as one of three finalists for the "Tourism for Tomorrow" awards in the **Conservation** category. Every year the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) recognises the very best in sustainable tourism. **Conservation** entrants have made a direct and tangible contribution to the preservation of nature, including the protection of wildlife, expanding and restoring natural habitat, and supporting biodiversity conservation. This award is one of the highest accolades in the global Travel & Tourism industry. The winners will be announced at the Tourism for Tomorrow's award ceremony in Japan during April 2012.

Twenty years of Namib Sky



Photo: Namib Sky Balloon Safaris

Above: The extended Namib Sky family celebrated 20 years of operation in November 2011.
Below: Ballooning in the early days with Namib Sky.

In 1987, we were living in a village in the forests deep in the Congo. At a friend's home, we saw a video showing balloons flying over the African Savannah. We decided that this was the life for us, showing visitors around Africa in the most romantic mode of transportation available - a hot air balloon.

Obviously there were some vital elements missing: a balloon licence, money, a place to fly, and of course, a balloon.

Two years later, we achieved the first goal: I passed my balloon licence.

Another year later, we found what we thought to be the right place: the Akagera National Park in Rwanda. We threw a party, invited all our friends, and watched, hearts heavy, as civil war broke out around us. Putting our dream on hold, prisoners of Rwanda as the borders were closed and shooting began, we continued teaching and dreaming for another year...

Finally, a three day ceasefire allowed us to pack the children, our possessions and our entire lives into our Hilux, and flee to Botswana.

But something was missing in Botswana, we didn't feel that

(Continued on p12)





Ballooning with Namib Sky in the early days was an adventurous undertaking.

(Continued from p11)

this was our new home. We then saw a picture of Sossuvlei, and the dunes, and we knew, instantly, that is was our future.

On arrival, we realised that our dream was coming true, this was ballooning paradise. But there were things missing. No hotels, no lodges, just a campsite at Sesriem, a crazy couple at Wolwedans and very friendly farmers (who all thought we were a bit mad).

It took us a few months to convince the authorities (civil aviation, Ministries, National Park ...) that balloons were harmless to people and wildlife.

We were happy, together as a family in this beautiful place. We were living in a tent, which seemed fine to us until we experienced our first east wind, and then realized that our home was now in a tree some kilometres away.

We approached everybody around and eventually, another man with another dream, Albi Brückner, allowed us to restore Kwessiegat and make it our home.

We added three *en suite* tents and Mwisho – the first camp in the region—was born! (Mwisho in Swahili means "the end".)

It was not long after this that our first balloon arrived, and we could really start our lives in the desert.

The first few guests began trickling in, allowing us slowly to get a feel for ballooning and tourism in the area, but we realised we needed more lodges in order to bring in more tourists.

Then came Kulala, which we built while living under a tree in the riverbed (a plan which seemed fine until the river flooded and again, our home ended up some kilometres away from us).

We also built Le Mirage, adding another lodge to house the tourists we hoped would soon be flocking to our ballooning.

Once we reached Geluk, things really took off, and Namib Sky began finally to reach its potential, as did we. Our children grew, my son Denis joined me as a pilot, and our family grew with Namib Sky to have a great love and respect for the desert that had become our home.

The future is still bright, and we thank everyone for their support over these years.

Eric Hesemans



The Namib Sky team at present.

20 years &Beyond and new CEO



Photo: Ann Scott

The striking Vreemdelingspoort mountains at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge.

November 2011 marked &Beyond's 20th year birthday celebration as one of the world's leading ecotourism operators. It has been two exciting and truly memorable decades filled with many conservation triumphs, community empowerment success stories, a name change (from CC Africa to &Beyond) and lots of guest delight at more than 35 safari lodges in Africa and India.

&Beyond welcomed its first guests at Mountain Lodge at &Beyond Phinda Private Game Reserve at the end of October 1991. After 20 years of pioneering the company's model of luxury responsible tourism, &Beyond has shown that by delighting guests, it is possible to make a difference.

To mark 20 years of award-winning hospitality and conservation success, &Beyond has put together a selection of highlights from the company's history that mark its dedication to "Care of the Land. Care of the Wildlife. Care of the People" (see www.andBeyond.com for more information).

The appointment of Joss Kent as &Beyond Chief Executive Officer was announced in November 2011. Kent was previously global CEO of Abercrombie & Kent (A&K), heading up their 61 international offices, and thus brings a wealth of travel industry knowledge and experience in managing large scale tour operations in the high end market.

"Joss Kent ... shares our commitment to building an iconic brand that makes a positive difference to conservation of land,

wildlife and communities", said Mark Getty, Joint Chairman of &Beyond.

Valeri Mouton



Photo: &Beyond

Joss Kent, newly appointed CEO of &Beyond.



&Beyond Birding Big Day

Birding Big Day is the annual competition that takes place in all the &Beyond camps and operations, whereby one has to count as many different species of birds within a 50km radius of one's operating camp or office within a period of 24 hours. The rules for this competition are that the majority of the birding group must agree on a bird identification in order for it to be counted. The same applies to the bird calls.

This year Sossusvlei Desert Lodge entered a team consisting of Peter Nuugonya and Jacques van Eck (&Beyond) and Ann Scott and Quintin Hartung (NRNR). On 24-25 November 2011 this day was quite successful on NamibRand Nature Reserve because we managed to count 70 different species of birds out of 109 (64%) that occur in our area. Amongst the highlights were Rufous-eared Warbler, Karoo Eremomela, Rosy-faced Lovebird, Verreauxs' Eagle and four different lark species!

Our team was placed fifth overall out of 20 competing teams. I would say a job well done to all the people that took part and contributed to this Birding Big Day.

Since this competition usually takes place in November only, we are planning to do it twice a year here (wet and dry season) because we have noticed that some of the bird species are migrating out shortly after the rain season.

Peter Nuugonya



Photos: Ann Scott

Part of the Sossusvlei Desert Lodge team for the 2011 Birding Big Day.



News@NaDEET

Solar cooking and sustainable living training for NamibRand Nature Reserve staff and neighbours



Photo: NaDEET

Proud new solar cooker owners at NaDEET.



NaDEET's Community Education Programme continues to flourish with four more groups participating in the programme in 2011. Funded by the European Union, the NamibRand Conservation Foundation and the COV

Fund, twenty community members joined us at a time to learn skills, knowledge and most importantly the practical application of sustainable living in their daily lives. Our community education programme remains focussed on promoting alternative energy and energy efficiency in households together with water saving and waste management. Although many participants want us to do even more, we have found that practising sustainable living starts on a household-by-household basis. A workshop at NaDEET Centre, away from daily life and amenities such as cellphone reception, allows participants to focus and open their eyes to new ways of doing everyday household tasks.

In November 2011, NamibRand Nature Reserve staff and workers from neighbouring farms participated in a weekend community education programme. It was finally an opportunity for long-time residents of NamibRand to participate fully in a NaDEET Centre programme and to become the owner of a parabolic solar cooker. After successful completion of this programme, participants returned home equipped with skills, knowledge and the equipment needed to live more sustainably in their households. Providing equipment such as fuel-efficient stoves, recycled fire bricks, solar ovens and parabolic solar cookers is a key component to creating meaningful change within local households.

The programme does not stop with this weekend, as it is now up to the community members to implement what they have learned. NaDEET has identified several key factors that



Photos: NaDEET

Top: Andreas Keding teaches NamibRand Nature Reserve staff and neighbours about parabolic solar cookers.

Centre: Making fire bricks from recycled paper.

Bottom: Hard at work making fuel-efficient stoves.

determine programme outcomes. Firstly, programme participants would like to stay longer; and it is essential that we include an evaluation visit several months after the programme. Thereby it is more effective that we work with the same communities to build a relationship and a momentum within the community.

Fifteen years Tok Tokkie Trails

"In the midst of the complexities of modern life, with all its pressures, the spirit of man needs to refresh itself by communion with unspoiled nature. In such surroundings - occasional as our visits may be - we can achieve that kind of physical and spiritual renewal that comes alone from the wonder of the natural world" (Laurence S. Rockefeller).



Photo: Beate Schümann

The late Marc Dürr, co-founder of Tok Tokkie Trails.

The above quote conveys very well what Tok Tokkie Trails has been offering since it was founded 15 years ago. Tok Tokkie Trails, a guided walking trail at NamibRand Nature Reserve, was initiated by the late Marc Dürr and his wife Elinor. When they were asked why there were no walking trails in Namibia, they became captivated by the idea. Because of its unique beauty, NamibRand Nature Reserve virtually suggested itself as the place where the trail should be done. When Marc and Elinor obtained one of the five low-impact ecotourism concessions in the Reserve, Tok Tokkie Trails was born.

The founders did a lot of walking in the area of Die Duine farmhouse, which is now the Tok Tokkie Trails base. Die Duine used to be a farm which became incorporated into the



Marc Dürr, his son Craig and Andreas Keding enjoy the dunes.



Photo: Unlimited Travel & Car Hire CC

Dinner served in style is one of the comforts on the trails.

NamibRand Nature Reserve, when the drought in the 1980s made it clear that livestock farming was not sustainable in this ecologically sensitive area. Die Duine means "The Dunes" in Afrikaans and refers to the picturesque setting at the foot of rolling vegetated dunes.

The first Tok Tokkie Trail started on 25 February 1997 and was a great success. Over the years both the route and the Tok Tokkie Trails experience has been fine tuned. In 2008 the Tok Tokkie Trails concession was transferred to Unlimited Travel & Car Hire cc.

Today, Tok Tokkie Trails is still a "Hiking with Style" experience, where guests have the opportunity to get close to the Namib's awesome beauty and discover miracles of the desert which cannot be seen when driving. Tok Tokkie Trails is a special experience for nature lovers and travellers who know that a beautiful landscape can best be discovered at a slow pace. Guests can savour the pristine surroundings, be active outdoors, free their mind, have the unusual experience of staying without a roof for more than 48 hours, and still enjoy the luxuries that they do not want to miss.

Barbara Wayrauch

Tok Tokkie Trails 



Photo: Scott Hurd

Endless desert vistas await the hiker—a photographer's delight.

N/a'an ku sê Research Programme

2011

Introduction

2011 has seen the successful continuation of the partnership between NamibRand Nature Reserve and N/a'an ku sê. Using infra-red remote camera traps and VHF telemetry, the N/a'an ku sê research team has continued the ongoing monitoring of both released and free-roaming carnivores on NamibRand and the surrounding areas. Advice and assistance have also been provided on several occasions to mitigate situations where large carnivore activity was reported in areas that may have resulted in human-predator interactions.

Infra-red remote camera trap monitoring

Infra-red remote camera traps (*Rogue Stealth Cams*) were deployed at various waterhole and dry river-bed sites in NamibRand Nature Reserve during March-November 2011. The total sampling effort was 786 trap nights.

Large carnivores

Remote camera traps recorded many incidents of free-roaming large carnivores:

- Leopard at Prosopis, Straussenwasser, Ysterwielnek.
- Spotted hyena at Prosopis, Straussenwasser, Kalkpomp (maximum group size of three)..
- Cheetah at Straussenwasser (uncollared coalition of three).

Other wildlife species

A variety of different raptor species recorded at the waterholes includes a number of tagged Lappet-faced Vultures, nine of which could be identified positively.

The sites at Kalkpomp, Prosopis and Straussenwasser waterholes have produced some of the most interesting and unusual mammal records, including honeybadger, warthog and African wildcat. The greatest level of jackal activity was recorded at Straussenwasser waterhole.

Radio telemetry

Radio telemetry equipment was employed extensively throughout NamibRand Nature Reserve, as well as other areas where carnivores have moved into since their release, in an effort to locate and monitor the activity of those animals fitted with VHF radio collars.

The signal of leopard female N015 ("Shiba") was picked up only on 30 May 2011 north of Porcupine waterhole.

Cheetah female N029 ("Lilly") was seen with a cub of 3-4 weeks in the Kwessiegat dunes on 23 July 2011. Her signal has been further recorded on several occasions and she is believed to have two cubs, seen at Saffier in November 2011.



Unusual sighting of a warthog at Prosopis waterhole, 6 June 2011.



A group of bathing Lappet-faced Vultures and White-backed Vultures captured on camera at Kalkpomp on 7 July 2011 included three birds with yellow tags.

Potential human/predator interactions

The researchers were called to give support and advice during several incidents of potential human/predator interactions in 2011. A leopard entered the Keerweder compound on several occasions, leaving visible spoor of its activity. Also, a female leopard resident in the area behind Boulders Safari Camp has been reported dragging the carcasses of her kills up onto the decking of the camp. Experiments with placing scat of other large predators (mainly spotted hyena and lion) to act as a "bio-boundary" seem not to be completely effective at Keerweder but are still being monitored at the Boulders Safari Camp. Other measures including the use of a chilli-based deterrent can be attempted instead.

Discussion

In the southern part of the Reserve, the Straussenwasser waterhole was by far the most frequented by large carnivores; it may be beneficial in the future to place a larger number of remote camera traps in the corridor between Straussenwasser towards Schafberg as this seems to be an area of high predator activity. The emphasis will be on acquiring more complete spot pattern records thus allowing more accurate identification of individuals and their movements.

Moreover, there is growing evidence that cheetah have successfully recolonised the NamibRand Nature Reserve, even though mainly on a temporary basis, as part of their larger ranges in the pro-Namib ecosystem complex. The uncollared coalition of three adult cheetahs has been observed at least five times in 2011. In addition, there are three independent sighting records of a coalition of five cheetahs which were roughly classified as two adult females with their sub-adult offspring. Finally, released female N029 has been rearing at least two cubs on parts of the Reserve, and in adjacent park areas, in 2011.

The research team for N/a'an ku sê would like to thank NamibRand Nature Reserve and all its staff and associated concessionaires for their cooperation, their help & advice and all their efforts during 2011. We look forward to the continued partnership in 2012 and beyond.

Stuart Munro

Mountain zebra at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge

Over the last two years the Mountain Zebra Project in NamibRand has focussed on the animals that use three main water holes in the north-east of the Reserve: Moringa, near the head of the Moringa valley, Draaihoek and Porcupine. All are artificial water sources, although Draaihoek is close to a natural water supply in a deep rocky cleft in the lower western slopes of the Nubib mountains. These sources provide water for the largest concentration of mountain zebra in the northern part of the Reserve, and previous work suggests that these animals are part of a larger population that moves in and out across the north-eastern boundary of the Reserve. The project also aims to establish overlap in use with other water holes and pilot observations have been carried out using camera traps at a number of places in the Reserve.

Some of the most interesting developments in this respect have been at the water hole maintained by Sossusvlei Desert Lodge in the extreme north of the Reserve. A camera trap was in place between February and December 2011 and over 10,000 images were collected. Most of these were of other species but the mountain zebras yielded 364 images that were good enough to establish individual identities from their unique stripe patterns. These proved to be from 24 individuals, mostly new to the study, some from breeding groups and some from bachelor groups. All of the observations were at night, a pattern of visits that is typical of mountain zebra drinking near to human activity. Significantly, none of the animals had been seen before at any of the Moringa-Draaihoek-Porcupine group of water holes. Moringa, the nearest, is about 13 km away as the crow flies but because of the angle of the boundary fence in the north-east, a mountain zebra would have to walk at least 15km across open habitat and cross the C27 main road that bisects the Reserve. None of this is impossible for mountain zebras, but none that we know of have done it so far.

The only known overlap to date is with Hyaena, a water hole that nestles against the red Namib dunes that rise along the western edge of the Reserve. Of the 24 mountain zebra now known at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, six (25%) have also been identified at Hyaena. So there is definite connectivity between these two water holes, which are about 9km apart as the crow flies and at least 10 km on foot. The number identified at Hyaena may be an underestimate because this water point is heavily monopolised by oryx which often prevent mountain zebra from drinking and keep their visits brief. Only 12 animals have been identified at Hyaena Dam, and a half of these have also been seen at the Sossusvlei Desert Lodge water hole.

Apart from this new information on connectivity, which is vital information for conservation management, we have also obtained further information from the above lodge about another male mountain zebra that lives with plains zebra. Readers of "The Barking Gecko" (see September 2010 and February 2011 issues) may remember Stompy, an adult male who lived, perhaps for years, with plains zebra, was then seen in a brief, hopeful, association with a young mountain zebra (probably a young female) and then, perhaps finally, went back to life as a "plains" zebra. Sadly, Stompy has not been seen for some time but, remarkably, he has been replaced by a



Photo: Camera trap



Photo: Ann Scott

Above: Mountain zebras at the water hole at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge.
Below: Male mountain zebra (left) interacting with plains zebras.

male mountain zebra behaving in a similar fashion who was photographed by wardens Ann and Mike Scott near Kwessiegat on 10 October 2011. We have named this male "Hotspur" and, like Stompy, he has spent time closely associated with plains zebra, living with them in the open plains of NamibRand. After being photographed near Kwessiegat, Hotspur moved with his companions to Sandgrouse, some 17 km south-east of Kwessiegat and near to Keerweder. The next movement, in December last year, links this story to the results from Sossusvlei Desert Lodge, with Hotspur moving north to that waterhole with a group of plains zebra. This water hole is 25 km in a straight line from Keerweder, and Hotspur was presumably taken there by his highly mobile plains zebra companions. So, distance itself is not what prevents mountain zebra moving between Moringa-Draaihoek-Porcupine and the north-west, but we will have to wait to see if mountain zebras ever make such movements on their own.

Hotspur is a fully adult male, perhaps 5-6 years old, in good condition and with none of the fighting scars that Stompy accumulated in what may have been, losing, battles with larger plains zebra stallions defending their breeding groups. What makes these mountain zebra males bond with plains zebra groups is still a mystery but one we hope to solve. So far there have been no obvious hybrid offspring in NambRand but these repeated associations are worrying because in Etosha the two species are reported to have resulted in extensive interbreeding.

Many thanks as always to Mike and Ann Scott, and Nils Odendaal, for their help and support; and especially to Quintin Hartung and the staff at Keerweder for maintaining the network of camera traps.

Morris Gosling

Mesa Community College study tour

Introduction

As part of a Mesa Community College (US) study abroad programme to Namibia, 12 students, myself as instructor and four support staff visited the NamibRand Nature Reserve on 3-7 July 2011 and engaged in the following activities: (1) collect data on a system of mountain zebra trails (as part of a larger mountain zebra project in collaboration with Dr Morris Gosling; see page 17), (2) remediate the area surrounding the staff quarters adjacent to Kwessiegat, (3) set out camera traps at several locations with evidence of leopard activity.

Mountain Zebra mapping project

The major goal of this project was to GPS map the major paths taken by mountain zebra to the Moringa water hole over a mountain pass, from a start point approximately 6km south-east of the water hole. Since there were many paths that branched off the major path at the start point, we split our group into three separate groups and followed what appeared to the most used major routes over the pass.

As the paths were followed we measured the size (diameter and depth) of rolling pits and distance from the main path, and ranked each pit on a scale of freshness-of-use. In addition, we mapped the location of each pile of droppings and dung piles (larger piles of droppings) and ranked each on a freshness scale. Each rolling pit, pile of droppings and dung pile was marked with a waypoint using a GPS, and the major path taken by the zebra was recorded as a GPS tracklog. The data are recorded in three excel spreadsheets. The GPS data were also entered into Google Earth and saved as three *.kml files that can be opened in Google Earth, as well as image files of the paths over the Google Earth satellite maps (see example below).

Just over 220 separate waypoints were recorded. Of these approximately 50 were rolling pits and the remainder primarily droppings or dung piles. We started at an elevation of approximately 1100m, crossed the pass at approximately



Photo: Mesa Community College

The staff quarters at Kwessiegat after rehabilitation.

1280m and descended to the Moringa water hole at approximately 1100m elevation for a total distance of 6km. These data have been sent to Dr Morris Gosling who will integrate them into his wider studies on the movement, ecology and behavior of this threatened species.

Remediation of the staff quarters at Kwessiegat

The disused camp at Kwessigat had at one time had provided accommodation, power and water to staff. As it is no longer in use, the water and power lines had become broken and exposed, wire fences were a hazard for the wildlife and the site was littered with broken hardware, trash and rock piles. It was an eyesore on the beautiful landscape and needed to be remediated.

Our group spent an entire day working to clean up the site so it was pleasant to look at and did not pose a hazard to the wildlife. Specifically we: (1) removed all of the fencing wire and fence posts, (2) buried all the water and power lines or removed them from the site so none were visible, (3) cleared and removed all broken hardware and trash from the site.

Camera traps for leopard activity

Leopard activity in the vicinity of Wolwedans had been noted over the past few months, as evidenced by fresh tracks in the sand, actual sightings, and skulls of springbok kills. We set out three camera traps in locations of the most recent activity to attempt to determine how frequently the animal may be visiting the area and whether it was a single animal or more than one. It was perhaps over-optimistic to attempt to collect camera trap data over such a short time (two nights) for such an elusive animal, but we decided to try. None of the cameras we set out contained any leopard images after a period of approximately 48 hrs.

Camera traps are an ideal way to monitor elusive animals such as leopards and other carnivores. It would be a fruitful endeavour to conduct a much more extensive camera trap survey in parts of the NRNR, using more cameras and over a longer time period. We have camera trap surveyed in other Namibian reserves with significant results on the carnivore populations and individual identities from spot patterns.

Dennis Wilson



Map: Mesa Community College

Image file of a mountain zebra path over a Google Earth satellite map.

More research snippets



Our camel thorn is no longer an *Acacia*

The International Botanical Congress has confirmed that there are now no (indigenous) *Acacia* species on the African mainland, following taxonomic changes within the genus (<http://www.scienceinpublic.com.au/mediareleases/the-acacia-debate#more-6623>).

Australia will keep the name *Acacia* for their wattles (having proposed the change of type for the genus back in 2003), and African *Acacias* will now become one of either *Vachellia* (like *erioloba* or *tortilis*) or *Senegalia* (like *mellifera*).

Although these changes are still meeting with considerable resistance from some quarters, it looks as though we will indeed have to become accustomed to using *Vachellia erioloba* for our camel thorn.



L to R: Mike Scott, Dr Andrew McKechnie and Dr Blair Wolf on the dunes at Kwessiegat during an investigation into studies on birds and climate change.

Birds and climate change studies

Dr Andrew McKechnie (University of Pretoria) and Dr Blair Wolf (University of New Mexico) visited NamibRand in January 2012, with two of their post-graduate students, Ben Smit and Maxine Whitfield. This exploratory trip was part of an important larger project to develop a framework for predicting the consequences of climate change on birds in semi-arid areas, by looking at the relationship between temperature and the way the organism performs. One of the possible focal species that is being investigated on NamibRand is the endemic Dune Lark, which has an extremely restricted range and specific habitat requirements, and could be rapidly affected by rising temperatures.

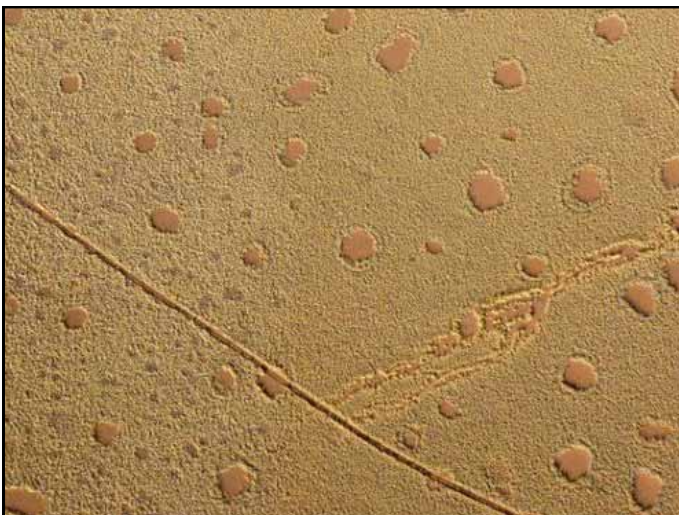


Photo: Denis Hessemans

New fairy circles being formed

29 October 2011: I took some pictures from the hot air balloon this morning of some new fairy circles developing in a waterway here on Geluk, notice the grass colour and height difference within the grey baby fairy circles! (Denis Hessemans).

Publications now available

The **2011 Game Count Report** has been added to our online library, <http://www.namibrand.org/Library.htm>.

The direct link to download the report is:

<http://www.namibrand.org/Library/NRNR%20game%20count%20June%202011%20-%20main%20report.pdf>

Below please find a link to an **article on Namibia and NamibRand** written by Eric Schacht (a recent intern here) and published in Nebraska's most widely read newspaper.

<http://www.prairiefirenewspaper.com/2011/12/exploring-conservation-success-in-africa>

Some of you may recall that Eric stayed with us as part of an internship programme that we are establishing with the University of Nebraska.

Ann Scott

Interesting sightings and photo gallery



Left: Nymph of a *Brachytrupes membranaceus* cricket; the adults have a deafening call (Ann Scott & Mike Picker); Centre: Wolwedans guide Lucas Mbang with a "desert dueller", a Namib sand snake (NamibRand Safaris).



Left: Greater Kestrel showing much interest in oryx droppings (Jacques van Eck); Centre: Yellow Wagtail (left; with a Black-chested Prinia) at NaDEET—a new record for NRNR (Viktoria & Andreas Keding); Right: Huge black Spitting Cobra at NaDEET (Viktoria & Andreas Keding).



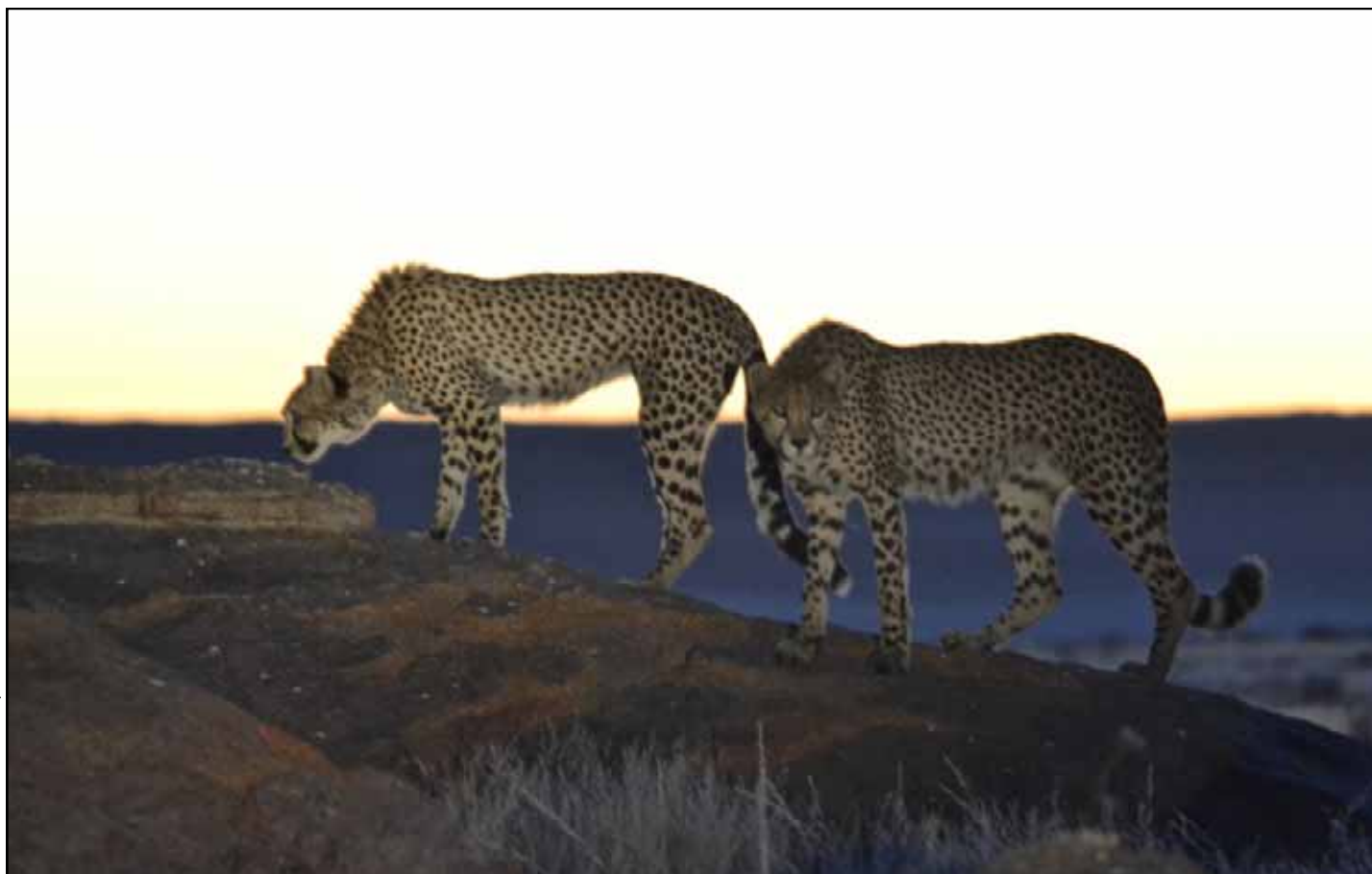
Left: Blue wildebeest at Sossusvlei Desert Lodge on 6 September 2011 (NRNR camera trap); Centre: African wildcat at Family Hideout (Richardo Tjiho); Aardwolf at Kalkpomp (N/a'an ku sê camera trap).



Leopards galore: Left: At Prosopis waterhole (N/a'an ku sê camera trap); Centre: Mother and two cubs (one visible) at Boulders on 20 December 2011 (Vincent kahiha & Lucan Mbang); Right: at Moringa (NRNR camera trap).

More photographs

Photo: Emmanuel and Stephanie Haine



Two of a group of four cheetahs seen east of Bushman Koppies on 2 July 2011. Sossusvlei Desert Lodge ranger, Peter Nuugonya says this was one of his closest views of cheetah ever in the area, and sent us this photograph taken by his guests from Germany.

Thank you

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this issue of *The Barking Gecko* by providing articles: Jefta Ampueja, Andreas Brückner and the Brückner family, Dr Morris Gosling, Quintin Hartung, Eric Hesemans, Viktoria Keding, Valeri Mouton, Stuart Munro, Peter Nuugonya, Nils Odendaal, Mike Scott, Theo Shungu, Dr George Tucker, Barbara Wayrauch, Dennis Wilson and Peter Woolfe. We would also like to thank all those who so generously share their photographs and interesting sightings! All the contributions by guides and rangers are especially encouraging. Also thank you to Nils Odendaal, Jana and Stephan Brückner and Mike Scott for editorial inputs. *The Barking Gecko* is your newsletter and, as always, we invite you to keep on sending us your contributions in terms of news and views, short reports, sightings, artwork and photographs!

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