

BOGENFELS ATTEMPT NUMBER 4

Fitting brown hyenas at Bogenfels with GPS collars seems to be a never-ending story. But as I reported before, we won't give up. This time we asked H.-O. Reuter from Windhoek to help us darting the animals. We arrived at Van Reenen Bay late in the afternoon and Trygve was already waiting for us at the research station.

We decided to try our luck close to the southern end of the seal colony for the first night. At 2:00 h in the morning a beautiful brown hyena approached the bait, but was extremely wary of the vehicle and circled widely around us before disappearing into the night. Well, that was only the first night and we felt confident, that we would have other chances in the following nights. We found a fantastic bay, surrounded by cliffs with many resting sites and caves and the amount of hyena spoor gave us hope. However we couldn't believe it, when before sunset, the first hyena walked straight towards our bait. Couldn't it be better? Initially the hyena did not seem to be too concerned about the vehicle, but suddenly changed its mind and ran away. So we could only hope for night-time and waited patiently. At 2:00 h a brown hyena passed our bait, but was unfortunately too far away to be darted. Just before sunrise, another brown hyena used the same track to go to the beach and we decided to follow it. Again, bad luck, as it had disappeared into thin air. While driving back to our darting spot, we saw another brown hyena in the far distance and we knew that we had missed our chances for that night. The following night was quiet – no hyenas. By then I rather felt like celebrating Christmas instead of spending sleepless nights in the field. Nevertheless, we had one more night to go and decided to have a nice braai at False Plumpudding and to take hyena darting a bit more easily. We used the alarm system at the bait and therefore only had to sit outside the igloo to listen to the alarm. Unfortunately we had to leave latest at 7:00 h in the morning to take H.-O. back to the airport, so that he won't miss his

Christmas celebrations. And: as many times before: Murphy's Law ruled. We stopped listening to the alarm at 2:00 h to catch some sleep before the drive back to town and in the remaining five hours, the hyenas had a party with our bait and carried all of it away. As if this wasn't enough: just a few kilometres north of the camp we passed a brown hyena resting next to the beach in a hummock dune on our way back. We stopped the car and watched the hyena. It was posing nicely, as if saying: "I know you don't have time to dart me, but look how easy it could be". Another brown hyena crossed our way a little bit later. So, although we had many, many sightings, we failed again. At least there is always news for the newsletter....

Thanks to H.-O. Reuter, Trygve Cooper and Steve Appleton for joining this trip and thanks to Wilfried Erni for the bait – unfortunately we only fed jackals this time.



At least we managed to enjoy a lekker braai, despite unsuccessful and sleepless nights.

CONSERVATION STATUS OF BROWN HYENAS IN NAMIBIA

With the distribution of our sighting forms in Namibia, we hope to get a better picture of brown hyena abundance. The conservation status in Namibia is "insufficiently known (vulnerable or endangered)", which highlights the shortage of data.

SLOT TINS

Luderitz Safari's and Tours collected N\$ 584-50 in their slot tin. Thanks to everybody who contributed to the project.

There are seven slot tins at various places in Luderitz and the money collected mainly contributes to the basic running costs of the project.

BOGENFELS ATTEMPT NUMBER 5



Floppy with his new remote-download GPS

Although I should have spent most of my time in front of my computer to finish my PhD thesis, I couldn't resist joining the field trip that was planned for the end of February to Bogenfels. Luckily I did, as we finally managed to dart one of the Bogenfels hyenas. The trip was planned for four nights with Gino Noli and René Rossler joining Hartmut Winterbach and myself on the second day. As so many times before, the first night was unsuccessful, but when Hartmut and I returned to camp, we spotted a brown hyena feeding on a seal close to the seal colony. We needed to take our chances and approached the animal. It was not aware of our presence, although all the jackals, that tried to get some bits and pieces of the hyena's food, ran away as soon as they saw us. However, the hyena was too busy with its prey and Hartmut was able to dart it quickly. The hyena ran into the hummocks and after darting him a second time, went down nicely. Floppy, that will be his name from now on, is a 10 year old male in a good condition. He had a pretty deep wound on his hindleg, but it seemed to heal nicely. Bite marks in the neck also indicated, that he must have been involved in a fight just recently, but otherwise he appeared to be in a good condition for his age. He had some old, but healed fractures in his front legs, which explains, why he was limping a bit when we first spotted him. We will try to do the first data download from the collar in April and will report in the next newsletter about it. Unfortunately Gino and René missed the action, as they only arrived later that day, but: we had three more days and nights to go. We went to the Bogenfels Arch for the next night and although one hyena was in the vicinity, it again did not approach the bait and we were not able to dart it. We decided to move camp to False Plumpudding again and set up two sets of bait, one near the igloo and the other one at Dreimasterbay to double our chances. Gino and I were lucky. We darted a hyena just after midnight. Everything seemed to go perfect, but we were already wondering why we hadn't seen the charge of the dart go off and hoped, that we just did not pay attention to it. We started searching for the hyena and unsuccessfully scanned the area for over one hour until realising, that the dart must have failed. We returned to the area the next morning and found the hyena's footprints, which showed clearly, that it just walked off. So again: equipment failure. No luck the next night, but all of us were extremely relieved, that we managed to get Floppy on the first day.

Thanks to Hartmut Winterbach, Gino Noli and René Rossler for all their enthusiasm and help during this trip.



AERIAL TELEMETRY FUNDING

We are desperately trying to raise funds for aerial telemetry. The grant we usually received to cover the majority of these costs unfortunately does not exist any more and we are looking for other options.

Aerial telemetry is essential for the success of our studies. In order to be able to download the data from the GPS collars, we need to locate the brown hyena from the air first. The ground time will then receive the GPS position of the animal from the flight team and will then drive and walk as close as possible towards the hyena. Download is possible from a distance of 1 km and takes about 50 minutes for 1000 positions.

Especially for projects such as the pre- to post mining impact study in the Bogenfels area, it is of importance to download GPS data on a regular basis, as we can discover possible impacts and develop mitigation strategies in time.

If anybody of you has got any ideas, where we can apply for funding, please let us know. We need a minimum of N\$ 10 000 to cover the basic costs consisting of fuel, landing fee and maintenance.

AGATE BEACH HYENAS AND VICKY

We finally managed to fly to locate our new Agate Beach hyenas. I'd been out a few times trying to find them with the vehicle, without much luck. Although I received the signal of one of them once, I couldn't find the young female at all. This was the more surprising, as both of them were usually seen together, so I started to get a bit worried. However, there was not need for worrying, as both of them were found closely together on the western side of the Kowis mountains. This is the first time that we found hyenas of the Agate Beach Clan in this area. We knew that the Wolf Bay Clan animals visit these mountains, but that they don't venture into the sand dunes to the west. The home ranges of both clans seem to overlap on the western side and we will hike in the Kowis mountains soon to map the area for hyena signs.

During the same flight, we tried to locate the missing Vicky again. We couldn't find her and possibly have to accept, that the collar either failed or that she really doesn't live in our study areas. The battery life of the collar will expire soon and we might therefore never be able to find her. Since there was a lot of rain in many areas of the Sperrgebiet, we doubt that she visits the Kaukasib waterhole on a regular basis. The gemsbok and springbok are further inland, but once they go back to the fountain, we will try to monitor the waterhole for hyena activity as well. We would really like to retrieve the collar, not only to download the data, but also to finally relieve Vicky of carrying it. So keep your fingers crossed...

DJANGO'S TRAVELS

To all our surprise, Django is well and moves around as if nothing happened. To remind you, Django was fitted with a GPS collar in June last year. After having been in a serious fight with another brown hyena, we had to drop the badly damaged collar off. Unfortunately Django was in a bad condition, having lots of deep wounds around his neck and obviously a bacterial eye infection. The vets that I consulted said that he might turn blind and we really did not think that we

would see him again, although we know, that other blind hyenas manage to survive quite well.

Anyhow, Django was spotted at the beginning of February at Baker's Bay. The GPS data that we had downloaded in October did not show any positions around the Baker's Bay seal colony and the area where he was seen was approximately 20 km south of the position where I had last seen him. He seems to be in a good condition, but his eyesight is not the best. His eyes are still bluish in colour and he seems to react more to noises than to movements. Nevertheless, we are extremely happy to know that he is fine and hope to see him soon again.



Django at Baker's Bay (T. Goosen)

Thanks to Tony Goosen for reporting Django's sighting and for taking such great photographs.

ORANJEMUND RESCUE



This young brown hyena was trapped in a pond that was filling with water. There was no escape route, as the ground was slippery and the area was fenced off. I was prepared to go on the four hour drive to Oranjemund to dart the hyena to carry it out of the area, but we were running out of time quickly. Fortunately some people from Oranjemund formed a rescue crew, built a catch-pole and were able to save the hyena from its destiny. The confused and exhausted hyena ran off quickly and I'm sure that it learned its lesson.

Thanks to everybody, who was involved in the rescue operation.

NEWS

We gave a presentation about the carnivore questionnaire project and inland demography project at the SKEP workshop in Rosh Pinah in March. Nangula Johannes, our assistant at the Environmental Information Centre and Paulus Johannes, who helps with data entry, participated in the workshop as well. For more information about the SKEP programme, please visit their web page: www.nnf.org.na/SKEP/skepindex.htm.

Gemma Cryer from Great Britain arrived at the beginning of March to participate in the Bogenfels study. She will be joined by another volunteer in April and they will both be based at Van Reenen Bay to collect data about the foraging behaviour of brown hyenas at the seal colony and they will work together with Gino Noli and Kathie Peard to download Floppy's GPS data on a monthly basis.

The Brown Hyena Research Project featured in the BBC series Animal Park – Wild in Africa. The programme was broadcast at the beginning of March and we received encouraging feed-back from viewers.

There are apparently two brown hyenas roaming the streets of Luderitz at the moment. Emma seems to have joined the other hyena and both of them are regularly seen between sunset and sunrise, mainly around the German church and near the old water tower.

OTHER SIGHTINGS



Stuart Bowen saw this brown hyena near Bogenfels in January. Many brown hyena and other carnivore sightings were reported during the last three months, mainly from Luderitz town, but also from the Baker's Bay area.

There was also a record of a cheetah sighting near Oranjemund. Other than that, many black-backed jackals, bat-eared foxes and some leopards were recorded.

We will include our data in the Namibian Biodiversity Dataset, which can be visited at <http://www.biodiversity.org.na/index.php>

Thanks to everybody who reported sightings. We will hopefully be able to publish a separate report about carnivore occurrence in the southern Karas region soon.

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

Caltex kindly donated an additional N\$ 2000 towards our fuel expenses, as we used the usual donation of N\$ 10 000 within eight months.

Namdeb continues to support the Brown Hyena Research Project and the Environmental Information Centre with an annual donation of N\$ 60 000. This donation goes towards the basic running costs of the project and is also used to pay the salary for our employee at the Centre.

A big thank you again for accepting our slot tins goes to **Luderitz Yacht Club, Bay View Hotel, Coastway Tours, Sandrose, Luderitz Safaris and Tours, Kolmanskop Curio Shop, Grillenberger's Bottle Store** and **Namibia Wildlife Resorts**.

We haven't done much fundraising during the last few months, as I was busy writing my PhD thesis. I hope to be able to catch up with fundraising in May again, as money for many basic costs are still outstanding.

THE BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND COMPANIES FOR THEIR HELP AND SUPPORT:

Namdeb	GraphPad Software, Inc.	BHP Billiton	Coastal Electric & Hardware	Jean-Paul Roux	Erich Looser
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Predator Conservation Trust	Namibia Nature Foundation	First National Bank	MFMR	Frikkie Kraamwinkel	Beppo Family
OK Grocer	Namibia Nature Foundation	Luderitz Yacht Club	Luderitz Safaris & Tours	Rene Rossler	Willem Swiegers
Truckscan	Sidewinder Films	Luderitz SPAR	Riaan Laubscher	Ronel v.d. Merwe	Luderitz Backpackers
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If you would prefer to do a bank transfer, the details are as follows:
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ADOPTION AND DONATION FORM

Post form to Brown Hyena Research Project, P. O. Box 739, Lüderitz, Namibia or
e-mail to strandwolf@iway.na

† Adopt/Sponsor a brown hyena for one year (N\$/ZAR 1500-00, Euro/US\$ 250-00,
£ 150-00)

† Become a friend of the Brown Hyena Research Project - annual fee: N\$/ZAR 500-00, Euro/US\$ 50-00,
£ 35-00 discount for members from Namibia (60%) and other African countries (30%)

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Thank you very much for your support!
