

MINERVA'S NEW DEN

I was busy in December with the Wolf Bay feeding ecology study (see previous newsletter) and therefore neglected the hyenas a bit. Therefore it was a good opportunity when Anna and Paul from Australia visited me at the beginning of February to go out to check Minerva's movements. I downloaded the data from her GSM collar from the internet, which showed an increased amount of activity at a den site near Agate Beach. This den site is outside the Diamond Area so that my visitors could join me on the walk to the den. Already from a distance, I could see that the ground around the den had been disturbed and arriving at the den, the strong smell of carcasses and also the fresh and decomposing carcasses in the area confirmed that the den was active. Anna and Paul drove to the den the next morning and couldn't believe it when they saw a single cub in front of the den. They went back two days later, when also the second cub made an appearance. I was convinced that we were dealing with a litter of two cubs, approximately 9 to 11 months old. I was really excited, but only found time to go to the den a few days later. On arrival, I spotted some dark, moving 'spots



Minerva (second hyena from the left) talking a walk with her four cubs

in the distance. Usually, dark, moving spots turn out to be ostriches, but something did not seem right. I finally managed to get my binoculars out and could not believe my eyes when I saw that the spots were five (!) hyenas moving towards the den. One of the hyenas was Minerva, clearly identifiable through her collar and the other four smaller hyenas were her cubs. What a great start to the day! I hadn't seen that many cubs together for over ten years, when Gypsy and Emma raised six cubs together (a litter of four older and two young cubs). Since the den is in a public area, I did not want to draw attention to the site and have not been back to observe the animals, but I monitor Minerva's movement in the area with the help of her collar. The den was still used at the end of February, but it looks as if Minerva has moved her cubs to a new location inside the Diamond Area since then.

Thanks to Anna and Paul for getting up early in the morning to catch a glimpse of the cubs!

ANOTHER THEFT AT KOLMANSKOP

Every year around the end of December and beginning of January our Environmental Information Centre seems to be the target of visitors that feel the need to steal something. Two years ago we lost a leopard skull from our exhibit that was used for school presentations. Last year our slot tin was stolen. This year, we had very cheeky thieves. Sarafina helped me to carry some

exhibits back to my vehicle. Some visitors were in the adjoining room with the Diamond Mining exhibition. We decided to leave our Centre's door open, so that the visitors could have a look at our exhibit, too. We came back only three to four minutes later and had to realise that these 'visitors' had stolen parts of our merchandize – all hyena road sign stickers were gone. Sarafina went to look for the persons that had been in the Diamond Mining room before we left, but they had vanished together with our stickers...

TOSCA'S TEENAGE CUBS EXPLORE THE WORLD

Tosca moved her cubs from the Jungle den to another den, approximately 5 km further east shortly after Christmas. However, the cubs were close to being weaned by that stage and therefore it was not all too surprising for me to suddenly get sightings of cubs reported.

It started at the beginning of February. Steve drove to E-Bay for an EIA site visit in connection with another mining extension. Near Unverhofft Pan, about 1 km east of the new den, he spotted the two 'subadult' hyenas, the weaned cubs. They got a bit of a fright, seeing the vehicle and ran back into the direction of the den.



Adult and the two cubs playing in front of the den

The second sighting was reported by Gary Gray. He saw the two animals near the green water tanks next to the road between Kolmanskop and E-Bay mine. They were feeding on some waste that Gary still saw on the road, but also ran away when the vehicle stopped. I'm sure we will hear and see a lot more of these hyenas in future.



AERIAL DOWNLOADS

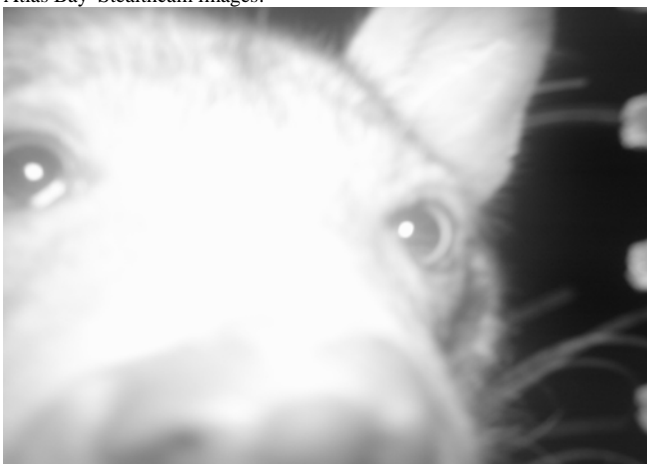
Gino came to Aus at the beginning of January to do the aerial data downloads of Tosca and Obelixa. A friend from Germany, Thomas Klimeck, offered his help to fly with Gino and download the data. I drove to Aus to give Thomas a crash course in GPS telemetry, receiver function, switching of antennas and how not to get sick while circling around a hyena. The weather was not the best for taking off in Aus, but on day two they managed to fly towards Luderitz to do Obelixa's download in the E-Bay area and Tosca's in the Atlas Bay area. They found Obelixa quickly. She was moving north along E-Bay beach. Thomas triggered the download while Obelixa was still walking towards the ghost town at E-Bay before finding a resting site inside one of the ruins. The download went well and they flew further north to find Tosca. Tosca's download was a bit more tricky, not only because Thomas got sick and needed to concentrate on his wellbeing instead of the receiver, but also because she was in a deep hole, which made the download extremely difficult (one of Tosca's old tricks – she did the same to us a few years ago). Gino landed at Luderitz airport and I met them there to collect the receiver. After a short chat and refuelling the plane, Gino and Thomas took off again, but not for long. Something was wrong with the plane and Gino managed to fly a perfect 8 to get back to the airport. The plane was obviously grounded in Luderitz and Gino is making plans at the moment to have it fixed. We will therefore do the next downloads from the ground, but I can't wait for our next tracking flight, hopefully around June this year.



Emergency landing

THE CAMERA TRAP GALLERY

Atlas Bay Stealthcam images:



Stealth Cam 12/11/2009 04:35:19 057 F
Inquisitive brown hyena cub



Stealth Cam 12/10/2009 02:30:14 058 F
Unknown adult hyena carrying food back to the den

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

Luderitz Safaris and Tours collected N\$ 489.05 in their slot tin. Thank you very much for your contribution.

A brown hyena from the Peninsula/Wolf Bay Clan was adopted as a present by **Thomas Long** for **Richard S. Gill**. The hyena was named Andy and we hope to be able to fit a GPS collar on Andy in August this year.

Tosca was also adopted. Thanks to **Elke Berger Kunz** for supporting the project by sponsoring this special hyena.

Our long term sponsor **Chevron** contributed fuel to the amount of N\$ 15.000 to the project. Thank you very much for this long term support.

The **Predator Conservation Trust** in the UK also continued to support the hyena project. We received a donation of £ 1.300 towards this year's darting expenses.

A special big thank you goes to **Namdeb**. Namdeb has been supporting the hyena project with generous donations since 1999. We received another donation of N\$ 106.200 to cover our general annual expenses and to run the Environmental Information Centre at Kolmanskop.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

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

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