

MINERVA'S APPEARANCE ON THE PENINSULA

The last time that we had seen Minerva was in 2010 when we tried to capture her to remove her GSM collar. Since then there had been no sign of her until December 2012 when Jessica Kemper and Jean-Paul Roux saw her close to the Second Lagoon on the Luderitz Peninsula. I really thought that she would dead by now having reached an age of approximately 15 years – so this was a great surprise. She looked thin though and was spotted by other Luderitzbuchters on many occasions thereafter, usually around the Second Lagoon, but also close to the rubbish dump and Diaz Point, where there is a fresh water trough. Steve and I were extremely lucky to be able to see her in January during mid-morning close to the water tower on the Peninsula. She was a bit disorientated and her eyesight does not seem to be the best any more. Since then, no-one else has seen her, which probably means that she has died in the meantime. But who knows, maybe she appears again.



Minerva (photo Steve Appleton)



Minerva (photo Jessica Kemper & Jean-Paul Roux)

Minerva was the main breeding female of the Agate Beach Clan. We knew her since 2003 when we fitted her with a VHF collar at Agate Beach. She was captured together with Remus, who was unfortunately killed by a vehicle on the tar road close to Luderitz in 2006. We fitted her with a GPS telemetry collar in 2007 and with a GSM collar in 2009. She raised many litters of cubs and had four cubs of approximately 9 to 11 months of age when I last saw her walking towards their den in February 2010 (see Issue 29). Her main foraging ground has always been the Luderitz rubbish dump, but she also found food along the beaches north of Agate Beach. Minerva surprised as all, as she was also occasionally recorded from Flamingo Island, foraging for seabird eggs. It is nice to see that our hyenas can have long and successful lives and can eventually die of old age.

OBELIXA IN THE GHOST TOWN

Obelixa' cubs are 9 months old now. I'm not entirely sure where their den site is at the moment, as the GPS data that I downloaded was inconclusive, but I know that Obelixa's previous cubs, which are 2 year old sub-adults now, 'like' to spend time with her: when I was doing the last data download at the beginning of March, together with my PhD student Elsa Bussiere, who studies brown hyenas in Tswalu, South Africa, I was tricked by one of the naughty sub-adults. I received a strong VHF signal from Obelixa coming from one of the ghost houses. Suddenly we saw a hyena peeking out of the door – I automatically assumed that this must be Obelixa and started the download. However, I was concerned that the VHF pulse rate did not change to an activity signal, when we had the sighting – despite the animal obviously moving, fearing that the collar might be malfunctioning. During the download however, I suddenly realised that I could not see a collar and the closer inspection by binoculars confirmed this. The hyena that was observing us through the door of the ghost house was not as assumed Obelixa, it was one of the sub-adults... These animals are always good for surprises!

KANDAHAR

The **Kitsch Inn** Vintage Bar and Restaurant in Les Houches, France, adopted a brown hyena from the Van Reenen Bay Clan and named the animal Kandahar. Kandahar has been a regular visitor to the seal colony at Van Reenen Bay and shares this food source with at least four other hyenas.

Thank you so much for your support and I hope we have updates about your hyena soon.

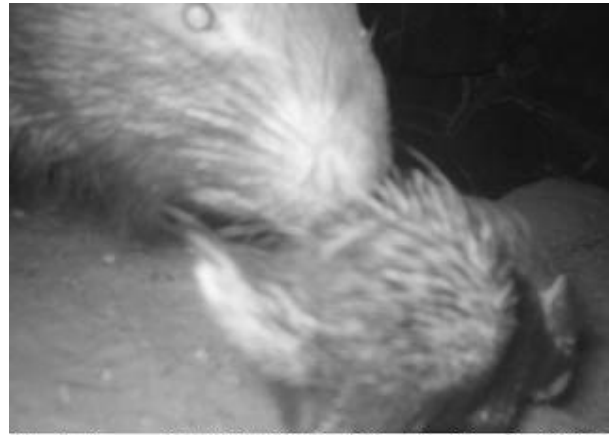


TALKING PICTURES – TERRA MATER DOCUMENTARY

The German version of the documentary that we have been filming together with Talking Pictures from South Africa has been broadcast by Terra Mater on Servus TV in Austria in December 2012. Please see this link for further information <http://www.servustv.com/cs/Satellite/Article/Terra-Mater-011259464842200>

PORCUPINES AT THE WATERTOWER DEN

I've set up two camera traps on the Luderitz Peninsula in the hope of capturing images of Minerva. One was set up at a den and daytime resting site close to the water tower and the other one in the area around Griffith Bay. I unfortunately did not capture any images of Minerva, but both dens were occupied by porcupines. It was so amazing to see a new-born porcupine – what a treat.



NEW PENINSULA HYENAS

The camera trap that I set-up at the den at Griffith Bay at least captured some hyenas. I knew that there was a lot of hyena activity in the area, as I've been recording paste marks along the 4x4 track passing the dens for the past three months. The dens in that area have not been showing any sign of hyena activity since 2003. This has partly got to do with the move of the Peninsula Clan hyenas to the vacant Wolf Bay territory to the south. However, although the main activity of the former Peninsula Clan is concentrated around the Atlas and Wolf Bay seal colonies, our GPS telemetry data shows that they do come back to the Peninsula on occasion. However, the animal or animals that we have captured at Griffith Bay are not in my ID book and I'm excited to find out who they are and whether a new Peninsula Clan has formed. I will keep you informed.



SARAH EDWARDS

The human-carnivore conflict study has been running for nearly a year now and how fast the time has flown by. Life on the project has not for an instant been boring and I am loving every moment. I've been rewarded with some great first hand experiences; in September I was lucky enough to see not one but three spotted hyenas close up at the cattle trough on Namtib and in October Evelyn and I were excited to see an aardwolf on the farm. I was also treated to an early morning sighting of a brown hyena drinking from a water trough at Klein Aus Vista.

Camera trap photos have continued to prove exciting and sometimes unexpected. Most recently we got the first caracal photo for the project on Namtib, we've also had more spotted and brown hyena, leopard, honey badger and small-spotted genet. More unusual photos include two lappet faced vultures, owls, Cape cobras and even a family of slender mongoose hunting birds drinking from a water trough at Tsirub. As of yet the cheetah still remains elusive having not made an appearance on camera trap, but we shall be ready with the champagne when that day arrives.



In October Evelyn and I set up the rub stations and hair snares as non-invasive hair collection methods for genetic and stable isotope analysis. Rub stations consist of carpet pads with barbed wire attached to trees baited with catnip, beaver anal gland secretion, and a really potent bait called Canine Call. The hair snares are pieces barbed wire lining holes in fences where carnivores are likely to be passing through. Both methods are working really well; it's amazing how excited I now get seeing some hair on a piece of carpet! I can't wait to send the hair off at the end of the project to see which species we have.

It's been a long hot summer on Namtib, with temperatures inside the tent reaching 42°C. We've still only had 1mm of summer rain so far; everyone's fingers are definitely crossed for more. The animals are getting more used to my camp and coming closer, I've had kudu, fighting oryx, jackals as night time visitors, owls nesting behind the tent, baboons, male weaver birds fighting their own reflections in the car wing mirrors, and even a sun spider in my laundry basket. Never a dull moment!

Most recently the project has collaborated with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism on the National Leopard Survey to try and estimate leopard density in the south. This has involved putting up an additional 23 camera trap stations on the farms and working on a new farm – Wiesenborn. I spent a week working with Amon Andreas and his team from Scientific Services in Windhoek setting up camera traps and learning from their experiences how to "hyena proof" the traps. As I write this the cameras have only been up for a week but we've already had aardwolf, caracal, jackal porcupine and baboon investigating these strange new additions to the environment. As these camera trap stations consist of two camera traps either side of the road, we hope to get both right and left hand side photos of the animals which will allow individual identification of leopard and hyenas based on their individual markings.

For the next phase of the project I am going to start questionnaires with farmers to gain a better insight into the human perspective of the human-carnivore conflict problem which I am very much looking forward to. I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank Ingrid for her help and support, especially during some of the more stressful times this year. I would also like to thank Go Green and Porcupine Bar and Grill for financial assistance and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for collaborating with us. My work wouldn't be possible without the cooperation of all the farmers to whom I am grateful for continuing interest in the project, and most recently to the Itzco's for allowing us to work on Wiesenborn for the leopard survey. And last but not least to the Thiele family at Namtib for their enthusiasm, help, support and laughs.



FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

Christian & Christine Duell from Germany sponsored EUR 200 and became members of the Brown Hyena Research Project.

Christine Lindner renewed her membership and sponsored N\$ 1000.

NHK Enterprises from Japan were filming brown hyenas in our study areas in December last year and sponsored US\$ 1000.

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

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