

THE HAPPIEST AND THE SADDEST DAY WITH DOLLAR

Brown hyena “Dollar” was one of our favourite and most well known animals at the Wolf Bay study site, just 10 km south of Lüderitz. We knew him since 1999 and he was fitted with a visual collar, a radio collar and finally last year with a GPS collar. He gave us many insights into his life and many visitors to the Brown Hyena Research Project got to know him “personally” over the years. Dollar lived mainly of seal pups born at the Wolf and Atlas Bay seal colonies and lived in a home range of approximately 200 km² of size. He was occasionally seen at Elisabeth Bay and usually walked 20 km per night to search for food and to control his territory boundary.

The GPS collar was fitted last year in August and dropped off just four months later. After the drop off of the collar, we did not see him for quite some time until a few weeks ago. I arrived at the Wolf Bay seal colony to help our student with the data collection. I started to check the northern end of the seal colony for dead seal pups and discovered the first hyena predations shortly afterwards. The dead pup was very fresh and I already had the feeling, that I just missed the brown hyena responsible for the kill. I continued checking the seal colony and while approaching the next sample area, I stumble across Dollar, happily feeding on another killed seal pup.



Dollar discovering my presence

He discovered me quickly and grabbed his kill to walk away from the seal colony. I watched him until he was out of sight and continued happily with my work, being extremely relieved that he was fine after such a long time of not seeing him. I had just finished with checking half of the seal colony for other hyena predations, when Dollar appeared out of a gully just a

few metres ahead of me. I couldn't believe my luck and decided to skip the work and follow him while he was foraging.



Dollar re-appearing

He was aware of my presence but not disturbed and took plenty of time looking for prey. He finally grabbed an already dead pup and walked away with it from the colony. My day was saved and it was one of the happiest ones I had this year.

About three weeks later, Dollar was killed by a vehicle on the tar road just 40 km east of Lüderitz....

We all lost a long time friend and especially everybody who got to know him over the years will miss him badly. This whole experience highlights the danger the tar road poses to brown hyenas. Dollar was the 5th road kill between Lüderitz and Haalenberg that we know of during this year. Considering that the population size of our brown hyenas is not large and therefore the vehicle encounter rate on that tar road should be low, the number of road kills is alarming! The road kills happen during night and are usually a result of speeding. Everybody in Namibia knows that wild animals might cross the roads and that one should actually drive very cautiously, especially during night. There is not much that we can do at the moment, but we might try to find sponsoring for road signs, similar to the ones near the wild horses around Aus. Hopefully that will make drivers aware of the danger speeding can cause and might save some lives.

Thanks to...

Bresler de Beer, who reported the road kill, when he heard about it and to Helmuth from the SPCA, who did the necropsy.

SLOT TINS

A big thank you to Crispin Clay and Grillenberger's Bottle Store for collecting N\$ 586-00!!

ADOPTIONS

Gisela Wolters supported her brown hyena Goofy for another year. Goofy lives in the area around Baker's Bay and was seen last in March 2004.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO THE WOLF BAY HYENAS?

The Predator Conservation Trust in the UK sponsored three radio collars earlier this year. We decided to try to fit one of them on Gypsy II, whose GPS collar dropped off in February this year. The other collars were supposed to be fitted on brown hyenas foraging at the Wolf and Atlas Bay seal colonies. Dr. Hartmut Winterbach came at the end of September to help us darting these brown hyenas and we decided to start in the area around Wolf Bay. I pre-baited all possible darting sites for two weeks and everything looked promising. The brown hyenas went to the bait nearly every night and I thought nothing could go wrong.



Searching for brown hyenas (photo Jessica Kemper)

We placed our bait at the first dart site, parked the vehicle in a good distance and waited and waited and waited. We thought we were lucky, as it was full moon and we could monitor the bait without spotlight. Unfortunately the wind was blowing strong – as usual – and the hyenas had to be close to be darted, but that had never been a problem in the past. So we waited...and saw plenty of brown hyenas, but they didn't seem to be interested in the bait. Night after night the same story. The animals came, looked and disappeared again and we had no chance to dart. We blamed it all on the bait! After our last unsuccessful night, we left the bait and went back to town. The next morning I went pass our dart site and: the hyenas had a party while we were gone. Nothing was left of our sheep and I realised that the bait was good, but something else was not. It might have been that the vehicle was too visible during full moon, but the other option is, that the increased traffic and disturbance in the area caused a change in the hyenas behaviour. The latter seems to be the case, as I encountered many hyenas since then and they are extremely scared of vehicles and run away from them even in a big distance.

Still, it remains a mystery, but we will try to learn from this experience. At least we know that there are plenty of brown hyenas around that area and that they seem to have a healthy fear of people and whatever comes with it.

Thanks to...

Hartmut Winterbach and Jessica Kemper for enduring all these long and especially ice-cold nights. The OK Grocer organised our bait.

ROAD KILL DISAPPEARANCES

Many road kills were reported this year, but some of them disappear mysteriously before we can collect them. We have certain ideas, who actually picks them up to sell or use body parts and we are busy investigating this matter. It is extremely important to have the exact number of road kills and to identify the dead brown hyena. If we wouldn't have found Dollar for example, he would have been missing in action, we would have never found out what happened to him and we would have assumed natural mortality. Misinterpretations like that can have a major influence on our demographic data.

OKATUMBA WILDLIFE RESEARCH

Harald Förster from Okatumba Wildlife Research informed us about a trapped brown hyena on a farm near Windhoek at the beginning of October. We decided to negotiate with the farmer and to offer him to radio collar the brown hyena. The farmer fortunately agreed and Okatumba Wildlife Research radio collared the brown hyena for our project. We also received an invitation to give a presentation in the conservancy next year.

CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND

Andrew Stein, who is studying leopards and brown hyenas at the Cheetah Conservation Fund recently provided our project

with hair samples of four brown hyenas. These samples are extremely important for our feeding ecology study using stable isotope analysis in collaboration with Dr. James Roth from the University of Central Florida, as they will help to interpret the isotope values for the comparison of a terrestrial versus marine diet.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM was held on the 6th of December at the boardroom of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in Lüderitz. The meeting was well attended and the minutes will be available for all interested and affected parties at the beginning of January next year.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CENTRE

Namdeb submitted a proposal to its Environmental Section to support the continuation of the Environmental Information Centre, which is situated at the Lüderitz Waterfront. This project was supported by the **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund** for the duration of one year and proved to be a valuable addition to information services offered in Lüderitz.

CAMERA TRAPS

We ordered camera traps from Trailmaster for our brown hyena demography projects at Hottentotsbay (supported by **Hottentot Bay Investment CC** and **Benguela Enterprises CC**) and at Kaukasib (supported by the **Namibia Environment Fund**). We modified the equipment to make it hyena proof and are currently testing it near Wolf Bay. So far no brown hyenas moved through the infrared beam, but jackals did and fortunately did not trigger the mechanism. The photograph shows the hyena proof cage around the infrared transmitter.

Thanks to Steve Appleton and Rene Rossler for modifying the traps.



RALEIGH INTERNATIONAL AT THE ANIGAB PAN

We met the Raleigh International ventures at the Anigab Pan to map the area for brown hyena signs and to search for the den site in the middle of October. This trip marked the start of the Hottentotsbay demography project and the aim was to find suitable sites to set up the camera traps. Unfortunately our project vehicle had to be abandoned in the desert due to a cable burn on our way to meet the ventures on, but believe it or not we found a lift in the middle of nowhere with Namdeb and other Raleigh visitors



Adult brown hyena at the Anigab den

The days were very eventful: on the first day, we actually found that the den site was active and saw three adult brown hyenas in the area. As we didn't want to disturb the animals, we decided to map the mountain range opposite Itchaboe island, but unfortunately didn't find much evidence for hyena activity.

Jessica and myself went to observe the den site during dusk and dawn and were rewarded to watch an adult brown hyena and one cub on the morning of our departure. The cub was approximately 10 months old and we hope to be able to visit the den near the Anigab Pan again before the cubs are fully weaned and leave.

Thanks to Raleigh International for their great mapping work, Namdeb for saving us and the vehicle, Trygve Cooper and Marek Hrywniak for organising the trip and keeping us good company.

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

A big thank you to **Namdeb** for their continuous support and for their help with the Environmental Information Centre.

We received a donation from the **Wild Horse Fund** through the **Namibia Nature Foundation** to purchase a new computer, which will be delivered at beginning of January next year.

We also received a generous donation from the **Predator Conservation Trust** in the UK to purchase a digital SLR camera. We bought the camera a month ago and some of the photographs published in this newsletter are taken with this camera.

We applied for the continuation of funding to the **Wilderness Safaris Wildlife Trust** and hope to hear about their decision soon. The grant application to the **Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund** for a demography project in inland areas of the Sperrgebiet is still under review and we hope to hear about the outcome before the end of this year.

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

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

Namdeb	Commercial Bank Go	Namibia Nature	Luderitz Bay Shipping	MET	Volker & Daggie Jahnke
Caltex	Green Fund	Foundation	&Forwarding	MFMR	Johann du Toit
Siemens	Namibia Environment	Sidewinder Films	First National Bank	Luderitz Safaris &Tours	Frikkie Kraamwinkel
Shell Solar	Fund	Forbidden Land	Luderitz Yacht Club	Riaan Laubscher	Rene Rossler
Predator Conservation	GraphPad Software, Inc.	Coastway Tours	Luderitz SPAR	Andrew Cunningham	Ronel v.d. Merwe
Trust	Benguela Enterprises CC	4x4 Adventures	Upstart Technologies	Alex MacKay	Steve Appleton
OK Grocer	Hottentot Bay Investment	Namibian Breweries	Diaz Point Exploration	Gino Noli	George Shimaneni
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			Nest Hotel	Trygve Cooper	



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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%)
- I would prefer to donate N\$/ZAR, Euro/US\$, £

I enclose a cheque for the amount of N\$/ZAR, Euro/US\$, £

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Thank you very much for your support!