

BOGENFELS ATTEMPTS NO 9 AND 10

The research station at Van Reenen Bay, just north of Bogenfels, became our second home in March. We spent ten nights either in our bedrolls or in the vehicle, staring at our cowhead bait, waiting for hyenas to come feeding. As usual, we saw many hyenas, but none of them approached the bait. The problem this time were the jackals. A family group of jackals claimed the bait as their own shortly after our arrival and protected "their" food not only against other jackals, but also against approaching hyenas. They ran to the hyenas, bit it into their tails and hindlegs, and chased them off. Within a few hours, our bait was gone and we had basically no chance of darting any hyenas. So we had to make another plan. I organised other bait, such as intestines, liver and heart and placed all these "nice" parts in a small cage (the ones that usually are our protection for the camera traps against hyena bites). The jackals preferred this bait to the other meat that we laid out for the hyenas, and they concentrated the whole night on getting bits and pieces of bait out of the cage. However, as long as they were still hungry, they continued chasing the hyenas away.



Rodin, still looking a bit sleepy

Luckily, by the second night, things started to look better. The jackals could hardly move due to their full bellies and they left the hyenas alone. But, as we had run out of proper bait by then, we had to go back to town before being able to dart a hyena. So our attempt no 9 was as unsuccessful as most of the previous ones. We returned to Van Reenen Bay a few days later, but decided to change our bait site to an area just south of Bogenfels, known as Dreimasterbay. The reasons were that we were running out of time, as our vet, Sonja, had to leave ten days later and also we had the feeling that the hyenas around Van Reenen Bay became far to skittish and we wanted to have a fresh start. As before, our trick with the caged in bait worked and by night two, the hyenas had the chance to approach the bait. There was one hyena that came several times to the bait, but was a bit uneasy with the spotlight, so that we could not dart it at night. However, the hyena did not leave the area and looked down at us from a nice resting site close to the bait the next morning. We decided to be clever and drove off, just leaving the vet behind, hiding next to a rock with good view of the bait. Kyra, our project student, and I watched from a distance. One hour after driving off, the hyena slowly left its resting site and walked towards the bait. Another hour later, it finally had a good feeling about the situation and went to feed on the meat. Sonja quickly reacted and darted the animal. Finally, a successful attempt no 10! The hyena turned out to be a young male, about five to seven years old and in an excellent condition and he will be known as Rodin from now on. We fitted him with a GPS collar and took all necessary samples. Two hours later, he was nicely awake and walked off to the east of Dreimasterbay. What a happy ending! We tried to dart a second hyena for two more nights, but due to heavy fog, it was very difficult to see at night and we decided to go back to Van Reenen Bay to try and dart hyenas foraging close to the seal colony during the day without any luck. However, we collared one and we were

extremely happy. We will go back soon to try and fit the remaining two collars. However, we have to do the first data download of Rodin's collar to make sure that the Dreimasterbay hyenas visit the Bogenfels mining site, otherwise we have to concentrate on the Van Reenen Bay area again.

Thanks to Sonja, Kyra, Rene, Olga and Fabienne to help with the night shifts. Also thanks to Wilfried Ernie and Juergen Syvertsen for organising nice smelly bait for jackals on short notice.

RADFORD AT KOLMANSKOP

Radford just loves to hang around the ghost town at Kolmanskop. He got pretty used to the camera trap, as his nose shot to the right proves and even poses nicely for tourists visiting the ghost town. Tourists reported him to our Environmental Information Centre several times and I was lucky to be there when two tourists reported to just have seen him and photographed him, lying in a collapsed shed behind our office. Nangula and I went to see him. He had dug a beautiful, protected resting site inside the shed and was watching us curiously. However, it was a bit too much attention and once we walked off, he decided to head into the desert for a quieter spot. What an experience.

Thanks to all the tourists that participate in our sighting programme. We also hope to get some photographs from them.



HOTTENTOTBAY ATTEMPTS NO 5 AND 6

The Hottentotbay hyenas started to give us as much headaches as the Bogenfels ones. After several unsuccessful attempts at the Anigab pan and Boat Bay, we had to make another plan. Initially our plan was to replace Remus' radio collar with the GPS collar, as we knew, that he lived around the Anigab pan area. Unfortunately Remus was hit by a vehicle last year. However, we knew, that Remus spent a lot of time with Minerva, a female, that was radio collared at the same time and place as Remus. Furthermore, we also received the radio signal of another radio collared hyena of the same clan in the Boat Bay area when we were out there at the beginning of March. Therefore we felt confident, that this hyena clans' home range actually includes the Anigab area. Since there was no hyena activity at Anigab after the extensive rainfall over easter last year, we decided on plan B: Gino and I went flying to locate the two radio collared females in order to approach one of them on foot during the day to dart it and replace the radio collar with a GPS collar. Easier said than done. We located the one female far in the Kowis mountains, in an area that is not accessible with a vehicle. Minerva on the other hand was very close to a busy road, so that we did not want to take the chance to dart her there. So, we went flying the next day again. This time, Minerva was resting in some hummock dunes close to the sea and at a good distance to human activity. Unfortunately no wind was blowing that day (quite unusual for Lüderitz), so we had to be extremely quiet in approaching the sleeping hyena. Many hours later, we finally approached the bush where she was resting, but: just a split second before we could get organised enough to dart, she jumped out of her resting site and moved off. However, she did not seem to be too concerned about us and only move about 2 km before lying down again. Therefore, we decided to give it another go, but again, she was just too clever. So no luck in darting her using this method. So again, we were only left with the method of using bait, waiting in the car and hope for the best to happen. We placed the bait in the same area where we had captured Minerva and the other female before. Sleepless nights were on the agenda again, but apart from a very shy jackal, we saw nothing. But the hyena darting team is not known for giving up easily. Night after night we were waiting. Eventually we had to take a night off to attend a meeting in town and when we returned the next morning to check the dart site for spoor, we had to find out that at least two hyenas passed the site that night, sniffing extensively in the area, where our bait had been. I'm actually lacking the words to describe our disappointment. Nevertheless, at least we knew that the hyenas were still visiting the area, so we continued

Continued on page 2



Finding Minerva's resting site in the hummocks

with our night watches. Two nights later, Fabienne suddenly woke us up during her shift announcing that there is a brown hyena at the bait. I must admit that I did not believe her in that moment, but peeking out of the window confirmed the sighting. And: it was Minerva. I slowly switched the spotlight on. Minerva unfortunately walked off. However, I had the feeling that she would come back and this is exactly what she did. Five minutes later, she is feeding nicely on our cowhead and relaxed nicely with the spotlight. The perfect darting opportunity! So we did it. We darted Minerva, replaced her radio collar with a GPS collar and released her out of her recovery cage two hours later. We tracked her with the plane two days later and found her again close to the road. All in all a very successful trip and we just hope that Minerva is going to provide us with good data for the Hottentotbay project. The collar is a store-on-board collar and we will only be able to download the data once we drop it off in January next year.



Night watches in the vehicle, still smiling...



Taking Minerva's samples and measurements

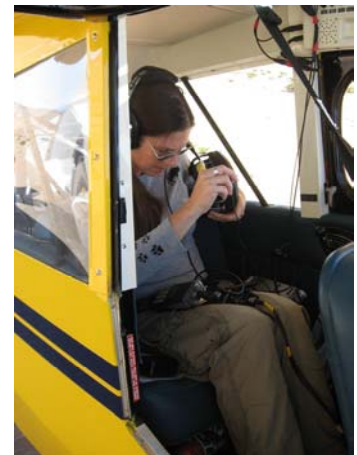
Thanks to Gino and Fabienne for not giving up. Kathie joined us on attempt no 5, trying to find Minerva in the endless sea of hummock dunes.

REMOTE DATA DOWNLOAD

There are four brown hyenas fitted with remote download GPS collars at the moment: Rodin, our newly caught male from Dreimasterbay, Caspar from the Klinghardt Mountains, Ray from Van Reenen Bay and Tosca from the Luderitz Peninsula. We know Tosca and Ray's movements pretty well by now and can usually find them with tracking them from the vehicle. However, Caspar lives in an area with hardly any network of roads that we can use and we had no idea where we would find Rodin for the first download. But let me start at the beginning. Fabienne and I drove to Van Reenen Bay to download Ray's dataset. He usually rests about 2 km north of the seal colony or if not there, just 6 km south of the colony. Therefore we were confident that we would find him easily. But, we learned our lesson: even hyenas such as Ray are unpredictable. We searched the entire coastline, but could not find him. Our last chance was the area around the fresh water spring, just a few kilometres inland from the mining site at Bogenfels. He hadn't been resting there for a long time, so we did not expect to find him there. But: that's where he was. The signal was nice and strong and so I tried to trigger the download – nothing. We drove and walked to six different places to attempt the download, but the trigger did not want to work. There was only one explanation. We were dealing with Ray, lying inside a cave and having a strong signal bounce from the mountains. So we walked closer and closer to the area where we assumed that he was resting and were finally able to trigger the download. So much for "easy" and predictable hyenas...

Tosca still wasn't a problem, as she continued to rest occasionally close to the den, so we managed to do her download quickly.

Luckily we also found Caspar north of the Klinghardt Mountains, on our way to Gabusib. So we only had to find Rodin. Since brown hyenas can have large home ranges and we knew, that some coastal hyenas go far inland, we decided to try to locate him by plane and do another aerial download. Not that Gino and I were looking forward to this, knowing how sick we got last time. Off we went to the airport. I decided to take a motion sickness tablet before flying. After setting up all the equipment, we were ready to go, but: the plane did not want to start. Nothing we could do and I was feeling so nicely tired by then, thanks to the medication, that I was actually more than happy to go back home. A few days later we gave it another try. This time I skipped the tablet, as it knocked me out for an entire day. Also, we didn't know whether the plane would start, so I did not want to risk to lose another day. But: this time it started and we flew off. We found Rodin north of the Klinghardt Mountains, far away from the coast, so the decision to fly was the right one. We triggered the download quickly and had to circle for 35 minutes to download 1000 data sets. Gino and I were happy and to our surprise not sick at all – thanks to a bag of "Gummibaerchen" (wine gums) that settled our stomach once we felt a bit wobbly. So my advice for researchers doing aerial downloads: Gummibaerchen!!!



Checking out the remote download equipment

Thanks to Gino, Fabienne and Yanick, and Steve for helping with the search for brown hyenas in the vast desert area.

IS TOSCA'S CUB DEAD?



Tosca and her one cub were still using the den near the Second Lagoon in March. I also placed a camera trap close to the den and got a few good photographs of the cub, including one where it tries to nibble at the camera (see left). Then we received devastating news. One of the locals reported a road-kill of a hyena cub, very close to town. Unfortunately the road-kill happened 10 days earlier and even searching the area around the accident site did not reveal any signs of the animal that had been killed. I was extremely worried, and checked the camera trap regularly in the hope of getting another picture of the cub. Three weeks later we finally had another photograph on the trap and it was the cub. Although I'm very relieved, I still wonder whose cub was killed on the road. I guess we will never know.

Thanks to Wilfried Ernie for reporting the road-kill and for helping to search the area for the dead animal.

NEWS

Our **Annual General Meeting** took place in Luderitz in the middle of March. Most of our directors and shareholders could participate and we had a very successful meeting. Sadly Schalk Hugo resigned as a director and Gino Noli resigned as the Chairperson. However, Gino remains a director and continues to be directly involved in the project.

I went to Port Elizabeth to attend **the Society of Conservation Biology** conference at the beginning of July. I presented a poster about "Predicting the Influence of Land Development on Brown Hyena Movement and Activity". The poster is now displayed at our **Environmental Information Centre** at Kolmanskop.

Kyra Walsh, our project student from Great Britain, left the project to travel around South Africa and to participate in a Vervet Monkey project in Tzaneen, South Africa, later this year. We wish her all the best for her remaining time in South Africa.

David Winston-Smith became a member of the Brown Hyena Research Project. We thank him for his support and hope that he will enjoy reading more about our projects.

James Knowles has finished his thesis about the Population genetic structure of the brown hyena population inhabiting the west coast of Namibia as recovered from microsatellite loci. I met with one of his supervisors Dr. Peter van Coeverden de Groot in Port Elizabeth and we are all interested in continuing with the project.

Our collaboration partner **Brian Kuhn** also finished his PhD thesis about the collection behaviour and taphonomic signatures of hyaenids. We are looking forward to work with him in future.

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

Wilfried Erni donated lots of bait again for our darting trips, also on very short notice. Thank you so much for your help. **Juergen Syvertsen** from the Luderitz Smokeries donated all the cowheads for our last few darting trips.

Gisela Wolters continued with the sponsoring of her adopted hyena "Goofy". We haven't been doing much work in the Baker's Bay area recently, where Goofy lives, but hope to have some news soon.

We collected quite a lot of money in the **slot tins**. The Environmental Information Centre collected N\$ 376.45, the Kolmanskop Curio Shop collected N\$ 233.38 and Grillenbergers Bottle Store collected N\$ 157.25. Thank you so much for your support.

The following grant proposals are still pending:

- Brown hyena conservation in the Sperrgebiet (Nedbank Go Green Fund)
- EnviroClub Sperrgebiet: The Luderitz youth is encouraged to run a "Biological Puppet Theatre" (Global Environment Fund)

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

Namdeb Diamond Corporation	Raleigh International	Luderitz Safaris & Tours	Trygve Cooper	Kolette Grobler	Pisces Environmental Services
Chevron Namibia	Luderitz Bay Shipping & Forwarding	Riaan Laubscher	Volker & Daggie Jahnke	Wilfried Erni	Westair
Siemens	Luderitz SPAR	Andrew Cunningham	Rene Rossler	Erich Looser	Albert Harness
Shell Solar	Upstart Technologies	Alex MacKay	Ronel v.d. Merwe	Jürgen Syvertsen	Oranjemund Moth Club
Predator Conservation	ESRI	Gino Noli	Steve Appleton	Morag Burrell	
Trust UK	MET	Kathy Peard	George Shimaneni	Luderitz Backpackers	
OK Grocer	MFMR	Jessica Kemper	Gisela Wolters	Mark Noffke	
		Jean-Paul Roux		Mandy Noffke	



NAMDEB
ON DIAMONDS WE BUILD

Nedbank Namibia
Go Green Fund





BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT
Contact Details



BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT WEBSITE:
www.strandwolf.org.za

P. O. Box 739 Lüderitz
Tel.: ++264 (0)63 202114, Fax: ++264 (0)63 202114
e-mail: strandwolf@iway.na

If you would prefer to do a bank transfer, the details are as follows:
Brown Hyena Research Project – Nedbank Namibia
Lüderitz Branch, Branch Code 461610
Account number: 11010015204

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\$, £

Name:

Postal Address:

Country: Tel.:

e-mail:

Date: Signature:

Thank you very much for your support!