I had been checking data from Obelixa’s Iridium collar regularly. It initially looked as if she had given birth in September last year. Hence before my next trip to Namibia, I had a closer look at the data to determine her current den site, which turned out to be close to the known Pipe Den II site. When driving to E-Bay I scanned that area for activity and quickly discovered some jackals that were behaving ‘suspiciously’. Sabrina Karthun, who was with me to help with the set-up for the upcoming darting season, and I decided to sneak up to the jackals to see what was happening. We quickly realized that Obelixa was lying in a valley and that there were quite a few seal carcasses around – a good indication that we were dealing with the new den site, and obviously the reason why the jackals were hanging around there. And, Obelixa was not alone: she was nursing a cub. Obelixa eventually walked off to find another resting site for the day and we could have a closer look at the cub. To my surprise, it was a lot younger than I expected, only about three months old and not six months if it indeed had been born in September. On return to Luderitz, I looked at Obelixa’s position data from January and indeed, all indicated to that she had given birth then. She may have lost the litter from September or I misinterpreted the data, but we were more than happy to see her with her new offspring.

KC Sowande’s collar had stopped sending data in September 2015, but the last positional data also indicated to the commencement of denning activity. As we hadn’t checked our camera traps at E-Bay since December, I went to retrieve that data to see whether we could find out more about KC’s activities since then. On arrival, I immediately saw cubs playing within the ruins. They were a lot larger than Obelixa’s cub and definitely around six months old. The cubs were very inquisitive and allowed us to get very close to them. It was an amazing experience and I managed to get lots of good ID shots for future identification.

Obelixa is getting old though. She must be 14 to 16 years old by now. Her eyesight and hearing capacity are certainly not the best any more. Most amazingly, KC seems to check on her mom and half sib quite regularly. On one occasion, when I was observing Obelixa, who was completely unaware of my presence, KC arrived and spotted me and our visitor, Keith Newnham, immediately. She seemed very concerned and ran towards Obelixa. We left immediately to give them the space to relax. We hope that Obelixa will still be able to raise her cub – but she has surprised us again and again and we may still see and hear a lot of her in future.
We only had limited time this year to replace KC Sowande’s and Lilinoe’s malfunctioning collars, fit a collar to Balu and remove and replace Alaika’s and Clyde Too’s collars, as spotted hyena darting was on the agenda for this year, too.

KC was always difficult to capture and we only ever managed at the very last minute, hence we did not expect differently this year. So when Kirk darted the first collared hyena, we expected it to be one of the males, which seem to be a lot less ‘trap-shy’ than the females: but, it was KC. What a fantastic surprise, especially also knowing that she currently had two cubs nearby. We also captured Lilinoe and replaced her collar the same night – what was happening? No sign of the males and less skittish females… Only Obelixa took her time to find the bait, but we did not need or want to dart her, so she could feed in peace. Two more nights passed and no sign of the males, so I decided to set-up a camera trap at the bait to monitor activity there and to concentrate our darting efforts to capturing Alaika and Clyde Too at Atlas Bay.

Alaika

Clyde Too

It has always been more difficult to capture Atlas Bay hyenas, so we were prepared ourselves for long, cold nights near the bay. But again, first night and we capture Alaika. We couldn’t believe our luck. Shortly afterwards we capture Clyde Too, so our aim was reached. Both hyenas were in a good condition, Alaika was not lactating, which confirmed our suspicion that there was no active den site at present. Clyde Too had been through some fights, lot of new scars on his neck and face. The same night, Alaika returned with two uncollared animals, but we were still hoping to collar Balu and rather waited before fitting the last collar. But the E-Bay males, Balu and Wallace, remained missing in action and we then decided to fit one of the uncollared hyenas at Atlas Bay with the last collar. Again, we were successful the same night, so that we could move to Garub to try to collar spotted hyenas three days earlier than planned, which was a bonus, as we did not know what to expect at that site.
Spotted Hyenas at Garub – Zane and Nya
by Ingrid Wiesel

Together with the Namibia Wild Horses Foundation we embarked on our second spotted hyena adventure. In 2008 we had collared the first spotted hyena at Garub, Oona. She gave us incredible insight into the harsh life that spotted hyenas have in the extreme desert habitat of the southern Namib Naukluft Park. Her entire home range was 4000 km² and she crossed the dune field north of the Koichab riverbed often.

We tried twice to capture another spotted hyena, without success. Still, Telané Greyling and Christine Wulff-Swiegers of the Namibia Wild Horses Foundation and me were very keen on starting a collaborative study, looking at the impact of spotted hyena presence on the wild horse population. We were not successful in securing grant money for that work, but the Brown Hyena Research Project was able to free some of our camera traps to get the study going and Telané and Christine managed to provide funds to contribute to the refurbishment costs of two GPS collars.

Hence, at the beginning of April this year, we tried to capture and collar spotted hyenas once again. We waited for two nights at our bait, but nothing happened, not a sign or sound of a spotted hyena nearby. Inga and I went to check the camera traps on day two and discovered a lot of hyena activity several kilometres north of our darting site and decided to move our bait there.

Our work paid off and we captured Zane (previously named Three Spot), a young male. We were so excited, especially as some other spotted hyenas were in the area and had therefore discovered our bait. The next night was unsuccessful, but on night five, we captured a beautiful female, Nya (previously known as Chip). She had cubbed before, but was not lactating at present.

However, we assume that she is one of the moms of the cubs that we captured on our camera traps last year. The first data download is planned for the end of April and we are very excited to find out where these animals move to. We have contacted our collaboration partners at Naankuse, who are also trying to collar spotted hyenas in an area that may border on the range of ‘our’ hyenas.

---

Citizen Science Project
by Inga Jänecke

I got the great opportunity to come back to Lüderitz to also start my PhD on brown hyenas. After studying these animals over the last 5 years I am really happy to add another at least 3 years to it.

The aim of my study is to determine conservation status of brown hyena in Namibia and if possible throughout its range by identifying their distribution and population size.

At the moment I am busy getting everything set-up to start with my Citizen Science Project, to gather information on the distribution of brown hyenas. A lot of information on brown hyena presence that is observed by people within Namibia, either through direct observations or camera traps, is currently getting lost to science. To prevent this loss I want to establish this Citizen Science Project, to give people the opportunity to report their brown hyena sightings and by doing so taking part in the conservation of these very special animals.

I hereby would like to ask everyone to please report any brown hyena sighting. You can either use the "Carnivore Tracker App" (being freely available for Android as well as Apple phones) or the Environmental Information Service Namibia (http://www.the-eis.com/atlas/). Otherwise you can also report sightings directly to us (inga.jaenecke@strandwolf.org). The only information that will be needed is: the amount of brown hyenas, date and time, the exact location (preferably GPS positions) and if possible images.

Additionally I am looking for volunteers that own a camera trap, are willing to set it up on their property (e.g. farms) and to share their data with me. If these three points should apply to you, please feel free to get in contact with me. I am happy about anyone who is willing to contribute to this project. The more the merrier!

I am looking forward to receive your sightings and thank you in advance!
We are happy to announce that Pescanova and Novaship Namibia are going to sponsor the restoration of the Van Reenen Bay research station and observation hut. The research station is regularly used by our researchers as accommodation during field work or as base for film teams that are trying to get footage at the close by seal colony. The observation hut is used for observations at the Van Reenen Bay seal colony. It is placed on the rocks next to the seal colony so we are able to observe the feeding ecology of brown hyenas as well as jackals there. The restorations will be done soon and I am looking forward to have our sponsors not only providing the needed equipment, but also helping me!

Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia Meeting

End of March I have been to the meeting of the Large Carnivore Management Association of Namibia (LCMAN) in Windhoek. It was the first time for me to attend this meeting, but it was nice to meet other researchers that work on large carnivores in Namibia, as well as members of the hunters and farmers association. I got the chance to get an insight into the work that is done by these people and to discuss current issues that conservation in Namibia is facing. Furthermore it was great for me that everyone offered to contribute their data towards my data collection for determining the current conservation status of brown hyena.

FUNDRAISING

- Namdeb renewed their annual donation of N$ 151 000 which enables us to cover a large portion of our annual running cost. Thank you so much for your continuous support.
- The Interessen-Verband der Auslandsjäger supported us again with a generous donation of € 70n,
- Christian and Christine Düll supported us with € 25 and Felicitas and Tom Weinert with € 150.

Tswalu Kalahari Reserve

Kelsey Green, from NMMU, George, is doing her BTech using our camera trap data. She has set-up all camera traps in March and will collect new data until June this year. Another set-up is planned for either July or October.

Mining Area 1 Sightings

Brown hyena sighting reports are increasing from Mining Area 1. So far, the sightings are from the same area, which indicates that we may have denning activity there. Otherwise general abundance may have increased. Please continue to report sightings.

Road Kills

Sadly we have to report several road-kills this time. One young animal was killed near Haalenberg, another one on the tar road from Aus to Rosh Pinah and we received a report about a roadkill at Henties Bay.
THE BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND COMPANIES FOR THEIR HELP AND SUPPORT:

Brown Hyena Research Project

Donations:

Namdeb Diamond Corporation
Predator Conservation Trust UK
Luderitz SPAR
ESRI
MET
Big Banana/Sidewinder Films
Luderitz Safaris & Tours
Gino Noli
Kathy Peard
Jessica Kemper
Jean-Paul Roux

Trygve Cooper
Wilfried Erni
Erich Looser
Soltau Family
Jürgen Syvertsen
Crispin and Orti Clay
Luderitz Backpackers
Christine Lindner
Coastway Tours
Kirk Suedmeyer
Coastway Tour Service Station
Kansas City Zoo

Interessen-Verband der Auslandsjäger
Riaan Burger
Windhoek Optics
PICES Environmental Services
Kitsch Inn
Talking Pictures
NHK Enterprises
Tony Edmunds
Klein Aus Vista
Namtib Biosphere Reserve

Contact Details

www.strandwolf.org
www.facebook.com/BrownHyenaResearchProject
P. O. Box 739
Lüderitz
Namibia
Dr. Ingrid Wiesel
ingrid.wiesel@strandwolf.org

Inga Jaenecke
Inga.jaenecke@strandwolf.org

Donations:

Brown Hyena Research Project – Nedbank Namibia
Bismarck Street, Lüderitz, 9000, Namibia
Lüderitz Branch, Branch Code 461610
Cheque Account
Account number: 11010015024
Swift code: NEDSNANX
BIC: NEDSNANXXXX
IBAN: 46161011010015024