

## ALAIKA'S NEW DEN AND CUB SURPRISE

We managed to download Alaika's data in the middle of July. Data showed that she was preparing to give birth, but the area, where she was spending most of her time did not make any sense. She was not close to any of her previously used natal dens. She was actually somewhere in the "middle of nowhere", at an open plain just 50 metres off the main road to Atlas Bay. As we had a visual of her when we were doing the download, we knew that the collar was not lost, so the only option was to have a look at the site. Inga rushed out and to all our surprise found a new den. This might not be all too exciting, but the weird thing was that all other dens are in the mountains and that we have never found dens on the open plains dug into the sand so far. We placed a camera trap there immediately, but Alaika had already left this den and it attracted more jackals than anything else. The camera trap that is permanently set-up at Jungle Den did not show any activity for a long time, but suddenly at the beginning of September, activity increased AND: we captured a tiny hyena cub on camera. However, we hardly saw any collared hyenas at the den and I started to wonder whether Alaika was actually the mother of this cub. I started to ID all visitors to the den using their unique stripe pattern on the forelegs. I could not believe my eyes when the mother turned out to be Alaika minus the collar...not again: Alaika had lost her very first collar many years ago as a sub adult when playing with Tosca's cubs.



The new den (photo: Inga Jaenecke)



Alaika with seal pup at Jungle Den



Alaika's new litter



HCO ScoutGuard

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Luckily we could locate the signal of the collar easily: it was just lying east of Unverhofft Pan. Inga and Lena Hahn, a visitor from the German school in Windhoek retrieved it quickly. The collar was still intact, just minor bite marks visible on the belting. It is still puzzling why it came off, but at least we can use it again. Data showed that Alaika gave birth between 22 and 27 July and lost her collar on 4 August. So far only the two cubs of her previous litter are regular visitors to the den, but we have also spotted Amadeus walking past. It will still take some time before the other hyenas start providing additional food for the cubs, but it will be exciting to see all other clan members again.

It is going to be quite difficult to check the camera trap at Jungle Den from now on without help of the collar signal, because we obviously need to avoid disturbing Alaika. She could lie anywhere between the bushes or inside one of the three entrances. However, we will try to monitor her movement closely.

I will set-up camera traps at the other dens that she uses regularly and hope to be able to follow the life of these new cubs this way. I've just set-up two new camera traps at Jungle Den to take some video footage.

Please also check our Facebook page for updates about Alaika and her cubs.

## CARACAL AND AARDWOLF SIGHTINGS

We also had some other interesting sightings in our coastal study area. Namdeb personnel found a caracal carcass close to the coast in the Elizabeth Bay mining area. It looked like a young, thin animal. I unfortunately could not examine the carcass and therefore can't give other information.

Also, one of our camera traps at Albatroskop captured an aardwolf. The aardwolf looked to be in a good condition, but they are also not supposed to occur in the coastal area.



Aardwolf sniffing at a brown hyena latrine



Caracal carcass found in the mining area (photo: Namdeb)

### NEW CAMERA TRAPS AT BOGENFELS AND AT ATLAS BAY

We were finally able to set-up 10 new camera traps in the Bogenfels area for our pre- to post mining impact study and four more camera traps in the Atlas Bay and E-Bay area. These traps capture fantastic identification images, mainly because so many of the hyenas are active during the day at the moment. Here are just some of the more special images:



New camera trap at Dreimsterbay



New camera trap at Buntfeldschuh



Camera trap at Alaika's den in the plains



Camera trap near Kolmanskop ghost town

Other camera traps are set-up at Elizabeth Bay ghost town, both at inactive den sites, but Obelixa should also have a new litter of cubs soon. We also have two camera traps at the territory boundary in Bain's Bay riverbed where the Atlas Bay and E-Bay clan members go. All traps are working well and none of them has been destroyed by hyenas recently...

### E-BAY HYENA SIGHTINGS



I had not seen any of the E-Bay Clan animals after we captured them in March, but I wanted to find out whether all collars were fitted well, so I took the opportunity to track three of the E-Bay clan members together with two visitors Stephen and Susan Jewitt from the UK. We had two days to find them. The safest bet is usually to go to E-Bay ghost town, but we had not luck – not even the faintest hind of Obelixa's signal. We continued along the coast and finally received a signal from Wallace. He was resting near Bain's Bay. The wind was very strong and noisy, an advantage for tracking hyenas on foot, so I was confident that we would manage to see him. And we did: but he did see us before and unfortunately ran away. However, he was in a very good condition and the collar looked fine, too. The same day, we managed to see Balu about three kilometres south of Wallace's resting site and Clyde, just north of the territory boundary in the Bain's Bay riverbed. What a successful day! Now we only need to find Obelixa to do a long overdue data download and as usual we found her the next day at one of her favourite spots, a large hummock dune close to E-Bay ghost town. The download went extremely well and we could spend a good hour observing her afterwards.

### BROWN HYENA ADOPTION

LHb36m was adopted as a birthday present on 4 July 2013 for Oscar Robert Clay by Crispin and Orthi. Clyde is a three to four year old male of the Atlas Bay clan and was fitted with a GPS telemetry collar in March this year. His collar should last for a period of two to three years. He is a regular visitor to the communal den site of his clan and I'm sure that he will start visiting Alaika's new cubs soon.



**SARAH EDWARDS  
HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT STUDY**



June bought a wonderful surprise for the human-carnivore conflict project; after eleven months of camera trapping we finally captured a cheetah. At first I could not believe my eyes, as the area in which it was captured is not considered cheetah country, however after staring at the photo a few more times, there was no mistaking – cheetah. You can imagine the excitement when on an early, foggy morning in August the camera traps picked up two individuals, possibly brothers, on another farm 90km away. Tracks have been reported in the area and we hope for a better photo of the pair soon.

The spotted hyenas at Namtib have recently reminded us, not all human-carnivore conflict involves livestock predation. In the beginning of September, the spotted hyenas caused a significant amount of damage which resulted the draining of the one of the largest dams on the farm, which considering this is a drought year is a significant loss. The hyena ripped up plastic water piping, tore off the metal brace holding the dam together and then managed to pull off and bend a thick metal water pipe connected to the dam. The damage was not found until the next day, by this time all the water from the dam was out. As the hyenas had access to, and were captured by camera trap drinking from the water trough earlier in the evening, it remains a mystery as to why this happened. Four days later the hyenas were still at Namtib and came across one of the camera trap stations near the main gate. Two individuals spent over an hour, chewing and licking, eventually prising the mental protective housing off, before taking the camera trap out to further play with it in

grass. Unbelievably the camera trap is still working and the whole event was captured by the camera trap opposite. Luckily, the hyenas haven't caused any more damage since and fingers crossed they won't.



We've also had some incredible results with the leopards on the southern farms around Aus. One large male, known as Tom, was captured on two camera traps on Tsurub and Klein Aus Vista 25km apart. One of the females has also been captured on both of the farms proving what large home ranges this species has in the arid south. One of the leopards on Klein Aus Vista was also captured drinking from a water trough in the day with the cattle also present. This female seems to be leaving the cattle alone, proving large carnivore and domestic livestock can live together without problem.



In June Kim (my assistant) and I joined Manus the shepherd and Amir the Anatolian livestock guarding dog on Namtib in taking out 900+ sheep out to graze for the day. Throughout the day both Manus and Amir must be vigilant for approaching predators, and with such a large number of sheep to watch over this is not always easy. Anatolian livestock guarding dogs are being increasingly used in Namibia as a predator friendly human-wildlife conflict mitigation measure. These large, working dogs are raised and bonded with sheep, spending both day and night protecting them, and will use their loud bark to deter any approaching predators. We learnt a lot about shepherding and how livestock guarding dogs work in the field that day, and also, thanks to Manus about Namibian vampires!

In July I was lucky enough to attend a human-wildlife conflict workshop with the southern Ministry of Environment and Tourism staff. During the workshop we discussed the human-wildlife conflict policy and how that has been working in the south of Namibia and I gain an invaluable insight into how the Ministry is dealing with the problem. I was invited to give a presentation of my work and results so far, which was received with great interest.

As usual I would like to thank Ingrid for her continuing help and support, the farmers with whom and I work with and Nedbank Go Green Fund for financial support. Additionally I would also like to thank the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for allowing me to attend their workshop, Kim Moore who assisted with the project in June and July and Isabelle and Richard Theille for giving up a day of their school holidays to come and move camera traps around with me.

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**Bob & Morag Burrell** supported the project with N\$ 1000 again. Thank you very much for your continuous support.

The **Beppo Family** donated N\$ 2300. These funds will go towards necessary camera trap repairs as well as the donation of **Stephen & Susan Jewitt** who donated US\$ 200.

I have applied for N\$ 150 000 from the **Nedbank Go Green Fund** for a new study that aims at determining brown hyena density and distribution in Namibia by combining camera trap data and GPS telemetry and using citizen science networks.

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**BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT WEBSITE:**

[www.strandwolf.org](http://www.strandwolf.org)

[www.facebook.com/BrownHyenaResearchProject](https://www.facebook.com/BrownHyenaResearchProject)

**CONTACT:**

Dr. Ingrid Wiesel

P. O. Box 739

Lüderitz

Namibia

Tel.: ++264 (0)63 202114

Fax: ++264 (0)63 202114

e-mail: [strandwolf@iway.na](mailto:strandwolf@iway.na)

**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: NEDSNANXXX

IBAN: 46161011010015024