

## OBELIXA AND HER CUBS AT E-BAY



Obelixa and her two young cubs (photo: Albert Boehme)

downloaded the photos, we only had a few images of the cubs, many of Obelixa and one image of an uncollared hyena carrying a seal pup. However, we could also see that activity at the den decreased and that Obelixa once again had moved her cubs. When we did the GPS data download from Obelixa's collar, we saw that both her moves were not influenced by our activity at the den, which was good. I also knew from her previous litter that she raised that she moves her cubs frequently. This time, Obelixa moved her cubs to a well known communal den, which is also situated in the ghost town, so we will be able to monitor it with the camera traps that are already in place there.

Obelixa has been a very leading a very exciting hyena recently. Whenever we went to E-Bay to check the camera traps, we received her signal from somewhere within the ghost town. I obviously assumed that she was resting there, but also knew that she should have a litter of cubs somewhere. I therefore decided to have a look in the area around the ghost town for a natal den. While we were filming with Talking Pictures from South Africa for a documentary about my work, we stumbled across a natal den just a few hundred metres away from the northern-eastern end of the ghost town. It looked active and I decided to set-up a camera trap opposite the den entrance. However, nothing exciting happened there – no images of Obelixa or her cubs, just a few pied crows posing in front of the camera. I assumed that we may have disturbed them when we discovered the den and that Obelixa had moved her cubs, but I would only know for sure after I had done the next data download from her GPS collar, which was not due for another month. A couple of weeks later Albert Boehme, who is working for Namdeb, reported Obelixa's sighting at E-Bay and also attached a photograph. I could not believe my eyes when I saw Obelixa and her two young cubs on that image. I drove to E-Bay the following day and discovered the den site quickly. Obelixa was close by. Inga, one of our internship students, and myself had seen Obelixa walking into one of the ruins when we drove past the ghost town, which was an advantage, as we knew her exact position. We managed to set-up a camera trap at the den, but it took us several weeks before we could download the photos, as

Obelixa was always resting too close to the den. When we finally

## WHERE IS TOSCA?

It is really weird how some of our well known brown hyenas just disappear from one day to the other. We could not monitor Tosca's movements since October last year, when her collar was dropped off, but we knew that she had raised a litter of cubs at Jungle Den until December. Alaika, who is also a member of Tosca's clan, was also captured frequently by the two camera traps at the den providing food for the two cubs. There was no indication that Tosca would not be seen again, so I only started analyzing the camera trap photos in November this year. I obviously assumed that Tosca would feature on them as usual. However, to my surprise, we have not captured Tosca on any of the camera traps in her home range since January this year. What had happened? Did she die? I analysed all other camera traps in different brown hyena home ranges and finally found one image of Tosca in Obelixa's home range in May. At the same time though, hyena activity on the Lüderitz Peninsula increased again. This area used to be Tosca's original home range, but with the extinction of the Wolf Bay clan, Tosca and other members of her clan moved into the vacant territory. It is definitely possible that she split from the new Wolf Bay clan and moved back into her original territory. I have set-up two camera traps at the northern end of the Wolf Bay seal colony, which is part of Tosca's original home range and I really hope that we will find her there. I will definitely keep you informed.



## NEDBANK GO GREEN FUND PRESENTATION

Nedbank Namibia invited me to give a presentation at the Nest Hotel in Lüderitz in October. I had the opportunity to talk about all previous projects that were supported by the Nedbank Go Green Fund in the past. Other speakers were Dr. Jean-Paul Roux, who presented the Namibian Dolphin Project and Mr. Ndako Mukapuli, who talked about the Lüderitz Wind Power Project. All three projects received funding from the Nedbank Go Green Fund for projects that start or continue in 2012.

## CAMERA TRAP DONATIONS

I would like to thank everybody that contributed to the three new camera traps that we could purchase (to replace the ones that were destroyed by brown hyenas...). The combined funds that were available through donations from the Manica Group Namibia, who presented us with a cheque at the Nest Hotel in Lüderitz, Peter Elsner and Sibylle Schliemann from Germany, Birgitte and Heini Soltau from Lüderitz and Lüderitz Bay shipping and Forwarding added up to N\$ 10500.

**Namdeb Diamond Corporation** decided to provide another project vehicle to the Brown Hyena Research Project. The vehicle is a Ford Supercab. This vehicle will be used for various research projects. At the moment it is used by the project volunteers to check the camera traps and to download

GPS data from collared hyenas. Next year, it will mainly be used for the human-wildlife-conflict study that will start in April.

Thank you very much to everybody at Namdeb who supported this contribution.

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### NEWS OF ALAIKA AND HELENE



Alaika near Jungle Den (photo: Inga Jänecke)

When we captured Alaika and fitted her with a GPS collar in May this year, we knew that she had a litter of cubs at a den close by. She moved her cubs a month later to Jungle Den and they have been there since. Garth Lucas from Talking Pictures in South Africa came to Luderitz for a week to film at Alaika's den. He got fantastic footage of the two cubs and also of Alaika and amazingly Helene, who is a regular visitor to the den. Helene's GPS collar was bitten off by the cubs shortly after she was fitted with the collar, but I'm confident that we will recapture her next year. She is still too young to have cubs on her own, but it looks as if she is going to stay in the area as a full member of the Wolf Bay clan. Alaika's cubs are approximately nine months old by now. One of the cubs is very adventurous and approaches the observation vehicle very, very closely. Alaika does not seem to be all too concerned about it, but makes sure to always keep an eye on him. The cubs continue to destroy my equipment though. They managed to bite parts off another camera trap despite being in a protective cage and covered by protective housing, but it could luckily still be repaired. I hope that they will eventually lose the interest in the traps...

I did an abundance estimate from the camera trap images that we go this year and it looks as if we have between four and six brown hyenas in the Wolf Bay clan. These include Alaika, Helene, Albert, Frida and Tony.

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### WHO AND WHERE IS DARWIN?

Darwin still hasn't turned up again. It is really puzzling where he disappeared to. I alerted all other researchers via the Namibian Large Carnivore Management Association (LCMA) to also radio track for his frequency, but nobody has found him yet. However, I managed to track some of his movements before we actually collared him in May this year. When I re-analysed all old camera trap data, having his identification images at hand, I found three images of him, taken in 2009 and 2010. The images were taken at the Wolf Bay seal colony, which is approximately 5 km north of where we captured him and close to Kolmanskop ghost town, which is 15 km north of our capture site. This means that we captured him in the E-Bay clan's territory, the camera traps detected him in the Wolf Bay and Peninsula clans' territories. This all indicates that Darwin may be a nomadic living male, which gives me a lot of hope that he will return to one of my study areas and that I will be able to download his data then. It would be so fantastic to get movement data of a nomadic living animal. I'm very excited about this and will keep my fingers crossed that we will find him next year.



Stealth Cam 10/31/2009 22:28:57 055F



BUSHNELL 8.07.2010 22:57:09

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### TSAUKAIB HYENA DÉJÀ VU

The Tsaukaib camera trap does not record as many brown hyena images as all the other camera traps, but it has a variety of other carnivores on it. We capture a caracal on a regular basis and also got an image of an African wild cat. The funniest footage however, is again of a brown hyena. When I scanned through one of the downloaded image data sets, one image showed a brown hyena walking into northern direction. I continued with the photographs and suddenly had the same image in front of me again. I did not check the time and date that are printed on the images, but assumed that I had scrolled back to the first photograph instead of



## Brown Hyena Research Project

forward. However, that was not true. Although the image looked like a copy of the first image, it was taken at a different date. I found three more of these 'copies' in the data set...This hyena really seems to be an animal of habit.



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### FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

**Frikkie and Hilde Mouton** from the **Alte Kalköfen Lodge** near Keetmanshoop give a monthly donation of N\$ 200 towards the project since August 2011. You can visit their web page for more information about them ([www.altekalkofen.com](http://www.altekalkofen.com)).

**David and Gudrun Winston-Smith** renewed their membership and donated N\$ 600.

**Coastway Tours** in Lüderitz sponsor one tank of Diesel per month for the Ford Supercab.

**Peter Elsner and Sibylle Schliemann** donated € 200 towards the purchase of new camera traps. **Manica Group Namibia** also donated N\$ 5000 towards new camera traps.

**Lüderitz Bay Shipping and Forwarding** adopted another brown hyena, which was named Shadow, for N\$ 1500. **Birgitte and Heini Soltau** donated N\$ 2000. These donations were also used for the purchase of new camera traps.

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

Namdeb Diamond Corporation	MFMR	Steve Appleton	Walter Rusch	Chris Voets	Coastway Tour Service Station
Chevron Namibia	Luderitz Safaris &Tours	George Shimaneni	Beppo Family	Louise Yates	Kansas City Zoo
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**THE BROWN HYENA RESEARCH PROJECT WISHES YOU A WONDERFUL FESTIVE SEASON, MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A GOOD START INTO THE NEW YEAR**

**THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SUPPORT**



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