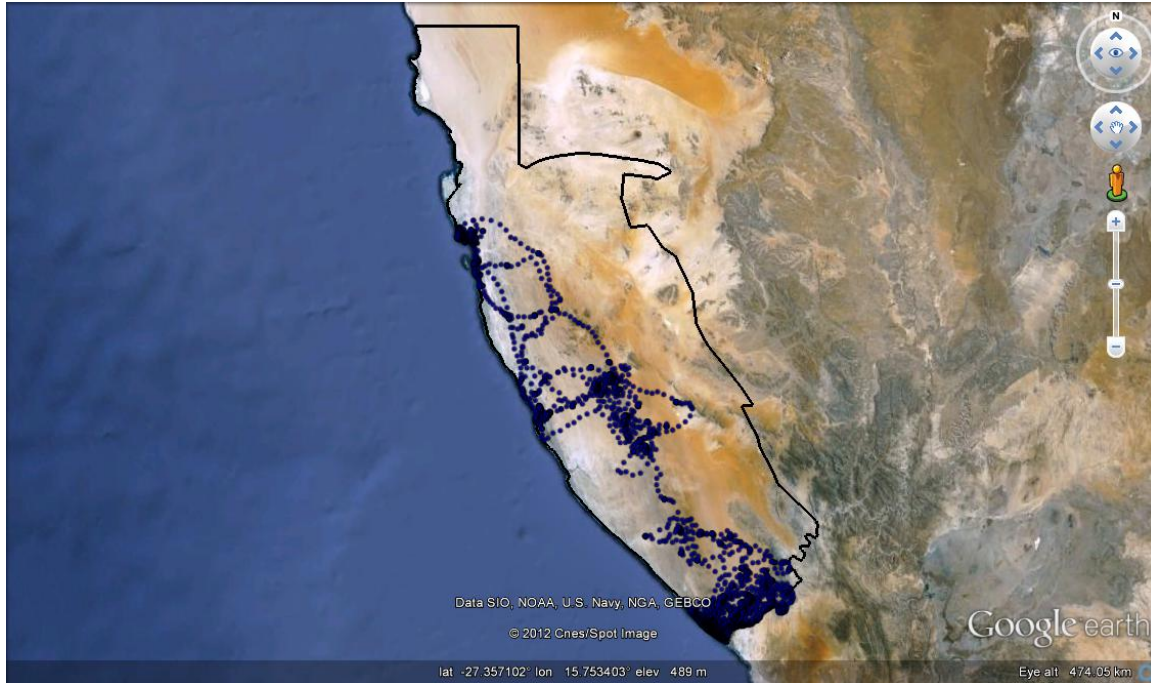


DARWIN'S TRAVELS



Who would have thought that we would ever find Darwin again...At the end of February I received two reports of collared brown hyenas, one was reported by Ruusa Gottlieb and was sighted near the Nadeet Centre close to the NamibRand Nature Reserve and the other one was reported by Holger Kolberg who sighted a collared hyena at Hohenfels on the Orange River. So we had sightings to the far north of our study area and to the far south. Our first telemetry flight was to the north, but we did not receive any signal. Two days later Gino flew with Claudia Sewig, our new volunteer, to the Orange River. We did not expect to receive any signal there either, and both of them were extremely surprised and happy when they heard the long anticipated beep sound in the receiver. Darwin had 'relocated' to the Orange River. Gino and Claudia tried to trigger a remote data download, but had to realize that the collar battery already seemed to be very low, as indicated by a specific signal pulse rate, and the data download was therefore not possible. Nevertheless, they were very happy to have found him. I decided to fly with Gino the next day to drop the collar off and to land in Oranjemund to retrieve the collar immediately. The drop-off worked well, but the weather was extremely bad. We had 30 knots of wind from the south and although we could have landed in Oranjemund, we may have been stuck there until the wind dropped and therefore decided to fly back to Aus. We finally managed to land in Oranjemund a week later and retrieved the collar in the resting site, where Darwin must have been lying during the drop-off procedure. If we could have flown quicker back to Aus, we would have, as we were so excited to have a look at the data. And the data was amazing (blue points on the map). Darwin travelled from Elizabeth Bay, where we had collared him, to the Kaukausib fountain, further south to the seal colony at Baker's Bay, into the inland dunes to the south of the Klinghardt Mountains and all the way south to the Orange River, where he has stayed since the beginning of October last year. Most activity was recorded along the river, but also in the southern portion of Mining Area 1. I'm not sure whether Darwin is a nomadic living male or whether he emigrated, but I will analyse the data soon and hope to find some answers.

Thanks so much to Ruusa and Holger for reporting these important sightings and to Gino and Claudia for flying all the way down to Oranjemund.

OBELIXA'S FAVOURITE RESTING SITE

Obelixa's next data download was due at the beginning of February. As usual, we received her signal from the Elizabeth Bay ghost town. This time the signal came from the casino. Claudia and I drove to the old plant to check the camera trap there and set-up the remote download equipment. Once the download was complete, we decided to have a quick peak inside the old casino to maybe catch a glimpse of the resting Obelixa. It is always a special sight to see them resting inside one of the old ruins, especially inside the large and beautiful casino. We were lucky. Obelixa was resting in the hall, right opposite the northern entrance. She got up to have a closer look at us, but relaxed immediately and went back to her resting site. The downloaded data revealed that she is usually using the casino as a daytime resting site at the moment and therefore it was no surprise that we found her there on our next visit, too. Obelixa's cubs are still at the den inside the old plant. Our camera traps show lots of activity of several adults that visit the den to provide food and to socialize with the cubs, and we also sometimes capture images of the cubs. However, the camera traps are placed at the entrances to the plant and we have not figured out yet, where the cubs are usually playing, as most of the ruins are not safely accessible.



AERIAL TELEMETRY COSTS

We have used all our available funds for aerial telemetry this year in order to retrieve Darwin's collar – we had to fly 12 ½ hours, but it was worth it. One flying hour costs us N\$ 2000 and money from hyena adoptions often goes towards these expenses. Three brown hyenas have been adopted in the past 12 months. There are three animals available for sponsoring at the moment: Obelixa, Alaika and Tosca. If you are interested to help the Brown Hyena Research Project with its aerial telemetry costs, please visit our web-page www.strandwolf.org for more information about the sponsoring programme or contact me directly.

ROADKILL

A brown hyena was unfortunately killed on the tar road between Aus and Rosh Pinah sometime in February. We only heard about it at the beginning of March, but I will visit the site later this month to have a look at the skull to record the age of the killed animal. Close to the wild horse trough at Garub a mare and its foal were also hit and killed by a vehicle at the beginning of March. Wildlife mortality on roads is a big problem. Wendy Collinson from the Endangered Wildlife Trust is currently doing a study about the impact of roadkills. You can visit <http://endangeredwildlifetrust.wordpress.com> for more information.

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

As mentioned before, I recently became an honorary research associate at the University of Cape Town. You can visit <http://adu.org.za> and http://adu.org.za/staff_page.php?staff_id=151 for more information.

TSWALU BROWN HYENA STUDY

The Tswalu Brown Hyena Project was initiated in March 2012. Elsa Bussiere will implement the project as part of her PhD. She is supervised by Prof. Les Underhill from the University of Cape Town and myself. With this project, we aim to strengthen the accuracy of our knowledge about this elusive species: the brown hyena. A close study of the brown hyena population in Tswalu Kalahari Game Reserve will enable us to set up an adapted monitoring and conservation plan in the reserve. Another aspect of the study is to test cutting edge technologies (spatial explicit capture recapture models) used to assess elusive species' abundance and range, key information for future conservation work. We also aim to determine the brown hyena distribution in Southern Africa thanks to the involvement of as many people as possible. To do so, we centralise all the pictures of mammals along with GPS coordinates (or located on a map) sent by citizen scientists to provide accurate maps of the brown hyena distribution. These maps will serve as conservation and educational tools, important needs for the protection of the species. Please visit <http://brownhyena.ek.la/> for more information.

OUR ADOPTED HYENAS: ANDY, HELENE, ALBERT, SHADOW AND OTIS



Andy was adopted for Richard S. Gill in 2010 and sponsored for a further year at the end of December 2011. Andy was part of the Wolf Bay Clan and a regular visitor at Jungle Den. However, he visited the den for the last time in September 2011 and it seems as if he followed Tosca back into their previous territory at the Luderitz Peninsula (see previous newsletter), as we were able to capture him since then on a camera trap set-up in that territory.



Helene is an adult female hyena of the Wolf Bay Clan. She did not follow Tosca back into the old territory and stayed with Alaika in the Wolf and Atlas Bay area. Helene and Alaika are the animals that are most frequently captured on our camera traps near the den. Helene was adopted by Holger Funk in 2011. Her collar was bitten off by the cubs sometime last year and we hope to fit her with a new collar during this year's darting season.

Albert was born in 2009 and was raised at Jungle Den. He is Tosca's son. Albert spent a lot of time at Jungle Den in 2010, but was not seen again in the area after February 2011. By that time he should have been 2 ½ years old. He may have emigrated into another group. We hope to eventually capture him on one of our camera traps again. Albert was adopted by Mikita Brottman in 2010.

Shadow was adopted by Luderitz Bay Shipping and Forwarding in 2011. Shadow is an adult brown hyena of the Elizabeth Bay Clan of unknown sex. We captured him/her on occasion on the camera traps close to the den at the old plant and will hopefully be able to fit a collar in April.

Otis was adopted as a cub for Maddie Cunard in 2011. Otis belongs to the E-Bay Clan, but Obelixa does not seem to be her mother. However, we captured another female on our camera traps, which may have been her mom. Otis should be around two years old now. We recently sighted a sub-adult animal near the den, which could have been Otis.



Andy, Helene, Albert, Shadow and possibly Otis (from top to bottom and left to right)

SPERRGEBIET TRIP WITH THE GERMAN EMBASSY, KfW DEVELOPMENT BANK, GIZ AND MET

Holger Vollbrecht from EduVentures asked me to help organizing a field trip for the German Embassy in Windhoek, the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, the GIZ, the KfW Development Bank and the Namibian Ministry of Environment and Tourism. The delegates only had one day to experience the Sperrgebiet first hand – obviously an impossible task. I met the delegates the day before our trip in the evening to give a talk about the Sperrgebiet. Samson Mulonga from SPAN project gave a talk about the tourism development plan in the area and I tried to give them a visual impression about the unique flora, fauna, landscapes and vegetation types.

Our field trip the next day started at E-Bay, where we actually wanted to have a look at the camera traps, but Obelixa was resting at her favourite resting site in the casino and we decided to 'visit' her instead. Everybody was extremely excited and more than surprised to see a brown hyena up close.

We went on a quick detour to the Atlas Bay seal colony and saw lots of jackals on our way there.

Our journey continued to the old pump station and police station at Grillenthal and from there on we went to the Kaukausb fountain. It was a very nice journey for myself, too, as I hadn't been to that area for many years. The fountain still carries lots of water and we saw plenty of ostrich and gemsbok in the area. Our next place of interest was the Tsaukaib mountains and we had an incredibly beautiful drive through two riverbeds to the old ox-waggon route from Tsiirub to the mountains. I checked one of the camera traps at the Tsaukaib Mountains. With the German Ambassador Egon Kochanke at the Kaukausb Fountain (photo: S. Sewig)

Most images were of gemsbok, but we also captured two brown hyenas. From there, the delegation drove on to Aus to meet with the Aus community and to see the wild horses the next day and I returned to Luderitz.

I think that everybody enjoyed the trip, especially seeing Obelixa at E-Bay ghost town.

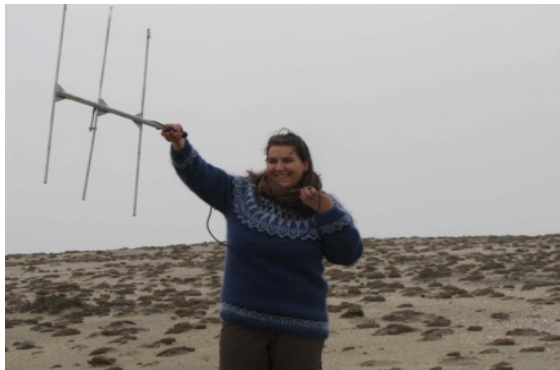


INGA'S STORY:

I am Inga Jänecke and in my final year of the bachelor Wildlife Management. In the course of my study, I had the great opportunity to do two 5-months internships abroad. The first internship I did, was on a game farm in the very north of Namibia and there I developed my love for Namibia. From that time on it was for sure that I would do my next internship in Namibia as well. As I wanted to get field experience by joining a research project, I started looking for one. Finally, I found the project about brown hyenas. After some e-mail contact with Ingrid Wiesel, the head of the project, it was set up to spend 5 months in the small town Lüderitz in Namibia and to work for the Brown Hyena Research Project. I was very excited and time could not pass fast enough until my departure in the beginning of September. Of course, I had already been to Namibia, but I knew that this time would be completely different and a new big adventure. Already the journey from Windhoek to Lüderitz turned out to be a small adventure on its own. It took three days until I finally reached Lüderitz on a Sunday evening. On the one hand, I was really tired from the long journey and on the other hand, totally happy about finally reaching my new home. When I arrived I was welcomed by Ingrid and her son Max. They showed me my new home and I had to smile when I saw the old boat lying at the hillside.



My first visual of Obelixa, resting near E-Bay ghost town



Me, trying to get a signal of a brown hyena

The next day after my arrival in Lüderitz I started work. When I came to the office I got to know Ruusa, a Namibian volunteer, with who I was supposed to work together for the first two months of my stay. After Ingrid introduced the project to me, I directly dunk into the world of the brown hyenas. I had to work on a dataset about the moving of Obelixa, a female brown hyena, in the Sperrgebiet. It turned out that Obelixa was accompanying me during my whole stay. The next morning Ingrid, Ruusa and I drove to the ghost town Elizabeth Bay (E-Bay) in the Sperrgebiet to collect photos from camera traps. The weather was awful, with a lot of fog and it was quite cold. That is why I first could not see a lot of the landscape and I doubted that I will ever remember the way we drove. But the weather got better in the course of the morning and I enjoyed everything completely. During the whole ride we had a receiver switched on, so that we could get the signals from the collared hyenas. Near E-Bay ghost town we got a strong signal of Obelixa's collar and as her data were not downloaded for quite a while we started a download. We still had to collect the data from all the camera traps located in E-Bay, so we did not accompany the download, but picked up the equipment later. As Ingrid was quite sure where Obelixa was resting, she started walking there and told Ruusa and me to wait and that she would fetch us if she found Obelixa. We were very lucky when Ingrid came back after a while and told us that she found Obelixa. Then we followed Ingrid quietly. The outcome of my second working day was that I got a visual of Obelixa and it turned out that this was not the last time I saw her. In the course of my internship we did more download of Obelixa and in the end, I even did some completely on my own. It got my job to regularly download the data from Obelixa, but also from Alaika, another collared female hyena. Furthermore, I was responsible for collecting the data from the different camera traps, which are located throughout the Sperrgebiet and I always enjoyed doing it as the landscape was just amazing. Parallel to the normal field- and office work, I started collecting data at the Wolf Bay seal colony mid November. Twice a week I drove out to the seal colony to look for dead seal pups. I determined whether the seal pups died, because of brown hyena predation or non violent mortality. Moreover, I measured several characteristics as age, sex, mass, length, girth and blubber. In the beginning, it was a strange feeling to walk through the seal colony and to look for dead pups, but after a short period of

familiarization I got used to it. And in the end, I really enjoyed being out at the colony with only seals around me as company. The 5 months passed by really fast and before I realized it was already the end of January, the time for leaving this beautiful place. If I would not have known at that time that I will come back to Lüderitz soon, it would have been even a harder goodbye. I have spent an amazing time in Lüderitz in which I met many interesting people, gained a lot of experiences and became much more confident about what I would like to do in the future!

CAMERA TRAP IMAGES



FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

Namdeb renewed their annual donation to the Brown Hyena Research Project. We received N\$ 122 250 towards the basic running costs of the project. We really rely on **Namdeb's** continuous support and are very grateful for their generous donation.

Simon Jones donated N\$ 2500 to the project.

Christine Lindner has also been supporting the project for many years. She donated N\$ 1000 recently.

I would also like to thank **Erich Looser** from **Altantech** in Lüderitz for helping us whenever we have an electrical problem.

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
Predator Conservation Trust UK	Gino Noli	Kolette Grobler	Jessie Salb	Nicole & Adam Baden-Clay	Mikita Brottman
OK Grocer	Kathy Peard	Wilfried Erni	Mildred Salb	Antje Burke	Oklahoma City Zoo
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	Ronel v.d. Merwe	Westair	Nils Schultze		



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