

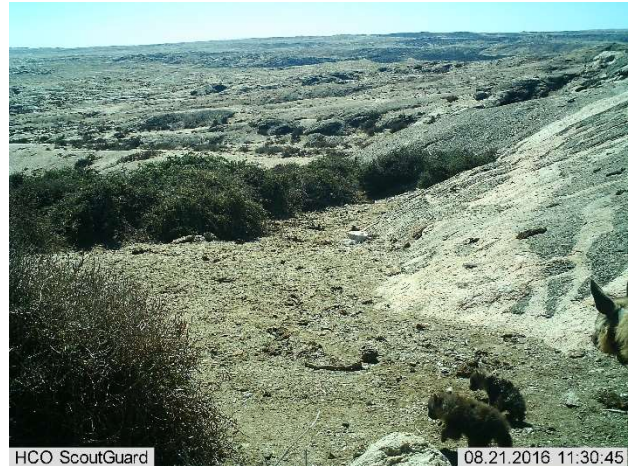


## Alaika, her Cubs and other Visitors

by Ingrid Wiesel

It is always one of the biggest highlights when we discover that one of our females has a new litter of cubs. Since we are only trying to download data from our GPS collars on a quarterly basis, we often only discover birthing events quite late if it wasn't for our camera traps that are set up at various den sites. We don't often capture very young cubs on our traps though, as our cameras are predominately set up at communal and not natal dens. Hence it was the more amazing to see that Alaika actually gave birth at Jungle Den this time, one of their largest communal dens. However, she only used the large cave for a week before moving her one week old cubs to another smaller cave outside the view of our camera trap (see camera trap images on page 4). Another month later, she moved to another communal den, where she stayed for two weeks before moving again. She definitely has been a busy mom...

Other clan members don't visit dens with young cubs often, but we were still able to capture Luther and Clyde Too on both dens on occasion. A very surprising visitor though was Balu. We captured this young male, son of Obelixa, at E-Bay three years ago, and fitted a visual collar last year, as we did not have enough GPS collars available at that time. We hadn't captured him on camera traps in the E-Bay clan's territory for several months and it looks as if he is searching for a new clan to join. It would be nice if he could stay with the Atlas Bay clan, but Clyde Too already fills the role of the immigrant male and hence Balu may not be allowed to stay. As always, we will keep you up to date.



Luther



Clyde Too



Balu

### De Beers Diamond Route Conference 2016



I presented a talk about "Detection of birth and location of den sites in brown hyenas based on GPS telemetry data".

### Kansas City Zoo

The Kansas City Zoo has generously sponsored 4 collar refurbishments, the purchase of 3 new collars and the purchase of a field generator. They are also supporting us by sending their vet Dr. Kirk Suedmeyer to help with the darting each year since 2009.

### Symposium

A symposium on animal movement & satellite tracking was held at the Otjikoto Education Centre in November. Inga attended the symposium and presented our talk about the detection of birth data and location of dens.

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## Tswalu Update

by Ingrid Wiesel

We've been collecting camera trap data at Tswalu Kalahari Reserve for the past two years. The equipment has been removed in December and now the big task of data analysis starts. We collected close to 340 000 images of 21 camera traps that had been deployed for three months in 2014, six months in 2015 and 9 months in 2016.

Kelsey Green has already assessed which variables affect capture rate for her BTech degree at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in George and presented a poster about her results at the De Beers Diamond Route Conference.

All camera traps recorded brown hyenas, but densities in different areas of the reserve vary. We also recorded leopard, cheetah, caracal, African wild cat, aardwolf, bat-eared fox and black-backed jackal, and obviously quite a variety of other mammals, too. Some very only seldom captured such as the aardvark.



Bushnell Camera Name 62°F 16°C 09-12-2016 18:32:14  
Brown hyena in the eastern section



SPARTAN M 10/14/2016 03:36:14 064°F P5  
Aardvark in the western section

Once data has been analysed, we will possibly study the brown hyena population in the eastern section of the reserve, where we know of one active den site, in more detail. We are also looking at working together with Rooipoort Nature Reserve and Telperion Nature Reserve in future.

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## What's happening at Garub?

by Ingrid Wiesel

Zane has definitely moved out of the Garub area. He was captured on camera traps set-up by the N/a'an ku sê Foundation on Kanaan and on camera traps set-up by the IZW for the national cheetah survey, also in the Kanaan area in August. Since then, we haven't been able to find him, but we will do a search flight at the latest in April 2017 when the whole team meets for our annual capture season.



HCO ScoutGuard 5.03.2016 19:27:54

Inga received Nya's signal in September, but could not download any data. Our camera traps also don't capture her very often, but she is still in the area and members of the Wild Horse Trust have reported that they captured her on their camera traps, however, we still have to retrieve and review their data. We are capturing some other interesting animals though: cheetah, African wild cat and aardwolf. There seems to be a resident aardwolf at our Riverroad site, which is very photogenic and loves to spend time in front of the camera.



HCO ScoutGuard 7.09.2016 19:22:39

The horses on the other hand are not doing well. The drought doesn't seem to find an end and according to Telané, no foals have survived since 2012.

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## Obelixa and her Collar

by Inga Jänecke

After almost one and a half years, Obelixa's iridium collar stopped taking positions due to low battery. Therefore, we decided to drop the collar off as soon as possible, so Obelixa can spend the rest of her life without a collar.

Since the middle of September I have been driving out to E-Bay regularly, to try and find Obelixa to drop her collar off. Unfortunately, most of the times she was hiding in the old plant, where it is impossible to trigger the drop-off, as I need to be in line of sight with the collar to be successful. Furthermore, it is too risky to drop the collar off at this plant in case the collar falls off immediately, I would not be able to retrieve it. Therefore, I was being patient and tried again and again to find Obelixa at a good spot.

A couple of weeks later I was lucky to find Obelixa resting next to one of the old buildings in the ghost town, being only a hundred meters away from me. I took my chance and triggered the drop-off. The impulse rate of her collars' signal changed immediately, indicating that the drop-off had been triggered successfully. Now it was on me to drive out every day to find Obelixa's collar. As the brown hyenas have long fur, the collar sometimes get tangled in the hair and does not directly fall off, so it needs a lot of patience and time to finally retrieve the collar.

During the first trips, the signal of Obelixa's collar still came from different directions, which indicated that Obelixa was still wearing the collar. After a couple of days, the signal came from Green Valley Den on two consecutive days, which got me excited that I might be able to retrieve the collar already. As I was walking into the direction of the signal and it got stronger and stronger, all of a sudden Obelixa looked at me through the bushes still wearing the collar. I immediately backed off, being really disappointed.

The next few times that I drove out I didn't get Obelixa's signal anymore, which let me think that the battery stopped working entirely. Nevertheless, a few weeks later, when I was driving through the E-Bay ghost town and tried to get Obelixa's signal, I suddenly heard it again. As it had been quite a while since I triggered the drop-off, I was pretty sure, that the collar must have finally fallen off. Regardless, I walked really carefully into the direction that the signal came from, as there was the chance that the collar still didn't fall off. This got confirmed when Obelixa stuck her head out of one of the old buildings. Although it was good to see that the collar's battery was still working, it was unpleasant to see the collar still on her. Therefore, I triggered the drop-off one more time, as I thought that something must have gone wrong the first time. During my latest field trip, it turned out that it is possible, that the drop-off unit of Obelixa's collar is malfunctioning. I was driving along Bain's Bay, when I got Obelixa's signal again. I was really excited and immediately started hiking towards her, as I realised how strong the signal was. When I hiked over the first ridge, I saw Obelixa lying only 20m away from our camera trap taking a peaceful afternoon nap. I took this chance to watch her for quite a while and although she knew I was there, she didn't mind me at all. Thank you Obelixa for being such a patient hyena and tolerating the constant encounters during the last few months.



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## Talks

by Inga Jänecke

We were recently approached by a Dutch Ecotourism Consultant to give presentations about our work on the brown hyenas in the Sperrgebiet to interested tourists. In September, I got the first couple to whom I gave a virtual tour through the Sperrgebiet to illustrate the challenges brown hyena face, followed by introducing the ecology of brown hyena and the research we are currently carrying out. After a couple of months, we got an excited E-Mail that this same couple saw a brown hyena at a waterhole in Etosha and only recognised it as a brown hyena due to our presentation. I think this presentation was a definite success. I am looking forward to give this presentation to more tourists in future.

Last month, I took part in a Symposium on animal movements and satellite tracking in Namibia hosted by the Namibian Chamber of Environment and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism at the Otjikoto Education and Environmental Centre. During this symposium researchers presented their methods and findings on how they use satellite tracking to understand their study species' behaviour. This symposium was not only very informative and a great opportunity for me to meet other researchers, but it also lay the first stepping stone for researchers to work together more closely and to combine data with each other.

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## Citizen Science Project Updates

by Ingrid Wiesel

We received reports of eight incidental brown hyena sightings between September and December 2016 from the following people: Peter Cunningham, Emsie from Desert Lion Logistics, John Meyer, Michael Demtschuk, Heiko and Diane Metzger, Philippe Campion and from All for Nature Travel & Consultancy. We are also receiving regular camera trap updates from our Citizen Science Partners Keith from Port Nolloth and Ruediger from Mount Valley Farm near Helmeringhausen. At Mount Valley, leopard, cheetah and spotted hyena are frequently captured on camera traps. Thanks so much for reporting all these sightings.



Photo by Heiko Metzger



Photo by Phillippe Campion



Camera trap image from Mount Valley Farm



Camera trap image from Holgat River (Keith Newnham)

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**Camera Trap Images – Alaika’s cubs keep her busy...**



HCO ScoutGuard 07.30.2016 19:51:14  
Alaika carries first cub to entrance behind camera trap



HCO ScoutGuard 07.30.2016 20:29:50  
Alaika carries second cub to entrance behind camera trap



HCO ScoutGuard 08.24.2016 08:22:51  
Alaika carries cub to den SPG27



HCO ScoutGuard 08.31.2016 12:58:15  
Cubs have settled at den SPG27



HCO ScoutGuard 09.09.2016 10:28:42  
Alaika carries cub to new den



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## FUNDRAISING

- **Namdeb Diamond Corporation** supported us again by covering the costs of **N\$ 12 180** for necessary repairs on our Ford Ranger project vehicle. We really appreciate this and are extremely relieved that our project vehicle is roadworthy again.
  - **Crispin and Orti Clay** have renewed their support for Clyde Too again. We fitted him with a new collar in March this year and have already retrieved the first data set.
  - **Theo Klatte** continues to provide lenses for damaged camera traps. They work very well and this prolongs the lifetime of our equipment that suffers a lot in our harsh coastal desert environment.
  - **Kai Neckel** is prepared to help us with aerial telemetry. The first flights were planned for December, but we could not get all necessary permits in time and will try again in January.
  - The **Kansas City Zoo**, USA, has contributed US\$ 13 000 for the purchase of collars and a generator.
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