

EMMA, GYPSY II AND THE REST OF THE PENINSULA CLAN

It's been a long time since we monitored the Peninsula Clan. There were too many other projects to think of and we only followed the lives of Emma and Gypsy II on an irregular basis. Then in May of this year we realised that something strange is happening with this clan. The animals were meeting regularly near one of the den sites and we suspected that one of the females finally had a litter of cubs again. But nothing – the den stayed empty, but the hyenas showed a weird interest in the area. We decided to fit at least one collar to another clan member to find out what was happening. Ideally we wanted to fit a GPS collar to one of the females, as the chance was greater that she would lead us to the den. We monitored the meeting point for a few nights and identified at least four different individuals: Emma, LHB116 – a male that was fitted with a visual collar in 1999, and two unknown adults. No sight of Gypsy II and we got the strange feeling that she might have died of old age. We managed to dart a young male, Brutal, in the second night and fitted him with a radio collar, as we wanted to save the GPS collar for a female, which we managed to do two days later. To our surprise, the four year old female, called Tosca, was lactating. We couldn't believe our luck, as she would definitely lead us to her den. We programmed the GPS collar to record a GPS fix every 20 minutes to be able to track Tosca's movements in detail and to get a better idea about the behaviour of a lactating female.



Darting team working on Brutal



Tosca, fitted with a GPS collar

We did the first data download ten days after we fitted Tosca with the collar. It took us a few days to find her, as she was spending up to 12 hours inside the den. The cubs must still be very young, as Tosca only leaves the den site for a few hours at night and since the other clan members haven't started to provide additional food. We managed to do another download near Tosca's den and then suddenly she disappeared. We inspected the den and unfortunately found no sign of activity. Therefore we decided to locate her with the plane another two weeks later and downloaded the data successfully. What we could see on the data set was incredible....

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Thanks to Flip Stander, Jim Roth, Gemma Cryer and Nick Warren for helping to figure out what was happening in the area. A great thanks to the downloading team: Gino Noli, Kathie Peard and Jessica Kemper – it's definitely easier to share the equipment load....

ROADKILLS

This time we have to report about a spotted hyena roadkill near Aus.



This subadult was unfortunately hit by a vehicle. The last roadkill was reported in 2004, but we suspect that many more are killed in this area. We applied for funding for a pilot study in the Aus area and will keep you updated about the progress.

SLOT TINS

The Kolmanskop Curio Shop collected N\$ 279-63 in their slot tin. We have also received the tin from Luderitz Safaris and Tours, but haven't managed to count all the coins yet, but it looks like a big contribution again.

Thank you so much for your support.

THE GREAT SUCCESS OF THE BOGENFELS STUDY

I think many of you must have kept their fingers crossed for us. Finally the Bogenfels study seems to be successful. Ray, whom we fitted with a GPS collar earlier this year is neither injured (remember Django) nor dead (remember Floggy) and is a healthy, resident male brown hyena. He spends most of his time near the Van Reenen Bay seal colony and we managed to download data three times. We reported about the first download in the last issue, which went picture perfect. The second one was a bit of a disaster! Jim, Gemma and myself went for a field trip to Van Reenen Bay. Finding Ray was the last point on our agenda, as the data download was only due in another weeks time, but we carried the equipment with us – just in case. Not expecting to find him, we listened for his signal from the Van Reenen Bay observation hut – and there it was and judging by the signal strength he was not far away. Jim and I walked back to the research station to fetch the equipment, 1 km back and forwards through the hummocks. At least effort is not missing on our side. Arriving pretty exhausted back at the observation hut, we slowly approached the area where the signal was coming from. Suddenly the pulse rate of the collar changed and we knew that Ray must

have spotted us. We quickly walked onto one of the hills, just to see him walking through the hummocks into northern direction while stopping and looking at us from time to time. Nevertheless, I decided to trigger the download. Although we lost him out of sight and had to change positions twice, finding higher hills, we managed to download two thirds of the data set. I was extremely surprised that the download worked under these circumstances and we were well rewarded for all our effort. We did the third download at the beginning of September. We located Ray in the same area and since we knew that he was resting in a pretty open area, somewhere next to a hummock dune, we changed our approach and managed to start the download without him hearing or seeing us. All three data sets show a similar movement pattern. We are extremely curious to see, whether his movement and activity changes once the seal pupping season starts in November. We will definitely keep you informed.

Thanks to Gino Noli, Jim Roth, Telané Greyling and Gemma Cryer for joining the hikes to find Ray.

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Jessica and Kathie preparing for the data download

First we discovered that Tosca moved to a new den about 300 metres to the west of her natal den. About one week later, she moved her cubs to another, well known den, about 1.5 km to the north-east. We knew that this den was occupied by porcupines just recently and Tosca seemed not too like the past presence of those animals in there and moved her cubs again in the same night and the following day to another den, also 1.5 km away from the “porcupine” den. The data showed us, that she must have at least two cubs, possibly three. Her move to the “porcupine” den showed three quick and direct trips to that den, but the next move just showed two distinct trips between dens. Nevertheless, she walked back a third time towards the “porcupine” den, but stopped half way, circled around a small area and went back to the last den. We assume that one of the cubs actually followed its mother and that Tosca therefore did not need to go back to the “porcupine” den a third time, but that she walked together with the third cub to the new den. This was an incredible discovery. We will download the next data set soon, but decided not too approach Tosca too close to her den. Being a young brown hyena and having possibly her first litter, she seems to be very nervous about human presence and we will give her all the space and time she needs. Since we can track her movements and find the den sites this nicely, we decided to stay patient and only start looking for the cubs to get ID photographs once they are about eight to nine months old and spend time outside the den even when the mom is not around. What an exciting project!

WILDLIFE COALITION FIELD TRIP



Sonja, Robin, Flip and myself looking out for lion tracks

Flip from the Kunene Lion Project hosted our first collaborative field trip. Robin and Sonja from the Wild Dog Project and me together with Gemma met Flip at his camp in Wereldsend in the middle of August to spend a week in his study area to fit lions with radio collars and to retrieve a GPS collar that was fitted to a lioness at that time.

We were lucky and received a radio signal of a radio collared male lion near Wereldsend on our first day out in the field. He was resting in thick bush near a waterhole in a beautiful river bed. Although we knew he was close to us and that a second male lion had joined him on the next day, we were not able to dart any of the two lions – not even catching a glimpse of them. So, I had to realize that it is actually a lot more difficult getting close to lions than it is to dart brown hyenas. We decided not to spend too much time with those lions, as there was the more important task to remove the GPS collar of the lioness, which is resident in the area around the Hoarusib River. We started early on the third day for our drive up north, which would take us about four hours. The drive was amazing: beautiful landscape, vast plains and incredible mountain ranges.

We stopped briefly at the Save the Rhino camp at Palmwag before heading further north, passing Sesfontein

until arriving at Purros to the south of the Hoarusib River. What an amazing area – and wildlife. We drove up and down the river for the next few days but only spotted old lion tracks. Nevertheless, we came across a fresh cheetah kill and saw the fantastic desert elephants feeding along the riverbed. The closer we got to the sea the more I felt at home, especially when we spotted the first brown hyena tracks. We arrived at the sea to check a fresh water spring for recent lion activity. The whole area looked so similar to my study area, but when we saw the first lion track, although not fresh, I realized the difference. The largest carnivore tracks that I encounter along the Sperrgebiet coast are brown hyena tracks and it was a weird feeling seeing lion tracks on a beach. What an experience. However, the lions seem to have moved away from the riverbed for the time being and we again were not able to dart the lioness to exchange her collar. Still, we all had an amazing time and I’m looking forward to our next field trip. The coalition members might visit the hyena project first, but we will definitely meet in Bushmanland soon, where Robin studies wild dogs.



Desert elephants also carry GPS collars

For more information you can visit www.wildlifecoalition.info

KOLMANSKOP HYENAS

Kolmanskop ghost town has a new tourist attraction: a brown hyena, possibly of the Peninsula clan has chosen the ghost town as its resting area and has been regularly seen by tourists and staff since March 2006. Naturally there were some concerns on the side of the concession holder, but so far the hyena shows its natural shyness towards humans. Nevertheless, we were asked to identify the individual animal, just in case it becomes too habituated, so that we can make alternative plans if necessary. I already knew that it would be problematic to find the specific hyena, as Kolmanskop ghost town forms the eastern territory boundary of the Peninsula clan and the north-western boundary of the Wolf Bay clan. I therefore expected many hyenas visiting the area, including Tosca, Emma, Gypsy II and Jewel. I investigated the area and found many paste marks and latrines, indicating that the town is regularly visited and fresh paste marks are deposited on bushes and grass daily.

I had four days to prove, that more than one hyena visits the area and quickly mounted two camera traps between the old abandoned houses. This was an incredibly short time to capture brown hyenas with the cameras, as they are often very skittish to new structures in their territory and sometimes avoid going close to these for quite some time. But luck was on my side: In the third night the cameras captured two different brown hyenas visiting a latrine close by. One of the animals was our radio collared female “Emma” of the Peninsula Clan. The other animal is also a well known hyena of the same clan “LHb31m”. Emma passed the latrine at 5:30 h in the morning and LHb31m walked through the area one hour later. Both were quite interested in the camera trap, as can be seen on the photographs, but luckily did not decide to nibble at the equipment – so they are far better behaved than the Kaukasib and Anigab hyenas that try to destroy the cameras on a regular basis. Anyhow, all parties realised that it will be extremely difficult to identify the “Kolmanskop” hyena and we decided on a different tactic. An employee of the concession holder will make sure that no hyena rests in the ghost houses before the tourists arrive. Everybody is happy and the hyenas will have enough time to do whatever they need to do at Kolmanskop at night. I will leave the camera traps there for a few more weeks to get a better idea about the individuals visiting this area.



NEWS

I finally managed to submit my doctorate thesis about the predatory behaviour of brown hyenas at Cape fur seal colonies. I should get my first results at the end of September and have to defend the thesis at the end of October. The thesis will be available online from December on-wards.

We are collaborating with Queens University in Canada regarding brown hyena genetics. Andrew Stein, who studies brown hyenas at the CCF, and the Africat Foundation, joined the collaboration to maximise the sample size and we hope to have first results by the beginning of next year.

Many brown hyenas have been reported in the Oranjemund, Baker's Bay and Bogenfels area. Gondwana Nature Reserve regularly reports carnivore sightings in their area and our idea about carnivore occurrence in the southern Karas region improves monthly. We are also contributing to the Namibian Biodiversity Database that is updated by the National Botanical Research Institute. We submitted a joint proposal to SKEP in order to improve data collection in the Sperrgebiet. This proposal was approved of last months and includes the purchase of GPS's, digital cameras and camera traps.

We prepared a poster for the De Beers Environmental Conference held in South Africa. Namdeb will present the poster there and we will display the information at our Environmental Information Centre at the Luderitz Waterfront soon.

We gave a presentation to children that participated in the EduVenture tour to the Sperrgebiet in August. We also took the children to an abandoned brown hyena den site at the Luderitz Peninsula to give them a better idea about brown hyena denning behaviour. We all enjoyed the visit and hope to participate in future again.

FUNDRAISING AND DONATIONS

As expected, I didn't find much time to do fundraising, as I had to concentrate on finishing my thesis. Nevertheless, we submitted the following proposals:

Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Planning (SKEP):

- Herbivore abundance and movement in the Sperrgebiet
- Brown hyena awareness programme
- Brown hyena conservation in the Sperrgebiet
- Brown hyena conservation along the Orange River
- Human wildlife conflict with spotted hyenas around the Sperrgebiet boundary

Global Environment Fund (GEF):

- EnviroClub Sperrgebiet: The Luderitz youth is encouraged to run a "Biological Puppet Theatre". The idea behind this is to transfer knowledge and raise awareness about the unique Succulent Karoo Biome through plays.

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

Namdeb	Benguela Enterprises CC	Raleigh International	MET	Rene Rossler	Luderitz Backpackers
Caltex	Hottentot Bay Investment	Luderitz Bay Shipping	MFMR	Ronel v.d. Merwe	Mark Noffke
Siemens	Cc	&Forwarding	Luderitz Safaris & Tours	Steve Appleton	Mandy Noffke
Shell Solar	Wilderness Safaris	First National Bank	Riaan Laubscher	George Shimaneni	Pisces Environmental
Predator Conservation	Wildlife Trust	Luderitz Yacht Club	Andrew Cunningham	Gisela Wolters	Services
Trust	Namibia Nature	Luderitz SPAR	Alex MacKay	Kolette Grobler	
OK Grocer	Foundation	Windhoek Optics	Gino Noli	Norbert Klosta	
Truckscan	Sidewinder Films	Wild Horse Trust	Kathy Peard	Wilfried Erni	
Critical Ecosystem	Forbidden Land	Upstart Technologies	Jessica Kemper	Erich Looser	
Partnership Fund	Coastway Tours	Seaflower	Jean-Paul Roux	Lino Scanavino	
Nebank Green Fund	4x4 Adventures	Coastal Electric &	Trygve Cooper	Jürgen Syvertsen	
Namibia Environment	Namibian Breweries	Hardware	Volker & Daggie Jahnke	Morag Burrell	
Fund	BHP Billiton	Nest Hotel	Johann du Toit	Beppo Family	
GraphPad Software, Inc.	Divpac	ESRI	Frikkie Kraamwinkel	Willem Swiegers	



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If you would prefer to do a bank transfer, the details are as follows:
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ADOPTION AND DONATION FORM

Post form to Brown Hyena Research Project, P. O. Box 739, Lüderitz, Namibia or
e-mail to strandwolf@iway.na

- Adopt/Sponsor a brown hyena for one year (N\$/ZAR 1500-00, Euro/US\$ 250-00, £ 150-00)
- Become a friend of the Brown Hyena Research Project - annual fee: N\$/ZAR 500-00, Euro/US\$ 50-00, £ 35-00 discount for members from Namibia (60%) and other African countries (30%)
- I would prefer to donate N\$/ZAR, Euro/US\$, £

I enclose a cheque for the amount of N\$/ZAR, Euro/US\$, £

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Thank you very much for your support!