



The Sub-region Namibia annual newsletter

The SKEP Co-ordination Unit aspires to the vision that, 'by the year 2020 the people of the Succulent Karoo are taking ownership and enjoying their unique living landscape in a way that maintains biodiversity and improves livelihoods now and into perpetuity.'

Steering Committee approves projects amounting up to a N\$ 400,000

Providing financial incentives for communities to engage in conservation initiatives is key in promoting sustainable development, while at the same time promoting community upliftment through income generating projects aimed at providing employment. Impacts on local communities in various parts of Namibia from such incentives have been observed and acknowledged.

Such financial incentives have been expanded to the *Sperrgebiet*, through SKEP. The *Sperrgebiet*—an understudied area—is threaten by human activities such as mining, illegal collection of plants and irrigated agriculture.

In an effort to address these challenges, the SKEP small grant programme recently pledged almost N\$ 400,000 to various environmental projects in and on the boundaries of the *Sperrgebiet*. Recently and through the SKEP small grants programme, eight (8) projects receive funding for their projects. The projects were approved on the 23 November 2006 at the SKEP Steering Committee meeting.



Steering Committee meeting in Rosh Pinah

The beneficiaries are the Namibian Environmental Education Network, EduVentures, Brown Hyena Research Project, Biodiversity database, Lüderitz High School, Nature Investments, Aus Community Conservation Trust and the Warmbad Community.

Approximately N\$ 2 million has been allocated to the small grants programme. The small grant programme is open to all members of civil society, including NGOs, private individuals and other interest groups who have innovative ideas to contribute to the conservation and sustainable development of the Succulent Karoo in Namibia. A maximum amount of N\$ 60 000 per project is awarded with no lower limits.

By: Jonas Nghishidi

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Aus town set for tourism boom

Although the town of Aus has seen significant development in the last few years, it is one of the poorest communities in Namibia, despite its proximity to some of the leading economic contributors of the country, such as the mining and fishing sectors.

With financial support of R 1,000,000.00 million from the European Union (EU) and the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP), the settlement of

Aus in the south is set for a tourism boom after the official launch of the Aus information centre.



Launch of the Aus centre

The Aus Tourist Information Centre was officially launched last Friday (24th November 2006). This latest development is seen as a significant step for the community of Aus to be engaged the tourism industry while conserving their rich culture and natural resources.

The new building is situated some 200 kilometers from Keetmanshoop at the junction of the Aus village turnoff, a strategic place for visitors and locals alike to get more information about the village and its natural desert environment.

Officially launching the centre, Minister of Environment and Tourism, Rev. Willem Konjore, said it was encouraging to note that the initial idea of establishing such a centre came from two local people who had the interests of the community at heart.



The official launch of the **Aus Info Centre**, Governor of the Karas Regional Council Hon. Dawid Boois (right), Minister of Environment and Tourism Rev. Willem Konjore (Centre, right), Bethanie Community Traditional Leader, Chief Fredricks (Centre, left) and the vice chairperson of the Aus Community Conservation Trust, Mr. Partick Xogab (left).

Through the Aus Community Conservation Trust (ACCT) the new centre will be managed with the objective of promoting the fragile, yet rich desert environment of the south in a sustainable manner for the benefit of the community.

“For a long time now Namibian people have forgotten about the south and its potential. It is up to us in the south to prove that wrong,” said Konjore, adding that the ministry gladly welcomes the “pro-poor tourism” initiative that has been undertaken to realise this goal.

Besides the project being financed by the European Union and SKEP, other major partners are the Namibia Nature Foundation, Nature Investments and Klein-Aus Vista (t/a Gondwana Desert Collection, a group of private nature reserves in southern Namibia), and tour operator Cheetah Tours & Safaris.

For more information on the Aus Information Centre contact Ms. Claudia Baisitse at Tel/fax : 063 - 258151, email: acct@iway.na

By: Jonas Nghishidi

Aus town

The name means 'out' in German but may be derived from a Khoi-Khoi word which means the 'place of the snakes'. After the German surrender to South African troops in World War I, Aus became an internment camp for German military officers. As many as 1550 prisoners were held at Aus and the towns population was further boosted by around 600 South African guards.

Namibia Environmental Education Network to organize the Succulent Karoo day



Generating local and national awareness about the importance of the hotspot is the first step to ensuring conservation practices are adopted, and is identified as an important strategic focal area within SKEP.

As a partner in the SKEP programme, NEEN aims to address this. Through the SKEP small grants programme, NEEN aims to contribute to this strategic focal area

NEEN has become a recipient of the SKEP small grants programme after the Steering Committee approved the proposal with an amount of N\$ 60,000.00.

The funds are earmarked for the commemoration of Succulent Karoo Day in conjunction with World Environmental Day. World Environment Day, commemorated each year on 5 June, is one of the principal vehicles through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

The overall objective of Succulent Karoo Day is to pro-

mote conservation of biodiversity in the Succulent Karoo and draw attention to the value and benefits of natural resources and enhance people’s understanding of biodiversity and our shared responsibility towards it.

The event is to be implemented in two phases with an emphasis on schools residing on the boundaries of the Succulent Karoo in Namibia. In the first phase, a school poster competition for schools in and on the boundaries of the Sperrgebiet will be implemented. The winners of the poster competition are scheduled to partake in the Succulent Karoo day celebrations.

Prizes for best schools in various categories will be presented during the occasion.

By: Jonas Nghishidi

As children, small creatures endlessly fascinate us; as adults, we can protect them so as to inspire future children.
- Les E. Watling,



Study of the demography of brown hyenas in the Sperrgebiet, Namibia.

The projects aim is to get a better understanding about the movement, activity and habitat use of brown hyenas in inland areas of the Sperrgebiet compared to hyenas living along the coast.

The project proved to be more challenging than expected. After finally receiving all the necessary equipment, such as GPS telemetry collars, from overseas at the end of 2005, we tried several times to fit those collars to inland hyenas.

First we were surprised by the extensive rainfall that hit the Sperrgebiet over Easter. Hyena activity in our well considered study areas was minimal and they seemed to have followed the game far outside their usual activity range.

For successful capture, we usually concentrate on areas around water holes, as hyenas have to go there to drink on a regular basis. With fresh water all over the Sperrgebiet, this trick did not work. We then decided to postpone the darting until most of the surface water had evaporated. This finally happened in November and we planned our next darting trip for the beginning of December. Still, on a reconnaissance trip in the middle of November, there was no sign of recent hyena activity near the Kaukasib fountain.

We did not even see any game in the area. We had more luck near Gabusib, which is east of the Klinghardt Mountains. Fresh hyena tracks and sightings of plenty of game indicated that we might be lucky with our capture there. We will try to fit two GPS collars between 1 and 5 December and hope to be able to give an update by early January.



Analysis being carried out on a capture brown hyena

In 2005 two brown hyenas had already been fitted with GPS collars in the Kaukasib area. The female hyena disappeared from the area, and despite several search flights covering the entire Sperrgebiet and surrounding area we could not find her again. The male hyena used an area of more than 1500 km² as his home range with the active den site being



right in the middle of it. He walked up to 90 km per day to search for food and also visited the coast as well as the Kaukasib fountain on a few occasions.

Other interesting findings were that inland hyenas use a different search pattern for food to coastal hyenas. In coastal areas food is found along beaches and seal colonies and is therefore localized. Resident hyenas use this food source during the entire year. Food sources of inland hyenas on the other hand, are widely distributed. Inland hyenas search dune and plain areas walking in a zigzag mode to detect all wind-borne odours. They also follow riverbeds, as much game is usually found there.



Therefore our preliminary findings support our expected results, that brown hyena movement, activity and habitat use differs between coastal and inland study sites.

The final report will be available in September 2007.

By: Ingrid Wiesel (Director)
Brown Hyena Research Project

SAD BROWN HYENA STORY

On our way back from the launch of the Aus Information centre, we encountered a brown hyena killed on the road. The body was found 20km from Aus on the B4 road heading to Keetmanshoop.

We were very disappointed about the incident.

Although a lot of the research

and awareness campaign concerning the Brown Hyenas has been conducted to promote conservation of species, road killing still remains a threat to the brown hyena in the Sperrgebiet.

Brown Hyenas are key carnivores in the Sperrgebiet preying primarily the Cape seals on the coast.



Brown Hyena carcass



NNF team analysing the carcass

Report by SKEP team

The Succulent Karoo Expedition

People's response to a desert vary greatly. Some speed through it as rapidly as possibly and are horrified by the desolation and bizarre forms of life encountered there.

To those who appreciate more than just traditional pretty scenery however, the desert offers a great deal. This was concluded by the 17 learners from Karasburg and Windhoek who participated in an excursion of EduVentures into a remote area that is under sampled in the Sperrgebiet.

The group collected more than 4360



Learners on the Succulent Karoo expedition

samples of insects, spiders and reptiles as specimens to be used by the National Museum. In comparison to the previous eight expeditions, this was the first time such an enormous amount of samples was collected.

The expedition explored two moun-



Eager collectors

tain ranges, the Kowis and Tsaukaib Mountains, about 30 and 60 km east of Lüderitz respectively. The mountains form part of the northern fringe on the Succulent Karoo, the most diverse desert in the world.

There is possibility that new species of insects and spiders could be discovered. Scientist believe that worldwide only about half of these groups of animals have been found and described to date. Confirmation that a new species is indeed discovered could only be after several months, as samples still need to be sent to experts for further analysis. Last year EduVentures discovered a new spider species in the Fish River Canyon area as well as several samples of gladiator insects belonging to the order Mantophasmatodea, which was first discovered in the Bradberg

Mountain in 2002.

EduVentures expeditions always head for remote areas where not much biological material is available. Through each expedition the collection of the national Museum receives valuable materials—veritable treas-



Picture of a spider in the Sperrgebiet

ures of science. At the same time, the expedition leaders introduce learners to the basics of scientific work, and inspire them with enthusiasm for nature's wonders

The SKEP small grants programme, Global Environmental Facility, Namdeb, Rossing Foundation, Klein Aus Vista and Tre Supermarket supported and sponsored the expedition.

By Jonas Nghishidi

Letter from the Sperrgebiet

Since July 2005, when the Ministry of Environment and Tourism became a recipient of support to SKEP sub-region Namibia, it is difficult to imagine how we would have managed otherwise. Not only has routine work and maintenance proceeded as normal in spite of limited MET resources, but also new developments and innovations have taken place that would have been impossible without the input from SKEP.

This is especially significant when one realizes that the whole conservation world is watching us with close interest since the decision was taken to turn the Sperrgebiet into a new National Park, at a time when our own Government budget falls short of catering for what is needed. With little manpower and minimal logistical support and infrastructure, the time available to prepare the Sperrgebiet for Park status seems

even more compressed, and of course a mountain of routine work still has to be attended to as well – a situation which would have disillusioned and broken us all in the field, were it not for the assistance from others, chief of which has been SKEP.

Thanks are due to many groups and individuals who have provided financial and technical support towards fieldwork in the Sperrgebiet over the

last six years, ranging from NNF as a whole, Namdeb, Ambase Exploration, TeckCominco, Telecom, MTC, Seelenbinder, Raleigh International, Coastways Tours, Klein Aus Vista, Gino and Dieter Noli, Schalk Hugo, Plietz Engineering, NACOMA, Luderitz 4x4 Club, Oranjemund Offroad Club, Skorpion Mine, Hottentot Bay Investments, Marek Hrywniak, and other individuals too many to name – but it has been SKEP that has consistently made the biggest difference in our everyday work as we approach the proclamation of Sperrgebiet National Park.

Furthermore, SKEP has been instrumental in drawing together many local stakeholders such that there is now a greater understanding and sympathy for what the MET

is trying to achieve under difficult circumstances.

Maybe one of the greatest things about SKEP is the people who run the programme and make it work, such as Dr. Chris Brown, Kauna Schroder, and Jonas Nghishidi, and the whole NNF team – in particular Kauna who is extremely efficient, a good leader, prompt in dealing with our requests, and who has such a good grasp of the situation and problems in the field. With such a Project Coordinator, SKEP has become a meaningful, respected and very necessary partner and tower of support for the Sperrgebiet.

Where we would be without this SKEP team today, goodness

knows. We are very grateful, and sincerely hope that the lifetime of SKEP is extended for some years to come. It is of the utmost relevance, and the program should continue for longer than initially planned, at least until the new Sperrgebiet National Park is well on its way with a sound footing.

By: Trygve G. Cooper

*Chief Warden: Southern Namib Parks/
Sperrgebiet*

(Ministry of Environment and Tourism)

New project manager for SKEP

AFTER spending most of her time working for government, the new SKEP manager, Marion Johnson, is taking up a new challenge to head the SKEP programme.

Johnson who worked for the national departments of Health and Labour, and is currently working for the Western Cape Department of Social Development, accepted the offer to become the new Manager last month.

Born and bred in Cape Town, Johnson did her honours at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where she was awarded a USAID fellowship and got to study in the USA for a year.

She also did her masters degree in public health at a New Orleans based university.

Johnson then completed her second Masters degree in public administration, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) where she was one of the first to graduate from the School of Government.

She has worked throughout the Western Cape including Vredendal, Plettenberg Bay, and Southern Cape. While working for provincial government, she got to go back to the USA in

2001 where she spent two weeks at UCLA investigating monitoring and evaluation issues for their social development programmes, and in April this year accompanied Western Cape MEC for Social Development, Kholeka Mqulwana, to Mexico and Brazil for social development programmes.

Despite not working in the environmental sector, she has worked with plenty of communities developing community based programmes for poverty alleviation.

However she is looking forward to working for SKEP, and dealing with environmental issues and ecology. I want to make communities more aware of sustainable livelihoods, and since the ecosystem programme is part of a larger plan for Sustainable Development, I am keen on making those linkages, said Johnson.

She will take up her post with the SKEP coordination unit in January next year employed by the South Africa Botanical Institute (SANBI) in Cape Town at Kirstenbosch Garden. SANBI is the hosting institute for SKEP in South Africa.

