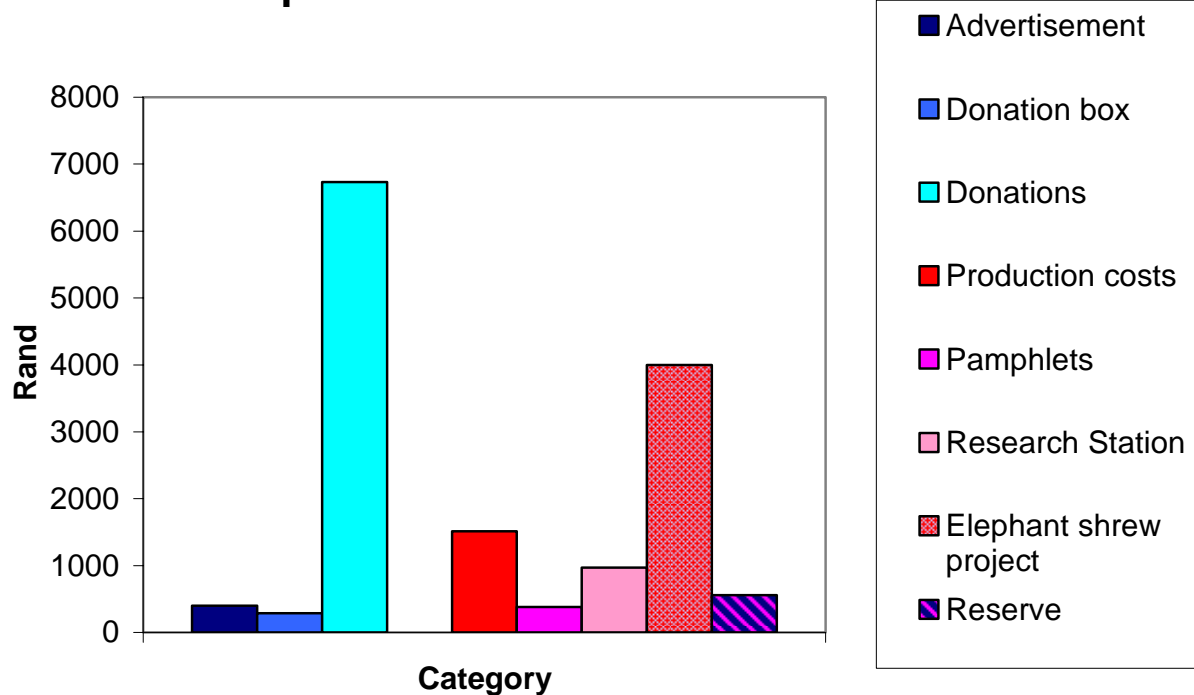


FSM-TIMES

FourStripedMouse

*Title: Annual report of the
FSM-TIMES Foundation*

Income and expenses FSM-TIMES Foundation



*Progress of the elephant shrew project
Reports by two new field assistants
Mouse portrait: Male 113
Bird portrait: Namaqua sand grouse
Plant portrait: Wildflower *Arctoites**

EDITORIAL

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WELCOME: THE SIXTH ISSUE OF THE FSM-TIMES!



It is the sixth issue of the FSM-TIMES, and that means nearly 1.5 years of information regarding our projects in Goegap. Together with the German SGM-

Spiegel and downloads from our homepage, we have around 1000 readers. This clearly indicates your interest in our studies, which is a great compliment both for our authors and our projects.

But the aim of the FSM-TIMES was not only to make public relations for our research. We also wanted to attract some funding for smaller projects. In the last 12 months we

received more than R7000 (nearly 1000 Euro or 1100 US dollars). In this issue of the FSM-TIMES we will explain exactly where we got the money from and what happened to it. You will see that this relatively small amount was used well and lead to significant improvements and scientific results.

It is Christmas time and thus very hot in the Succulent Karoo. I will remain with best wishes for Christmas and the New Year and one more wish: Please support our work also in the future!

Kind regards,

Carsten Schradin

THE DIFFERENT PLACES AND LOCATIONS

South Africa

As the name says, it is the most southern country in Africa. South Africa lies at the Cape of Good Hope. The population of South Africa (40 million) consists of black South Africans (e.g. the Zulu), which represent 75% of the population. 12% are white, 8% coloured, and some are Indian, Malaysian or descendents of the San (bushman). South Africa is the only industrialized country in Africa with a very good infrastructure.

Succulent karoo

It describes a special vegetation type. It receives low rainfall in winter and is characterized by dwarf succulent shrubs and an amazing wildflower display in spring. It is a desert to semi-desert environment. Succulent karoo is found in Namaqualand and southern Namibia. In the FSM-TIMES, the words succulent karoo and Namaqualand are often used as synonyms.

Namaqualand

It is situated in the northwest of South Africa, between Cape Town and Namibia. Famous for its wildflower display in spring, Namaqualand was one of the world's most important copper mining areas at the beginning of the 20th century. Nowadays the diamond mines are more important. Because of its dry desert like climate, agriculture is mainly absent and population density low. Namaqualand is part of the Northern Cape Province.

Springbok

It is the capital of Namaqualand. Although Springbok has only around 20 000 inhabitants, it has shops for nearly everything, including two well stocked supermarkets. At weekends Springbok is very busy, when all Namaqualanders come here to do their shopping.

Goegap Nature Reserve

Pronounced as "Guchap", this nature reserve lays only 20kms outside of Springbok. In spring it is visited by thousands of tourists that are attracted by its wildflower display. During other times of

the year it is very quite and mountain zebra, gemsbok, springbok, aardwolf, mice and mice researchers live in peace.

Field Site

This is the place in nature where the scientist collects his data. So our field site is where we observe the mice

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NAMAQUALAND-WEATHER

By Carsten Schradin

The last 3 months	October	November	December
Minimum temperatures			
night	6	7	14
day	16	22	31
Maximum temperatures			
night	18	21	22
day	32	38	38
Rainfall in mm	40	7.2	0
Days with rain	3	5	0

THE PEOPLE IN GOEGAP

By Carsten Schradin

Melanie Schubert was very busy the last few months trapping elephant shrews and putting radio-collars on the first individuals. Her first results are quite promising and described below. I myself was busy with the striped mice as usual, trapping, marking and radio-tracking them. In October I got some welcomed help by two field assistants, Stella Treffler and Julian Brenner from the

University of Cologne, Germany. Both work extremely independent and are very reliable. Thus, I am very happy that they decided to stay for an entire 6 months, until the end of March. This is especially lucky as I will leave Goegap end of December, to start my work in Zurich, before coming back to the field the second half of 2006.



The people in Goegap December 2005, from left to right: Brigitte Schradin (with Apollo), Carsten Schradin, Melanie Schubert, Stella Treffler and Julian Brenner.

GOEGAP BY NIGHT

By Julian Brenner

Carsten asked us a few days after our arrival if he could show us the Nature Reserve. Time was our choice, so we

decided to go on a night-drive, because we knew that at this time most animals are active.

How to become a field assistant?

Only people with a biological background can become field assistants. These are students of biology, veterinary medicine or related areas. The work of field assistants includes: radio-tracking, trapping and marking of small mammals, behavioural observations, work at the research station, including maintenance, and much more.

People interested in working as a field assistant for 2-3 months write an email to info@stripedmouse.com. Please write a short motivation and attach a CV. You will then obtain more information.



So we arranged to meet with Carsten at dusk. We put on warm clothes, since the nights are often really cold here, took our torches, binoculars, as well as chocolate bars and got into Carsten's Land Rover Melanie came along too. Although she works at night, she didn't manage to see an Aardvark, yet. And now there was a slight possibility to see it during the night drive. Carsten had plugged in the spotlights and explained to us how to use them. For the best results you should move it slowly from left to right. You should also take care not to shine the light too far, because you cannot make out animals in a far distance. After we got everything set we left and drove into the starlit night. We took the 4x4-route. and Carsten warned us that the road might not be passable, even for the Land Rover, because of the previous heavy rainfalls. We were told to look out for the reflection of the eyes of the animals. It was very interesting to hear that the eyes of herbivore shine blue and that of carnivore's red. The rock rabbit is the only herbivore whose eyes reflect red in the spot light.

The first spotted pair of eyes was blue and belonged to a Steenbok. That's a small gazelle that looks like Bambi. The next animals we could see, we knew as we saw them many times during the day: Gemsboks and Springboks. Then, we saw a pair of red eyes in a bush. They were moving fast through the grass. We decided that it had to be an Aardwolf, a shy hyena-species. Later we spotted several more aardwolves closer to the car, and also some curious jackals. We also spotted some ostriches that ran away like startled chicken, of course much faster.

In the meantime Carsten shared several interesting details about the animals and inspected our zoological knowledge by questions such as: "How many species of hyena are there?" (4, e.g. the Aardwolf) or "Are Rock-rabbits rodents?" (No, they are rabbits). We couldn't answer everything right and had to guess sometimes.

The night-drive gave us a real African-safari-feeling, especially because of the rocking ride on the bad road. But with good luck and Carsten' excellent driving skills– we were able to pass the whole route. For us, it was an exciting small adventure, though we didn't spot the Aardvark. Well, that gives us a good reason to repeat the experience again.



The aardwolf can be seen regularly during night drives in Goegap

TRAPPING MICE

By Stella Miranda Treffler

After a few weeks of being field-assistants filled with work we had a new job to do: We had to catch and mark striped mice. This was exciting to us and was more fun than determining home-ranges or making plant-surveys, that we did before.

In the beginning we had doubts, whether we would manage it without hurting the mice. Our concerns aroused because we had no experience at all in handling mice. My only experience was with a little rabbit I had as a child.

But it all worked out fine, because we watched how Carsten did it several times and practiced under his supervision. Afterwards we were prepared to do the trapping on our own. So we carried about 15 to 20 mousetraps to each nest and put bran flakes and currants, mixed with salt and sunflower-oil as bait in it. Then the traps were placed in the shade in front of the nests. Each morning and afternoon we had to set and check the traps. This we did for two days. Then we went on to the next couple of nests.

Well, a trap is closed. First thing we thought was that there was a striped mouse in it. Mostly we were right but sometimes we

caught a bush Karoo rat, an elephant-shrew, a bird or even an agame or simply nothing. But then, it was a striped mouse. We took a transparent plastic-bag and put it around the trapdoor. Then we slang the mouse in the bag. Sometimes there was even more than one mouse in a trap. After we got the mouse out of the trap into the plastic bag, we took it in our right hand and checked the sex and reproductive status. If the animal was already marked with an ear tag, we checked the ID-number. The partner writes down everything. A mouse without an ear tags gets one. For this we needed to get the mouse into the left hand, because with the other hand we had to handle the nippers with which we placed the tags on the ears. One ear tag per ear. For a beginner this is not as easy as it may sound, because of the sharp teeth of the mice. In the end we had to cut a little piece of the mouse´ tail to get a tissue sample. Freedom for the mouse was almost near because the only thing we had to do now was to weight the mouse. All we needed was a scale and the ability to read numbers. Finally the mouse was allowed to go home. All done!



The mice in Goegap are very trap happy, which means they readily enter traps.

Goegap Nature Reserve

Accommodation: Guesthouse, bush hut, camp site.

The new bush camp was just opened in October, offering camp sites in the idyllic nature of Namaqualand, as well as robust but comfortable bush huts.

Tel: +27 27 7121880

Fax: +27 277181286

HOMEPAGE: STRIPEDMOUSE.COM

By Carsten Schradin

In November we changed our server, which is why the homepage was not available for a short period. This is also the reason why statistics for the last three months are only partly available.

Homepage Statistics

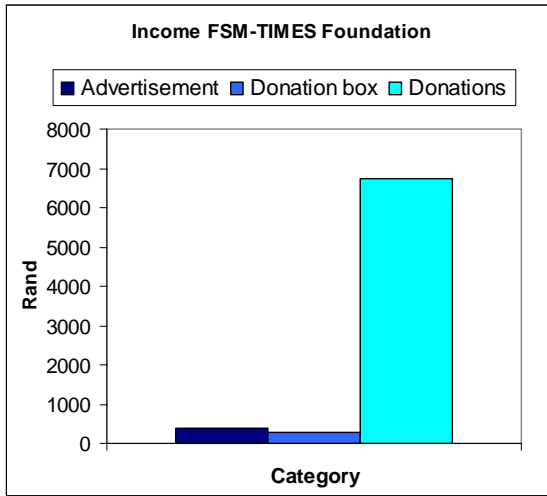
	October	November	December	Total last quarter
Visits of stripedmouse.com	Not available	558	600	>1158
Downloads FSM-TIMES, SGM-Spiegel	Not available	52	342	>394

TITLE: ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FSM-TIMES FOUNDATION

By Carsten Schradin

Income

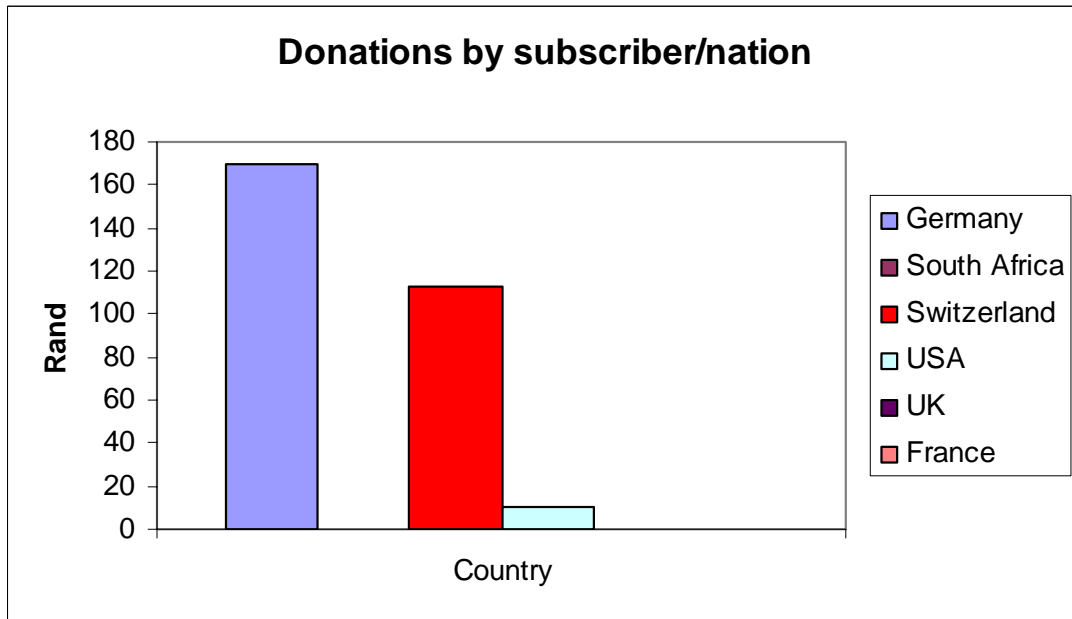
During the last 12 months, we received income of a total of R 7422 (ca. 990 Euro or 1140 US dollar). Most of this (R6658) came from donations of the readers from the German SGM-Spiegel. Readers of the FSM-TIMES donated R75, and we received R 400 for advertisements. Another R290 was obtained from a donation box put up at the reception of Goegap Nature Reserve. Tourists can obtain a little pamphlet about the research station at the reception, for a small donation of R5/pamphlet.

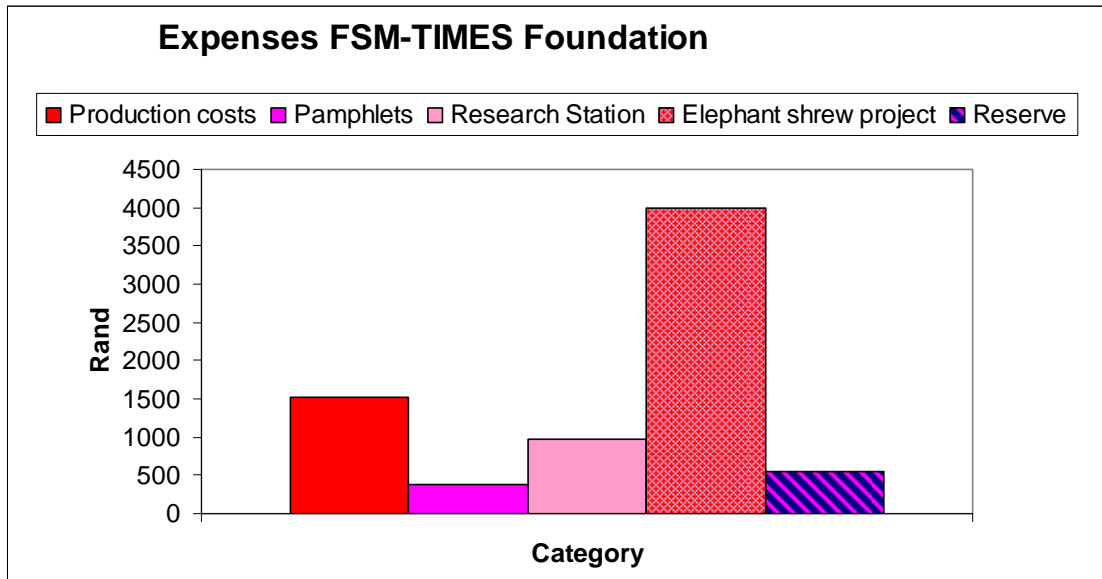


reside in Germany and Switzerland. While more money was donated from Germans, this was mainly due to more subscribers in Germany than in Switzerland. Only one reader of the FSM-TIMES made a donation. This might be mainly due to FSM-TIMES readers being mainly scientists (who would like donations for their own projects, I suppose) and to their difficulty to donate into a foreign account. However, this does not the case for South Africans, who represent the second largest number of subscribers after Germans. However, South Africans typically regard themselves as rather because they earn in total less than do Europeans (though I am sure more South Africans own their own houses and swimming-pools, than Europeans do).

Donations by Nation

Nearly all donations were made by the readers of the SGM-Spiegel, which mainly





Expenses

A relatively large amount (R1512) was spent for production costs: printing drafts for corrections, emailing etc. Luckily, next year these costs are expected to decrease dramatically, when I can do this for free at the University of Zurich. R382 was spent to produce some pamphlets for advertising the research station and making information available for tourists. Most of these costs are already covered by donations into the donation box. We spent another R 972 for the research station, to buy the new field guide about flowers of Namaqualand (R250) and to buy garden chairs and tables. Now the students can rest nicely on the veranda

of the research station and the braai (BBQ) area also became more comfortable. Most money was spent to support the PhD thesis of Melanie Schubert: She received R4000 to buy four transmitters for her studies. Below Melanie reports her first results, which make very clear that her project deserves support indeed. The remaining R556 has not been spent yet but is saved as a reserve for the future.

Sponsors

Dr. Gustl Anzenberger kindly agreed to sponsor one pair of radio-transmitters for the elephant shrew project of Melanie Schubert.



Call for sponsors for Transmitters: Melanie is calling for two sponsors for two pairs of transmitters for two pairs of elephant shrews. One pair transmitter costs Euro 275 (370 dollar; R2000). Every study pair will get the name of the sponsor or a name chosen by the sponsor. If you would like to sponsor a pair, please write an email to: info@stripedmouse.com!

CALL FOR DONATIONS

Please support our work also in 2006 with a small donation. Thank you!!!

SUBSCRIBERS DONATION

We appeal to all subscribers of the FSM-TIMES to donate 80 Rand (10 Euro, 15 dollars) a year for research on the socio-ecology of small mammals in Goegap. Donations of more than 80 Rand are welcome and donors of 400 Rand (50 Euro, 75 dollars) will be mentioned in the next FSM-TIMES.

Donations will be used for the following purposes:

Scientific research on small mammals in Goegap, especially smaller research projects such as Diploma and PhD theses, which have difficulties in raising funds elsewhere. Improving the infrastructure of the research Station.

Running costs of the research station. In the last issue of the FSM-TIMES of every year we will publish how much we received in donations and how the money was used.

Account details for donations
Please state "L.2112" as reference on all deposits and cheques.

South Africa

Standard Bank

Branch: Braamfontein

Account name: Wits University
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Account No.: 002900076

Branch code: 004805

Swift code: SB ZAZ AJJ 00480502

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Carsten Schradin, KSK Esslingen, BLZ 611
500 20, Konto Nr. 7434686

Switzerland

Carsten Schradin, ZKB, Konto Nr. 117-
0028.726.

NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT PLANTS AND ANIMALS

THE FIRST STEPS

By Melanie Schubert

Chaos, chaos, chaos.....! Only seven days left until I fly to South Africa, and yet no visa and no diploma certificate. Damn, now I forgot to send a declaration of acceptance for my scholarship to the DAAD. That is so typical Melanie Schubert!

Anyway, I still had a lucky star! Then one day before the deadline for the declaration I

found the "holy" paper containing the requirements for the scholarship. After spending a night without much sleeps, I called the DAAD. The kind woman on the phone calmed me down and said that everything is going to be all right. Uh, what a relief!

After taking the organizational and bureaucratic hurdles somehow I finally sat on the plane towards the South..... There I stood now, with my backpack, which was nearly as tall and heavy as myself in the desert; and no human soul was at home. Luckily Carsten deposited the key for the research station with the people of the nature reserve. And I could pounce on my work, which started with the beloved activity of cleaning traps. After mastering this task I placed the traps in the field. The result of one week intensive nightly trapping was one elephant shrew male. How fantastic! "A little" depressed I decided two things: Firstly: As a child of the sun with sometimes massive orientation problems in the dark I popped into the only electrical supplier shop Springbok has to offer and bought myself a Maglite, which guides me now through the darkness. Secondly I decided to include three other species for a bait preference experiment. Here four traps, each containing a different type of bait, were placed in one location. As time passed by the traps were not only visited by the striped mice, bush karoo rats and gerbils, but also by my longed for round eared elephant shrews. It seems like bush karoo rats and elephant shrews (which are also called sengis) preferred a particular kind of bait, whereas gerbils and mice munched away everything they could get hold of. Enthusiastic about the high number of sengi individuals I gave my attention to a new assignment. Carsten gave me six transmitters from the striped mouse project and I started to radio-track pairs of elephant shrews. Here I collected data of home range size and their overlap to neighbouring areas, which were occupied by other pairs. Summarizing the first interesting aspects:

- 1) The home range of males was usually bigger than of their female partners.

- 2) Female home ranges were usually totally overlapped by one single male that can be regarded as the mate of this female.
- 3) Males as well as female had overlaps to neighbouring home ranges. However this aspect was predominantly found in male sengis.
- 4) Change of mating system from monogamy to polygyny: After a male passed away, the area including the widowed female was overtaken by a neighbouring sengi male.
- 5) Occurrence of floaters: One lonely male had massive overlaps with at least two neighbouring pairs.

In the course of this study I got into a bottleneck for just having six transmitters. The problem is that only a maximum of three pairs could be radio-collared at a time. Thus a statement about the distance of individuals to neighbouring sengis can only be given partly. Furthermore the transmitters did not last for the determination of all neighbouring animals and their home ranges.

For the next year twenty transmitters will be made available for my project. Ten transmitters are sponsored by the University of Witwatersrand and Zurich, four by readers of this magazine and two more by another sponsor. Thank you so much for your support!

Everyone who paid attention will recognize that generous people already endure the costs of sixteen transmitters. Therefore sponsors are needed for the remaining four transmitters. So, dear readers, if someone of you is blessed with luxurious Christmas budget, then my elephant shrews and I would be really grateful for any support. I wish you all a nice Christmas and happy new year.

THE STRIPED MOUSE SOCIAL SYSTEM IN 2005

By Carsten Schradin

The long-term data that accumulates regarding the ecological conditions of sociality in striped mice accumulates nicely. This year the population density was again relatively high, and the social structure very

similar to the one observed in 2001 and 2002, before the drought of 2003. Mice again formed communal groups with several breeding females and one, single breeding male. One important difference came into

effect because the elongated breeding season after the heavy rains in January: More adult males per group were present, as apart from the breeding male also adult

sons remained at their nests. An unexpected result, ones more demonstrating the extreme social flexibility in this species.

MOUSE PORTRAIT: MALE 113

By Carsten Schradin

Mother: F48	Father: M27
Date of birth: 15. September 2003	Date of death: February 2005?
Age: 1.5 years	Cause of death: unknown
Partner 2003: F42	Partners 2004: F129, 182, 194, 434 (all from the same natal group)
Children: 2003: 4 sons, 2 daughters. 2004: 23 sons, 25 daughters.	Grandchildren: At least 54.

In evolution, an individual is called successful if it has many descendants. That was surely true for the old matriarch from the grass, F48, whom we met in the last FSM-TIMES. One reason why she had so many grandchildren was her very successful son M113. M113 did not stay long at home, at his mother's nest, but soon left to live together with F42 and found his own group. However, before the winter of 2004 he left F42 behind and moved to the neighbouring group living in the shrub B18, the most famous nesting site at our field site. The reason for his change might be obvious: Here was not only one female living, but four of them: F129, 182, 194 and F434, all closely related. However, at the start of the breeding season 2004, F194 and F434 left B18 and founded their own group, leaving M113 behind with F129 and F182. But he continued his good relationships with F194 and F434, and he visited both females during the breeding season, spending several nights with them. As no other male was seen at their nest, we assume he fathered their children as well. In 2004, males were either roaming, visiting several single females, or group living, living permanently with 1-2 females together. M113 was the only one who combined both strategies, living with two females in B18, but also roaming to the two other solitary females. This explains his unusually high reproductive success.

Why was M113 so successful with females? Important might have been that he knew all his females since a long time. He was able to establish a good relationship with the

females F194 and F434 before they left their natal group to establish their own groups. For us human observers M113 seemed to be an unusually nice mouse. He was sitting comfortably in front of his nest in the afternoon, enthusiastically greeting each other mouse that came home to the nest. His kind nature might have been another reason why he was so successful with females.



To save space, we only wrote a 13 on the side of M113. Still he was a very lucky mouse.

Beginning of February 2005 M113 was living with a big family group in B44. Next to his females F129 and F182, there were 10 young adult offspring living with them. I observed M113 as always at his nest the first February days. A few days later I trapped at his nest. It was unusual not to find him in the traps, as he was usually very "eager to cooperate" to our scientific project. In fact, I never saw him again and don't

know what happened to him. It seems to be another unresolved tragedy in the wilderness of Namaqualand. But his group is

still one of the biggest at our field site, in the meantime numbering 28 happy mice.

BIRD PORTRAIT: NAMAQUA SANDGROUSE, *PTEROCLES NAMAQUA*

By Carsten Schradin

The Namaqua sand grouse occurs over a wide range of southern Africa, but was first described in Namaqualand. After the Europeans settled at the Cape in the 17th century, Namaqualand was one of the wilderness areas closest to them, and several excursions were performed into this area. Thus, Europeans found many South African species for the very first time in Namaqualand although they occur over a much wider range. That is why the name Namaqua is given to so relatively many species.

The Namaqua sand grouse is a dull brown bird. They are monogamous and one can often see a pair together, as they are typically walking through Namaqualand, searching for food, mainly seeds. They have typically two young, one per parent. Why this is important becomes evident when one takes the treeless but very hot Namaqualand into account: Nest to each parent, there is always one chick walking, literally in the shade of the parent. By this they are somewhat protected from the heat. However, this is not enough, as the chicks also need water. But this might be difficult in the dry Namaqualand, when you are a young sand grouse, and is too young to fly.

A distance of 15jms might not be much when you can fly, but to walk is no option. But the parents can fly and this is what they do, leaving their chicks behind. At a little pond they drink and then wet their downy feather, before returning to their chicks. These are happy to see the flying water bottles coming back, drinking from the wet feathers of their parents.



PLANT PORTRAIT: WILDFLOWER *ARCTOITES*

By Carsten Schradin

For me it is THE flower of Namaqualand, the *Arctoites fastuosa*. I will never forget the intensive orange from the wildflower fields in my first year 2001. And every spring when I see these flowers the orange goes directly into my heart, like the warm sun in spring. also It was the same this year, when single

Arctoites were giving impressive colour to our field site in October. We didn't have as large fields as in 2001 the last years, but this simply means I am looking forward to the next impressive flower season, when the spectacle of 2001 will be repeated.



Arctoites flowers left, field in 2001 right

VISITORS

By Carsten Schradin

In the middle of November we had our traditionalbraai (BBQ) with the workers from Goegap. Nearly everyone came and we had a great time at the research station. In December Tasmin Rymer, a PHD student from Prof. Pillay at Wits University, Johannesburg, shortly visited. Tasmin was

already here in April in Goegap, together with an excursion from Wits. Her PhD is about paternal care in striped mice. For this she collected some mice from our captive colony kept in Goegap, to take them to Johannesburg for her studies.

CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

CONFERENCES: MEETING OF THE GERMAN ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY AND GRADUIERTENTREFFEN

By Christina Keller

From the 30th of September to the 6th of October I visited the Graduiertentreffen (meeting for diploma- and PhD-students) for behavioural biologists in Halle and the annual conference of the German Zoological Society (DZG) in Bayreuth, Germany.

At both meetings I gave a talk about my research in Namaqualand last year. As it was my first public appearance on the national biological stage, the first thing I had to learn was to deal with the nervousness that overcomes everyone standing in front of many expectantly staring people. Luckily I lost the thread of my speech just once and therefore was satisfied with myself.

By the way I noticed that even the great professors sometimes forgot what they wanted to say, had difficulties with the English pronunciation (the DZG meeting was in English) or made spelling mistakes in their power point-presentations. At least we are all humans and a small mistake more often arouses an understanding smile than a critical look – a very encouraging observation.

In Bayreuth I had my talk on the first day of the conference, which was probably not advantageous, because many participants

came later to the conference and therefore missed it. At least I could leave the nervousness behind very quickly and was able to concentrate on all the other interesting talks about all zoological topics. My colleague Melanie Schubert was also present at her home-university. She made a very demonstrative poster, which certainly arose some attention.

Very impressive was the rabbit-enclosure, used by the University of Bayreuth for behavioural studies. We were grateful to Heiko Rödel, who kindly showed it to us.

The Graduiertentreffen in Halle was very interesting, too. I got the impression that the presentations and discussions were more honest here, because doctors and professors were forbidden and nobody had to make a good impression. Therefore all the breakdowns and “bad” results were reviewed too.

At least I got a lot of new impressions and learned a lot, especially about nervousness and all the science-politics that is made in the coffee-breaks. Six days of conferences with hours and hours of driving in between were very stressful but it was definitely worthwhile.

FUNDING OF RESEARCH: CALL FOR DONATIONS

SUBSCRIBERS DONATION

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Account details for donations
Please state "L.2112" as reference on all deposits and cheques.

South Africa

Standard Bank
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Account name: Wits University
Foundation

Account No.: 002900076

Branch code: 004805

Swift code: SB ZAZ AJJ 00480502

Please state L.2112 as reference.

Germany

Carsten Schradin, KSK Esslingen, BLZ 611
500 20, Konto Nr. 7434686

Switzerland

Carsten Schradin, ZKB, Konto Nr. 117-
0028.726.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful to the following people who donated and whose assistance contributed to the continuation of our research project.

Sponsor of one pair of transmitters for the elephant shrew project

Dr. Gustl Anzenberger, Zürich, Switzerland.

SPONSORS

Sponsors of larger amounts can choose how they money should be spend. There are different options for sponsors:

1. PhD thesis about the reasons of monogamy in elephant shrews: We are still looking for two sponsors for a pair of radio-transmitters each. Cost per pair: R2000, 275 euro or 300 US dollars.

2. Sponsor for solar system: To have sufficient energy at the research station to run computers and lights, a stronger solar system would be needed. Costs: R 50 000, Euro 6750 or US dollars 8000.

Research Station Sponsor: To renovate the research station and to build further student accommodation. Costs: R 100 000, Euro 15 000 or US dollars 17 000.

Car Sponsor: A 4x2 car like a Toyota Condor would be of great help. Costs: R 250 000, Euro 33 000 or US dollars 38 000.

If you want to become a sponsor, please write an email to:
info@stripedmouse.com.

THE MOUSE'S TAIL

WEDDING

The 5th of November Brigitte Britz was transformed to Brigitte Schradin, and a free man became a lucky husband. The reception was held at Goegap Nature Reserve at the lapa (open area). One should think a party in summer in a desert with winter rain should predict good weather. However, temperatures soon fall below 10 degrees, but whiskey, dancing and a large bon fire made sure everybody felt warm.



SUNFLOWERS

At this time of year the visitors to the research station are greeted by a huge bunch of sunflowers. These grow out of an old Land Rover tyre, filled with homemade compost (actually, mainly old mouse bedding). In September I sow sunflowers,

and what the mice left can be seen now. However, only a few weeks, because when they wither, the captive mice will be the lucky recyclers of the sunflowers.

SCORPION

Very proudly, Dr. Schradin brought a scorpion from a night drive to the research station, to show it to the field assistants. The scorpion was the size of an average size hand and to better demonstrate it, Dr. Schradin pulled it out of the glass and popped it onto the kitchen table. However, in contrast to the night before, the scorpion was in the morning quite active and very

aggressive, jumping from the kitchen table onto the floor. So Dr. Schradin quickly had to catch him again with the glass, not without getting stung by the beast. However, as the situation was embarrassing enough, he kept quiet about this. Luckily (?) it was only a very mildly poisonous scorpion.

SGM-Spiegel

The FSM-TIMES is also published in German, as the SGM-SPIEGEL. If you want to receive the German version, write an email to: info@stripedmouse.com, please write „SGM-SPIEGEL Abo“ into the subject of your email

In the next FSM-TIMES:

You will learn about the bush Karoo rat, which could also be called the working rat, as it is busy building its stick lodges all day.