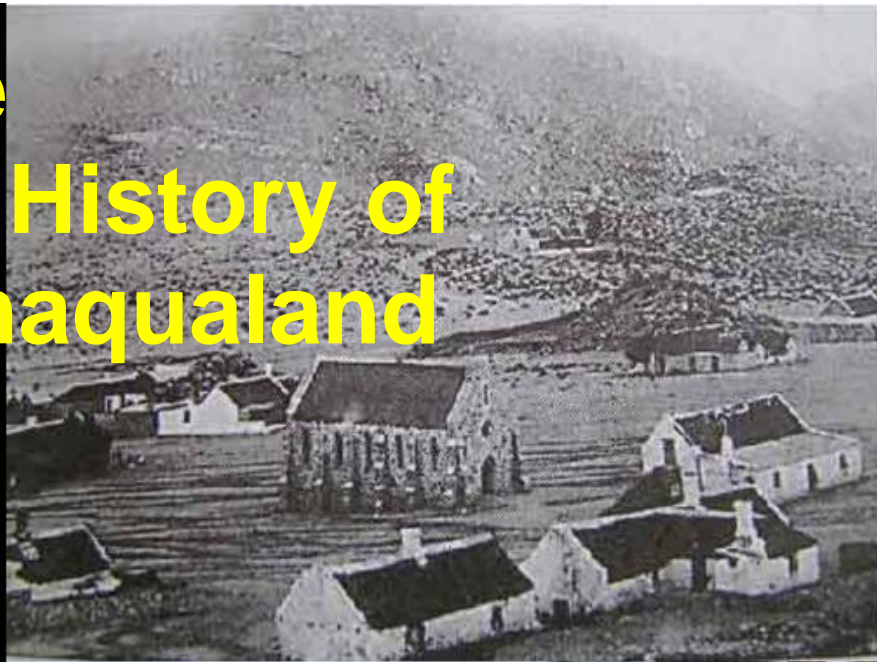


FSM-TIMES

Four Striped Mouse

Title The History of Namaqualand



Homepage stripedmouse.com

Mouse portrait: Female 43

Pale chanting goshawk

Rolling shrub

Three diploma theses finished

EDITORIAL

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PUBLICATION DATES

The FSM-TIMES is published quarterly, in January, April, July and October. The FSM-TIMES is sent as email-attachment in pdf.

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WELCOME: THE FOURTH ISSUE OF THE FSM-TIMES!



People often ask me whether it is not too lonely for me to live outside in the desert? My answer to this is two-fold: 1. One should not start a research station in the desert when one does not like loneliness. 2. In four years I have nearly never been alone. There were always some students helping me, such that my life was more that of a youth hostel warden than that of a hermit. E.g. after the last field assistant left end of March, 9 students from Johannesburg came for their excursion to

Goegap. But when the left, it really got somewhat lonely, and for the very first time in years I was by myself. Of course there was Brigitte who staid every second week with me (the other week she works in the neighbouring village that is 160kms away), but half the time there was only me and the mice. And I have to say I enjoyed it. But I know for now that the expectations I had when I first came here 4 years ago will never come true: I will never spend months alone in the wilderness. And this is good so!

Kind regards,
Carsten Schradin

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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 lies 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

NAMAQUALAND-WEATHER

The last three months	April	May	June
Minimum temperatures			
night	7	5	2
day	15	14	12
Maximum temperatures			
night	20	20	10
day	32	28	22
Rainfall in mm	20.7	25.2	3.0
Days with rain	6	6	3

THE PEOPLE IN GOEGAP

By Carsten Schradin

Beginning of April an excursion of 9 Students from my home Department of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand came to Goegap. They had one week time to learn everything, and I am sure they at least learnt something. The aim was to educate them about Namaqualand, which is for people from Johannesburg as exotic as for people from Berlin (Johannesburg is 1300km from Goegap). A day tip through the reserve and a day trip through the surrounding served this purpose well. But of course field techniques had to be learnt too, and every student got one mouse group that had to be observed every morning and every afternoon. Mice and students got accustomed to each other soon. During the day, when mice forage solitary, it was the students which were put into groups. One group trapped mice at a population next to the field site, two groups were radio-tracking

mice and one group measured nesting sites. A lovely evening with a potjie (metal pot on the camp fire with a kind of vegi-meat mix sizzling inside) and a rainy night drive with about 10 aardwolves added to a successful experience.



THE BEHAVIOUR OF A FIELD ASSISTANT (*LABORULUS VOLUNTARIJ*) IN A REMOTE STUDY AREA OF THE SUCCULENT KAROO

By Berit Kostka

„I would think about it” was what I read in the email I received to tell me my application as a field assistant got accepted. “There will be no other field assistants and it can be very lonely out here”. Well, this is exactly why I want to come, I thought! I wanted to learn about the methods used in field biology, but also find out if working in remote field sites without much human company would suit me.

And learn I did! On my first day I got introduced to the - in the meantime to all readers well-known - Striped Mouse (*Rhabdomys pumilio*) and how one best catches them. Not an easy task! After the first few attempts of handling the small animals with their fast defence mechanism, my sore fingers would force the operation to a halt – at least for now. But every master needs practise, so after a while I learnt the trick and the mice had to surrender. Most days were filled with the obligatory nest observation every morning and afternoon, sometimes accompanied by different experiment equipment like mouse models to measure the temperature at the basking places. It was very pleasant to watch the mouse groups bathe in the sun and interact with each other. Especially in the morning, when the sun was warming also my back after a chilly start, the whole field site was slowly waking up and the birds greeting the new day.

An easier routine than the trapping was the daily radio-tracking. Although during the very hot days – one afternoon we measured 50°C! – it was rather strenuous to walk through the field site, lots of other inhabitants of the succulent karoo showed themselves on my way round. For example many different kinds of lizards and skinks, beetles and birds, amongst which my favourite is the Bokmakierie with its melodious song and beautiful appearance. A group of baboons made their presence known by shouting from the hillsides, and herds of Springbok, Gemsbok and even Mountain Zebra were roaming the softly

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.



rolling slopes. One rendezvous in the bush was not all that pleasant when I encountered a spitting cobra during a trapping session. There she was all of a sudden, hissing at me and trying to impress with her shield open. I don't know who got the bigger shock, but luckily the cobra quickly retreated from the spot. Yet I was fascinated to see a snake in its natural habitat and see how it reacts to humans. It certainly cleared potential prejudices about snakes biting humans for defence! Why should they waste their venom if they can run?

The absolute highlight during my stay here though was a night game drive. It conveyed a real feeling of the African bush, standing on the back of the 4x4 and shining spotlights through the pitch black darkness. And luck was on our side! Amongst other animals we were able to see Aardvark (which I had been

waiting for for weeks!), Porcupine, Aardwolf, Jackals and Bat-eared foxes. All in all during my stay at Goegap I learned a lot about field methodology and had the opportunity to practise them thoroughly so that after a while they became a routine and I was able to carry them out "blind-folded". With no other field assistants around I had

the best supervisor-student ratio one could wish for, plus, which is very convenient, I had my own room! Loneliness wasn't a problem at all, instead I enjoyed nature all the more, gazing at the jaw-dropping star sky and found the tranquillity to appreciate even the smallest amongst the small.

PHD PROJECT OF MELANIE SCHUBERT ON THE REASONS OF MONOGAMIE IN THE ROUND-EARED ELEPHANT SHREW

By Carsten Schradin

Last year Melanie Schubert did a highly interesting diploma thesis on reproductive strategies of female striped mice in Goegap. During her work she demonstrated her capacity to work both hard and independently, her love for the work in the field as well as her deep understanding for important topics in the research field of animal behaviour. Back in Germany she wrote up her thesis and at the same time followed her aim to come back to Goegap this year for a PhD. She submitted a proposal to the DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst – German Academic Exchange Program) to study the reasons of monogamy in round-eared elephant shrews (*Macroscelides proboscideus*). She (and I as well) was more than happy when her proposal was accepted in June!

In the next issue Melanie will describe her project in the title theme. Originally this was scheduled already for this issue, but writing up a diploma thesis AND a grant proposal

within a few months was more than enough work. Her project will be about why elephant shrews live in monogamous pairs although there is no pair-bond, i.e. the male and female of a pair do not really like each other nor interact in a sociable way. For this Melanie will study 16 pairs of elephant shrews at two different field sites.



Sponsors needed for radio-transmitters: For this project we will need sponsors for radio-transmitters. Melanie will need transmitters for at least 8 pairs. A pair of radio-transmitters costs 260 Euro (2000 Rand, 330 US dollars). Each studied pair will receive the name of the sponsor or the name the sponsor chooses (e.g. pair Smith, pair Inter Mailand etc.). Sponsors will also be mentioned in the next issue of the FSM-TIMES. With the help of the radio-transmitters Melanie can study the social organisation of the round-eared elephant shrew: How large are home ranges, do males have larger home ranges, in how far do the home ranges of the male and female of one pair overlap, are the male and female of a pair often in proximity?

If you want to sponsor one pair, write an email to: info@stripedmouse.com!

HOMEPAGE: STRIPEDMOUSE.COM

By Carsten Schradin

Since May our homepage is online. Under www.stripedmouse.com you find information about our research and much more. While the readers of the FSM-TIMES might already know a lot of the information provided, I want to get your attention especially for two topics:

1. You can download scientific publications under:
http://www.stripedmouse.com/sitel_2_1.htm (due to copyright reasons, these are not the original pdfs

from the publisher, but the files contain exactly the same information)

2. You can see our mice in motion: Download small video clips under:
http://www.stripedmouse.com/sitel_5.htm

I am very grateful to my brother Jens Schradin who designed this homepage and put much effort into realizing it, spending many evenings and nights to make it available to us. Thank you!

Homepage Statistics

	April	May	June	Total last quarter
Visits to stripedmouse.com	2881	2774	1809	7464
Downloads FSM-TIMES, SGM-Spiegel	33	355	493	881

TITLE: NAMAQUAQLAND – A SHORT HISTORY OF NEARLY EVERYTHING

By Berit Kostka

With a big roar the bus that took me all the way from Cape Town pulled away from the stop at the TOTAL garage. There I was, in the pitch black darkness of the early morning hours in Springbok and did not have the faintest idea of what I would have to expect. The only vague information I had about Springbok was from story-telling friends and a picture I had spotted in a previous issue of the FSM-Times. With so little mental preparation done I could not wait to see what kind of environment I just got immersed into and what its inhabitants would be like. But for now I had to leave my

curiosity unsatisfied - an answer to these questions could only be found when the sun rose over the capital of Namaqualand several hours later.

Stepping out of the hotel, squinting my eyes in the bright sunlight I finally could take a first look at the new surroundings. The first impression was that Springbok did not look like anything I had imagined. Not that I had any imaginations in the first place! Walking along the main street some buildings vaguely reminded me of the towns of the Wild West era in the United States 150 year ago. Behind them I could see reddish rocky

hills and outcrops rising, only scarcely dotted with shrubs. This was the succulent karoo of Namaqualand, famous for its unrivalled wealth and diversity of succulents and wildflowers during spring-time, stretching for miles and miles on either side of the road to Goegap Nature Reserve. But where in South Africa is Namaqualand situated? It lies in the west of South Africa and is part of southern Africa's Karoo-Namib region, which can be divided into three subregions: The Namib Desert, the Nama-Karoo and the Succulent Karoo. The latter reaches from Klawer and Loeriesfontein in the south via the vicinity of Springbok and Steinkopf in the east all the way into Namibia to the coast just north of Lüderitz. There are five geographic regions in Namaqualand, according to the distinctive landscape and climate of each one. From the south to the north these are the Knersvlakte with its broad flat plains, the central Hardeveld comprising granite hills, the vast sandy expanse of the Sandveld along the coast, the high mountains of the Kamiesberg region and, in the north-west, the Richtersveld with its mountain deserts and arid plains. The succulent karoo of Namaqualand is a winter-rainfall desert which is unusual among the other deserts of the world. The annual precipitation ranges from around 50mm on the coast to about 300mm in the Kamiesberg. Temperatures can soar as high as 45°C during summer but also drop to freezing in winter nights. Fascinated by the barren beauty of the landscape, I started wondering, besides the immense diversity of animal and plant life, what actually made people settle here, in this seemingly hostile and waterless environment, with only scarce vegetation to graze animals on, and how they made their living. I wanted to find out more about the history of humankind in Namaqualand.

The Cradle of Human life

Australopithecus, the first hominid, roamed Namaqualand in small clans as long as three million years ago. His descendant, the tool-using *Homo erectus*, arrived about 800000 years ago. These hunter-gatherers mainly survived on wild plants and scavenging on kills by other predators, consisting of rhino, hippo, giant wildebeest and buffalo as well as wild pigs or bushbuck. 120000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* had

evolved from *H. erectus*. Relicts of their ability to manufacture tools are found widely throughout Namaqualand. Weapons enabled them to bring down animals larger than themselves, but berries, bulbs and other plant parts still formed the main part of their diet. *Homo sapiens sapiens* started to appear in Namaqualand around 40000 years ago. He is the common ancestor of all modern day humans. Bushmen, or San, clans used to migrate from the coast to the hinterland, always in search of prey they could hunt or plants to gather. Signs of their culture are only left in symbolic rock carvings and paintings.

Namaqualand remained a very quiet place regarding cultural evolution until about 2000 years ago, when the Khoikhoi, or Nama, arrived from the area that now encompasses northern Botswana. They introduced a so far unknown means of wealth and power: domestic livestock, mostly goats and cattle. Until now their descendants in the Richtersveld move their livestock in seasonal patterns, always following the fresh growth in different areas after the autumn rainfalls.



Traditional Nama hut

However, conflict with the San arose when the Nama livestock grazed the veld of the game the San depended on, and the people with their more sophisticated society comprising leaders, private property and individual wealth occupied prime spots that were also the choice of the hunter-gatherers. The weaker San then either had to retreat to inferior areas, or they became

stock thieves or were enslaved by the Nama to work as hunters.

The Confrontation with the Europeans

With the arrival of Dutch pastoralists, or *trekboere*, at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 a new group of nomads invaded Namaqualand. With the help of modern weapons and the affect of foreign disease, the Nama populated areas were conquered by 1750. However, between 1770 and the beginning of the 19th century, the Nama as well as the San successfully reclaimed their respective lands and thus reversed the expansion of the Dutch colony.

Only the British with their cruel and intimidating commando system that was introduced in 1806 made the indigenous people of Namaqualand surrender. San were hunted, enslaved or driven to marginal zones with little ecological value. The Nama were also enslaved or used as labourers by the *trekboere*, or were confined to areas such as the Kamiesberg or Richtersveld. Nowadays these areas are known as communal land and 40% of Namaqualand's population lives there. From the mid 1800s mission stations were established there and people earned their living mainly through agriculture such as wheat production where rainfall allowed for it. Today most descendants from the Nama are employed by the diamond and copper mining companies, which we will learn about later on, or the fishing industry of the west coast. Yet their original way of life by migrating with their stock has been more or less destroyed, apart from Nama descendants in the Richtersveld, who are said to be the last nomads of Namaqualand.



Nama woman

The end of the nomadic lifestyle of the *trekboere* came with the upcoming trend of private ownership of land. The Dutch East India Company introduced a loan farm system in 1708 throughout the Cape Colony which provided security of tenure as well as enabled the *trekboere* to graze their sheep on unoccupied plots of land. In 1878 under British rule, white farmers were allowed by a new legislation to buy their own land, and soon after no unclaimed land was left in Namaqualand. With the erection of fences around their properties, farmers could practise an internal migrating system, or rotational grazing. Nowadays farmers also own additional pasture in the summer-rainfall areas and “migrate” their stock in large lorries across the country. Times when people moved their stock in slow treks during starlit nights following the smell of rain in the hope to find fresh pasture are long since gone.

Treasure Hunt

But Namaqualand held other treasures hidden deep beneath its barren surface that enabled people to earn a living up until today: valuable metals and precious rocks. Interestingly, this mineral wealth of Namaqualand was only discovered because a Dutchman named Jan van Riebeeck, the first commander of a permanent settlement at the Cape, was eager to follow up the legend of the Golden Empire of King Monomotapa which was supposed to hold a fabulous supply of valuable minerals. This mythical Kingdom was widely believed in by the Dutch. Hence between 1660 and 1664, six expeditions travelled northwards in the search for Monomotapa's kingdom. But because they travelled during the hot summer months, oblivious of the weather and landscape conditions, all of them failed. With the arrival of Simon van der Stel, who was to command the Cape from 1679, four more expeditions set off between 1682 and 1685, this time travelling in spring. The third of the expeditions was successful, finding the Copper Mountain or Carolusberg (today part of Goegap Nature Reserve) and bringing back some copper ore to the Cape. Van der Stel was so delighted by the find that he personally led the last expedition, which even dug three shafts into Copper

Mountain and extracted some ore. But the ore did not yield as much pure copper as they first had hoped, and additionally, the hostile characteristics of the landscape with no trees and water as well as the harbourless coast made it impossible for them to establish a viable mining industry. Under the leadership of Hendrik Hop another expedition was despatched to Namaqualand in 1761. The Copper Mountain area was once again investigated, but found as being poor, holding only small quantities of copper. However, not far away rich deposits were found, though the focus lay on certain deposits close to the Orange River in today's Richtersveld. But again, no means for building a mining industry, like sufficient wood or water were available, and the nature of the river made it unsuitable for navigation.

Only in 1836/37, when James Alexander returned to undertake an expedition to this area, interest in the copper deposits rose again. Alexander found very copper-rich ore near the banks of the Orange River. Yet it should take another 10 years before the

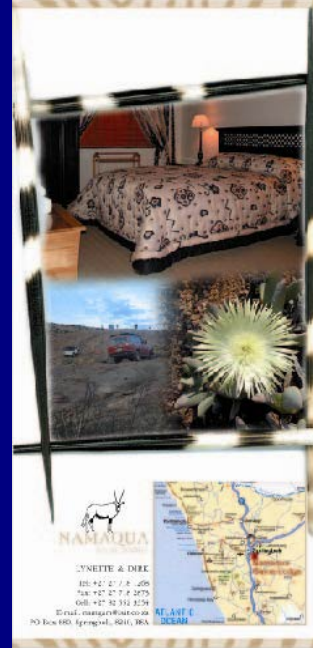
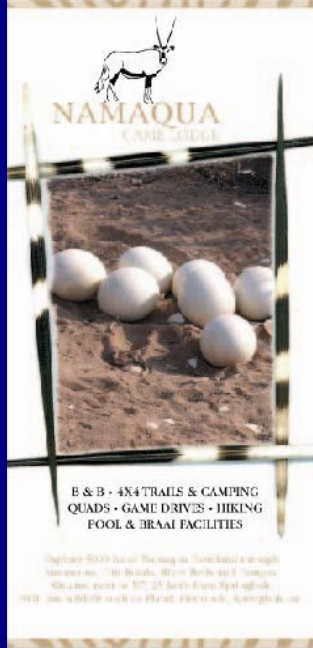
newly founded South African Mining Company first started working the copper ore in Namaqualand in 1846.

Some time later a German named von Schlicht went to Namaqualand and discovered by chance an immense deposit of copper ore on the farm Springbokfontein. He tried hard to find investors in Cape Town, in order to start up a mining industry, but stayed unsuccessful. In contrast to von Schlicht's house mate, a Mr. Jencken. He was told about the copper deposits by von Schlicht, and, during the absence of von Schlicht, arranged for the company Phillips & King to invest in the copper business. They purchased the farm in 1850 together with all the mineral rights and sufficient land for the erection of any buildings and works considered necessary for the processing of any future copper ore discoveries. Furthermore they were allowed the right to graze livestock, use water and build roads. This was the onset of the commercial exploitation of the copper deposits of Namaqualand, and should lead to a copper mining mania.



Springbok in 1880

Namaqua Game Lodge



Namaqua Game Lodge is situated next to the N7 25kms south of Springbok. The Game Lodge offers peaceful and secure accommodation as well as camping facilities, 4x4 trails and safe hiking for the tourist. Seven luxury en-suite rooms are available with morning coffee/ tea facilities as well a fridge and private entrance from the courtyard. Breakfast is served in the main dining room and well prepared home cooked traditional food is available on request. Game includes gemsbok, springbok, eland, and ostrich on 5000ha. For the explorer we also have to offer a day in the life of a shepherd; if anyone is interested in walking the trails of the Damara, the oldest herders in Africa. We have cut Namaqualand diamonds for sale at a price you can afford. Every stone comes with an international certificate. A diamond is a gift from South Africa.

Namaqua Game Lodge, Lynnette & Dirk.
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The Copper Mania

The growth of Springbokfontein was directly related to the opening up of the mine. From 1852 to 1857 it developed from an assemblage of one mud cabin and a few mat huts to a large mining station comprising officer's and workmen's houses, mess rooms, stores, wagon maker's and blacksmith's shops, stables and forage stores. Not to forget necessities like a post office, a small church and of course a prison. The work force consisted of mainly coloured people, but also tradesmen, soldiers, sailors, farmers and quarrymen all

contributed to the success of the mine. However, the copper ore supplies of the mine should soon be exhausted and Springbokfontein would have become deserted, had it not been chosen as the seat of the magistrate of the Cape Copper Mining Company in 1855, which was taken over from Anthing by E.A. Judge in 1861. Anthing was already planning to remove the headquarters from Springbokfontein, since the village was private property of Phillips & King. Every decision of the magistrate had to be supported by the company, even only people the company approved of were allowed to stay overnight. Nor were married

people allowed to settle, which made it impossible to find a much needed attorney for Springbokfontein. Only in 1862 the village finally became public, and a lively social life began to grow. By 1866, J.F. Davis, employed by the Cape Copper Mining Company, had established the Springbokfontein Reduction Works to smelt the ore on site, which were fully operational in 1867. However, another Reduction Works at Okiep soon superseded the one in Springbokfontein. In 1875 the population of Springbokfontein totalled 244, but it was nearly deserted by 1877 due to the removal of the headquarters of the Cape Copper Mining Company to Okiep.

A reduction of shipping costs in 1881 made re-opening the mine of Springbokfontein worthwhile again, and the village population had recovered to 200 by 1886. However, the inhabitants had to suffer under the tyranny of the "Super", a representative of the Cape Copper Mining Company, not granting any rights to the people inhabiting the village. A severe drought in 1895 as well as an attack during the Anglo-Boer War¹ caused the population of Springbokfontein to collapse again, and the village became more or less derelict. In 1900 though, life returned once again and trees were planted, a public library opened in 1909, the first public school opened in 1911 and drivers licenses were handed out from 1914.

Eventually, the copper mine had to close down, but Springbokfontein survived as a local centre. The name was shortened to its present form Springbok in 1911.

The greatest single problem affecting the profitability of mining was, and still continues to be, the big distance between the mining sites and the markets. The most common vehicle was the light Cape wagon drawn by

ten mules. The heavier ox-wagon was also fairly common during good seasons since it was able to carry more weight. However, the weight they could transport was limited on the sandy ground and hence this means of getting the ore to the markets was hardly worthwhile. Phillips & King systematically bought up all the farms on route to the small anchorage of Hondeklip Bay to ensure the transport of their ores to the coast. In 1852, the company exported their first 11 tons of copper ore on the steamer *Bosphorus*. During the subsequent years, the development of Hondeklip Bay proceeded immensely and by 1857 it was a bustling harbour with a lot of ship traffic going in and out. The importance of Hondeklip Bay as a trading harbour steadily grew and thus it was declared a separate magisterial district in 1862. The only thing that still could improve the export rate was a good main road between Springbokfontein and Hondeklip Bay, which later got known as the "Messelpad", or Masonry Road. However, the opening of the railway line between Okiep and Port Nolloth in 1873, built by the Cape Copper Mining Company, caused Hondeklip Bay to quickly decline in population and lose its status as magisterial district in 1877. Nowadays it serves as a small port for agricultural produce.

A second main road was built to Port Nolloth, formerly known as Robbe Bay. During its early days it provided income by selling seal skins and dried seal meat. Despite its geographical advantages over Hondeklip Bay it did not manage to become as important as a trading harbour for copper ore. That was partly due to the bad maintenance of the main road, but the early shut down of the northern mines at the end of the copper mining mania in 1854/55 played a major role, too. However, in 1869 the construction of an initially mule-powered rail line to Port Nolloth was taken underway and soon the population exceeded that of Hondeklip Bay, reaching the 2000 mark in 1882. A steam engine to operate on the rail line was only introduced in 1886. Port Nolloth achieved the status of a separate magisterial district in 1874, but certain necessities of life still had to be brought in by a steamer from Cape Town once every fortnight and water for the settlement had to be obtained from a place five miles away.

¹ The first Anglo-Boer War, or War of Independence, took place in 1881 during which the Dutch regained their independence from the British government and formed the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR).

The second Anglo-Boer War lasted from 1899-1902. The discovery of Gold in the Witwatersrand near Johannesburg led to a flood of foreign immigrants who were not allowed to vote under Kruger yet had to pay taxes. The British besieged the Dutch army and under the "Peace of Vereeniging" the Boer republics became British colonies.

Port Nolloth and its inhabitants were in a desolate state, being described as “eye-sores” from either land or sea. Only in 1896 a sanitary system got installed. But even until the 1930s the poverty-stricken appearance of Port Nolloth could not be improved.



Port Nolloth in 1905

Altogether differently the situation looked in Okiep, which by the 1860s had become the most important mine of the Cape Copper Mining Company. Black labourers worked both underground and on the surface under white supervision. Black women and children were employed to sort the ore by hand. It was a melting pot of all sorts of human races, from English, French, Colonial Dutch, German, Portuguese, Italian to African people like the San, Damara, and Nama, to name just a few. Every need of life was catered for in Okiep, there were stores, offices, stables, workshops, a church which was also used as a school. Furthermore there were an infirmary for the sick and of course accommodation for mechanics, miners and workers. However, the smelting works polluted the air and Okiep was a fairly unhealthy place to live. In the late 1880s, the population was estimated at 2000, two to three burials a week were reported due to the mining.

After Okiep was occupied for about one month during the Anglo-Boer War in 1902 during which the railway lines were severely damaged, a difficult time started for the Copper Mining Companies of Namaqualand. This was due to the lack of sufficient supplies like coke, the ongoing difficulty with shipping the ore, and also the prohibition of exporting matte to England. In 1919, the

Cape Copper Mining Company had to shut down, affecting the villages of Okiep and Port Nolloth to a great extent, leaving the majority of the population without enough money to buy their daily bread. The Namaqua Copper Company had to stop all mining activities in 1931.

A revival of commercial mining took place in 1939, when the Okiep Copper Company purchased all properties that were held by the Namaqua Copper Company. At Okiep they installed a mining, milling and power plant in 1945, thus reactivating the mines. However, the railway line to Port Nolloth was closed in 1944, after unsuccessful attempts of improving it. Port Nolloth itself was abandoned as a shipping port due to its inadequate facilities like an unprotected harbour. Instead, the copper ore was transported by rail to Cape Town for shipment. The problem of a big enough water supply for the mining activities continued to exist until pipelines were constructed to reservoirs and the Orange River in the late 1940s. Today only a small number of copper mines are still operated.



Miners in Okiep around 1890

Twinkle Twinkle Little Stone

During a day trip to Port Nolloth I saw something like fishing boats with long tubes that floated in the water anchored just off the harbour. What was their purpose I wondered? The boats were drenches with suction devices, hoovering up diamonds from the gravel fields on the sea floor, I was told. Diamonds - the second hidden treasure of Namaqualand that should provide a major source of income, but also lead to something quite close to the gold-rush in the west of the American continent.

The very first to commence the search for the twinkling gems was Fred Cornell, who arrived in South Africa in 1901. In 1910 he started his expedition at the Orange River, where he suspected large deposits of diamonds which he thought were washed down with the river from further inland. He followed its banks from Augrabies Falls to the coast, eagerly turning the shingles in the hope to discover one of the precious stones. On his way down to Alexander Bay he investigated the gravel every few yards. But Cornell seemed to be always just missing the diamonds, as we know now, yet he was convinced that in the area he was searching plenty of diamonds were to be found. In order to find investors for his diamond business Cornell went back to London, but his luck abandoned him once again and this time for good. Cornell tragically lost his life in a road accident before being able to return to Namaqualand and continue his search. The diamond expeditions of Jack Carstens proved to be more successful. He was the first person to find the seductive crystals at Namaqualand's coast in 1925. He opened a little diamond industry south of Port Nolloth and at the farm Kleinzee in 1926, which was just about to start growing when yet another prospector commenced a search in the area north of Port Nolloth. His name was Hans Merensky, a German geologist, who is wrongly believed to have found the first sparklers in Namaqualand. In truth it should take Merensky two more years to discover diamonds on the coast at Alexander Bay in 1927, more or less exactly in the area Cornell had searched painfully years before.



Diamond fishing boats at Port Nolloth

Merensky focused on the area south of the Orange River mouth, also believing that diamonds were washed downriver from inland. He thought that once they had reached the mouth of the river, they were washed southwards by some ancient current, hence they had to be found on the southern side of the mouth. Another theory goes that Merensky believed a change in sea currents millions of years ago shifted the original river mouth northwards, so the only thing he had to do was find the site of the ancient river mouth and search for diamonds there. What he really believed in we do not know, but fact is that he found diamonds south of Alexander Bay, so his ideas led him to success in prospecting. Interestingly, he was right for the wrong reasons – a common occurrence amongst inquiring minds. Today we know that the diamonds were in fact carried northwards by the Benguela current which originates in the Antarctic. In ancient times the mouth of the Orange River met the sea roughly about where the Olifants River does today, near the southern border of Namaqualand. This explains why diamonds nowadays can be found all along the coast.



Diamond mining plant in Kleinzee

In 1908 the discovery of diamonds in the area between the Orange River and Lüderitz in Namibia sparked off a frenzy with hordes of prospectors descending upon the town in the hope to find fabulous wealth buried in the sand. However, the situation soon got out of control and this part of Namaqualand was declared a *Sperrgebiet*, prohibited area, by the German government the same year. Independent prospecting was now forbidden and everyone who held claims was forced to

form mining companies. The *Sperrgebiet* exists until the present day and not a single entity is allowed into the area without a special permit and on a guided tour only. Namaqualand is a place that does not readily reveal its treasures. One has to look closely and the course of history shows us that it was possible for the indigenous people to survive off the harsh land by listening to nature and react to its cycles.

The greed for material goods and the exploitation of the land that came with the Europeans disturbed the tranquillity of this beautiful landscape forever. In the end, the natural wonders, living or dead, of Namaqualand are the real treasures that should be conserved to be enjoyed by future generations.

Follow-up literature:

- R. Cowling, S. Pierce: *Namaqualand – A Succulent Desert* (2002), Cape Town
- J. Carstens: *A Fortune Through My Fingers* (1962), Cape Town
- F.C. Cornell: *The Glamour Of Prospecting* (1986), Claremont, SA
- J.M. Smalberger: *A History Of Copper Mining In Namaqualand* (1975), Goodwood, SA
- Lonely Planet: *Africa – The South* (1997), Singapore
- Lonely Planet: *Namibia* (2002), Singapore

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NEWS AND INFORMATION ABOUT PLANTS AND ANIMALS

MOUSE PORTRAIT; FEMALE 43

By Carsten Schradin

Mother: F1, F2, F3 or F4 (sisters in a communal nest)	Father: M7
Date of birth: Start September 2002	Date of death: Start Dezember 2003
Age: 1.2 years	Cause of death: unknown, possibly raptor
Partners 2003: M25 and M29	Sister of F117
Children: ca. 6, including F129 and F194	Grand-children: At least 21

F: Female, M: Male

There is one mouse that symbolizes hope and tenacity for me: Female 43 (F43). When I came back to Goegap in 2003 to study "my" mice, I did not know yet what catastrophe had happened and what my study animals had had to cope with for the last 6 months. It was the severest draught for at least 4 decades, no autumn rain had fallen. Even winter, the main rainy season, kept dry. Only at the very end of winter did

rain fall, after 9 months of draught. As a consequence, there was no food for the mice which got weaker and weaker until they finally died. From my 200 study animals from 2002, only 4 survived. When the rain came, it was followed by icy cold air from Antarctica, and half of the mice died due to the cold. One of the survivors was F43.



F43 in 2003 in front of her nest. She weighs herself on a balance, on which is some peanut butter. She was the first female to give birth after the drought of 2003 and thus enabled the re-colonisation of the land of mice.

But F43 was a tough one. Only 4 weeks after the rains she gave birth to her first litter. However, she only gave birth to 2 pups, while normally 5 pups per litter is the average. However, more was not possible for this little emaciated mouse. But a month later she gave birth to a second litter. Also, both pups from the first litter survived and developed well: The sisters F88 and F90. When F43 gave birth to her third litter, her two oldest daughters were already adult and gave birth to pups as well. All three females lived in the same nest and reared their pups together.

F43 was the symbol of hope for me, not only because she had survived the catastrophic drought, but especially because her descendants started to colonise the land of the mice again. In 2005, when I write this report, two of the mouse groups in Goegap are direct descendants from her: The groups of F194 and of F129. Both females started their own groups in 2004. Two additional groups were established by the females F75 and F434. Also they are descendants of F43, either her daughters or grand-daughters, as their mothers could also have had been F88 or F90. We still observe these mouse groups and especially F129 reminds me a lot of her mother.

Who was F43? How did she survive the drought that killed 99% of the mice? Was she especially shy and cautious? The

opposite, F43 survived because she knew every trick in the book of Namaqualand, she went straight to the point and she stopped at nothing. That became obvious during nest observations. When I went to her nest in the afternoon to weigh her (to see if she was pregnant, had given birth), she immediately jumped on the balance to eat some peanut butter, before basking in front of her nest. Even if she had changed her nesting site, this was no problem. She nevertheless realized when I came to her old nest, and then she came too, eating the peanut butter. However, instead of switching to basking, she then left to go to her new nest site. I only had to follow her, which didn't disturb her at all. At the new nest "we" met her daughters F88 and F90 and the rest of the group.

Instead of all her wit, even F43 fall victim to destiny. Beginning December 2003 she disappeared. I do not know what happened to her, but I suspect she fall victim to a jackal buzzard. I knew her a long time and she gave me hope in my desperation in 2003, when all my scientific project seemed to fail as my study population was at the brink of extinction. She was the first female to give birth in 2003 and to see her pups coming out of her nest was a tremendous moment for me: I knew there was a future for the mice of Namaqualand.

BIRD PORTRAIT: PALE CHANTING GOSHAWK (*MELIERAX CANORUS*)

By Carsten Schradin



I didn't see any of these gentleman raptors in Goegap for nearly 2 years, but now they are back: the pale chanting goshawks. These beautiful birds have a coat of elegant grey, only on the belly is some white. Feet and bill are beautiful red. Their athletic slender body adds to their noble appearance. Sometimes one sees them on the ground, as they are searching for insects. But more often one or even a pair sits on the telephone poles in Goegap, scanning their surrounding for prey. This includes reptiles and small mammals. When mice and rats became very rare in Goegap during the 2003 draught, the goshawks disappeared. I did not see one single

goshawk in 2004. But now they are back, since May this year they are a common sight again. Whether they had left Goegap in 2003 and came back now, or whether the

Goegap goshawks died of hunger in 2003 and now birds from an outside population migrated in, I cannot say.

PLANT PORTRAIT: ROLLING SHRUB (*SENECIO KALI*)

By Carsten Schradin

At the right of the field site, behind the water pump and direction to a neighbouring farm, is a rather desolate place: Not much is growing here, if anything at all, and there are also no mice living here. The more I was surprised when in March 90cm high green shrubs started growing here, filling the entire area. In May they changed from green to yellow, and in June they lost their halt to the ground: As round woody light balls they were taken away by the wind. This is why they are called rolling shrubs. They look like the ones you see in old black and white western movies rolling over the prairie. The rolling shrub is a sign for disturbance, and in fact they grow on old farm land. They are actually an alien species, but I could not find out from where they are originally. Maybe they are even the original Western movie shrubs?



A dead "rolling shrub" on the left and right one which roots still hold it to the ground.

VISITORS

By Carsten Schradin

End of May Dr. Ute Schmiedle from the University of Hamburg and four para-ecologists staid at the research station. All five participated at the Namaqualand Colloquium (see below). Dr. Schmiedle works for the German BIOTA project, which studies biodiversity in Africa. Among other things Dr. Schmiedle coordinates the para-ecologist program. Para-ecologists are local

people that are trained as ecologists such that they can collect important scientific data. Thus, when a German scientist would have to spend a lot of time and money to quickly go to Namaqualand for a week to collect important data, this can be done instead by a para-ecoplgist. This saves a lot of time and money and at the same time creates jobs in South Africa.

CONFERENCES, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

By Carsten Schradin

CONFERENCES: THE NAMAQUALAND COLLOQUIUM

From the 24th – 26th of May the Namaqualand Colloquium took place in Springbok. 40 researchers from South Africa and overseas presented their work in Namaqualand. This included the work of biologists, conservationists but also many social scientists.

Most work was either applied or tried to have consequences for applied work. The two dominating themes of the colloquium were: 1. Weather, climate change and drought; 2. Livestock farming. It became clear that livestock farming is important in Namaqualand. However, it also leads to habitat destruction. Especially communal land (land not owned by private people or the government, but by local communities) is heavily overgrazed. There are way too many

sheep, goats and donkeys. People rely on those for extra cash. But livestock destroys the unique Namaqualand. No conclusions were reached, partly because of the extreme conflicts between the needs of people and of nature. So my conclusion: Nothing will be done, people will stay poor, will even get poorer, and the environment will be permanently damaged. The only solution, creating jobs for people outside of livestock farming that could improve their livelihoods and decreased habitat destruction, was only mentioned incidentally.

My very personal conclusion: While I felt a little bit out of place as a scientist who tries to understand nature without the aim to reach applied science, at least I do not have the burden that my work has to be applied.

Abstract of the poster presented at the colloquium:

Schradin, C., Keller, C. & Pillay, N. Plant biodiversity in the Hardeveld of Namaqualand: The influence of small mammals

Namaqualand is a biodiversity hotspot with an unusually large number of endemic plant species. We are still in the process of describing this biodiversity and its accompanying ecological patterns. However, knowing the reasons for the evolution and maintenance of this high biodiversity is important to develop plans for its protection. One hypothesis explaining a high variety of species in other habitats is the presence of predators: Predators prey on dominant species, thereby creating space for subdominant species. We tested this hypothesis in the Hardeveld of Namaqualand to explain its high diversity in plant species. The dominant plant predators in the Hardeveld are small mammals, which can reach a biomass of 10-20kg/ha. We sampled ten sites in Goegap Nature Reserve and found a highly significant correlation between the number of small mammal species and plant biodiversity, with more perennial plant species occurring in areas where many small mammal species were living. During four years of field studies, we observed striped mice (*Rhabdomys pumilio*) feeding on at least 32 of 52 plant species occurring at our study site. The dominant plant species *Zygophyllum retrofractum*, *Lycium cinerum*, *Mesembryanthemum guerichianum* and *Galenia sarcophylla* were preferred food plants. We determined plant biodiversity around occupied and abandoned nests of bush Karoo rats (*Otomys unisucatus*) and found a higher plant biodiversity when a rat was living in the area. These results indicate that small mammals might have a positive influence on plant biodiversity by restricting the growth and dispersal of dominant plant species, thereby creating space for subdominant species. Thus, small mammals play a significant role in the Hardeveld ecosystem, and the conservation of plant biodiversity should include a management plan for small mammals diversity.

PUBLICATIONS

Two popular science articles and one scientific article were published in the last three months. The magazine *Horizonte* from the Swiss National Science Foundation published a short article about our work on the mice. This article can be downloaded from the internet in German, Italian and

French under www.snf.ch/horizonte. I published a popular science article about the life of one mouse female in the *Rodentia*. This German article can be downloaded from our homepage at www.stripedmouse.com. The abstract of a scientific paper is published below.

Schradin; C. 2005. Im Jahr der Maus. Teil 2: „Striemengrasmaus-Weibchen Nr. 23 gründet eine Familie. *Rodentia* 25 (März)

Schradin, C. 2005. Whole day follows of the striped mouse. *Journal of Ethology*. Published online in May.

Abstract: Understanding of mammal social systems and behaviour can best be achieved through observations of individuals in their natural habitat. This can often be achieved for large mammals, but indirect methods have usually been employed for small mammals. I performed observations of the striped mouse (*Rhabdomys pumilio*) during the breeding season in the succulent karoo, a desert of South Africa. The open habitat and the diurnal habit of striped mice together with the use of radio-telemetry made it possible to collect data on the activity pattern and social interactions over an entire activity period (whole day follow). The striped mouse in the succulent karoo has been reported to form groups of one breeding male, 2-4 breeding females and juvenile and adult offspring of both sexes and several litters. Accordingly, daily range size use did not differ between males and females, but females spent more time foraging whereas males spent more time patrolling territory boundaries. Captive *R. pumilio* display biparental care, and in this study both sexes visited the nesting site during the day, possibly engaging in parental care. Mice travelled more than 900 metres per day, mainly during the morning and afternoon, and rested in bushes during the hottest times of the day.

DIPLOMA THESISES

The theses of the three diploma students that worked in Goegap last year are finished. Melanie Schubert, Carola Schneider and Christina Keller finished three excellent parts of work. You can read the abstracts of two of the theses here (the

abstract of Melanie Schubert's thesis will be published in the next issue), and the entire theses can be downloaded at our web site: [www.stripedmouse](http://www.stripedmouse.com) (go to research, publications).

Keller, C. 2005 .Do small mammals affect plant diversity? Field studies in Namaqualand, South Africa, a biodiversity-hotspot. Diploma thesis, University of Münster, Germany.

Abstract: The conservation of species is one of the most important duties of our century. Basic ecological knowledge is essential in order to perform it. Conservation is particularly effective in hotspots of biodiversity, because many species can be protected here at the same time in a relative small area. One of these biodiversity hotspots is the Succulent Karoo in southern Africa, which holds an extraordinary high number of plant species. Small mammals are abundant in the Succulent Karoo and might be of crucial importance as herbivores in this ecosystem. For the first time the influence of small mammals on plant diversity was investigated in my study. It is known from earlier studies that herbivores can increase floral diversity by reducing dominant plant species and thus providing space for subdominant species, which would be outcompeted otherwise. In a correlative study I tested if this mechanism might exist in the Succulent Karoo. The plant diversity in 10 ecological different study sites in Goegap Nature Reserve was correlated

with the number of small mammals living there. Additionally two rodent species (*Rhabdomys pumilio* and *Otomys unisulcatus*) were taken as example-species and tested in food-preference-tests for a preference for subdominant or dominant plant species. Additionally the influence of *O. unisulcatus* on the plant community surrounding their nests was also investigated. I found several positive correlations between plant diversity and the number of individuals and especially the species number of small mammals. The direct surroundings of occupied *O. unisulcatus* nests showed a significantly higher plant diversity than control areas, although food-preference tests revealed that *O. unisulcatus* prefers subdominant food-plants. In the contrary *R. pumilio* preferred dominant food-plants. All in all this results indicate a distinct influence of small mammals on plant diversity. The results of my study are of great importance for conservation programs in the Succulent Karoo in which small mammals should be included in the future.

Schneider, C. 2005. Male reproductive strategies in the South African striped mouse (*Rhabdomys pumilio*). Diploma thesis, University of Münster, Germany.

Abstract: In mammals a high variation in mating strategies occurs between species and sometimes even within species. But reports of social flexibility in natural populations are rare. So the key aspect of this study was to receive more information about the interesting intraspecific variation in reproductive strategies of males of one population of the south African striped mouse (*Rhabdomys pumilio*) in the succulent karoo. To study the reproductive strategies of *R. pumilio* three different approaches were followed. (1) To receive data of free living males in the field animals were trapped, radio-tracked and observed directly in the field. (2) Experiments were made in an aggression area with males trapped in the field during different seasons. (3) To receive data about sexual suppression in young males experiments were made in captivity. Field studies showed that intraspecific variation in reproductive strategies occurs in males of *R. pumilio* in the succulent karoo at a medium population density. Males can change their group-living strategy into a roaming strategy and vice versa within one breeding season. Males were not more aggressive during than before the onset of the breeding season. Thus, male aggression probably does not only function to increase immediate mating success. Experiments in captivity showed that factors like the protein content of the diet and encounters with strangers can have an influence on at which age males become potentially reproductively active (i.e. scrotal). In conclusion it can be said that the males of *R. pumilio* in the succulent karoo shows a high social flexibility and are not fixed to one reproductive strategy.

FUNDING OF RESEARCH: CALL FOR DONATIONS

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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:

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Improving the infrastructure of the research Station.

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Acknowledgements

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

Donations of Euro 50 - 100 (Rand 400 - 800):

Hartmut Schradin, Leinfelden-Echterdingen, Germany.

Donations over 100 Euro

160 Euro by anonymous donor from Switzerland

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

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Especially beds for students, cupboard and shelves are still needed.

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THE MOUSE'S TAIL

NAMAQUA ROCK MOUSE IN THE HOUSE

There were some suspicious noises coming at night from behind the cupboards in my sleeping room, and not much later the research station was getting noisy: rustling and scratching everywhere. As this was repeated for several night, I put some traps into the bedroom. When I went to bed, the noises behind the cupboard started again,

then it was silent, then: CLICK, the trap was closed. Inside was a young Namaqua rock mouse male, probably just dispersed from his natal group. He came into a tank, got lots of food, and was released as a much fatter mouse one warm evening at a koppie where I knew some rock mice were living. I hope he managed to immigrate into a new group.

LEOPARD IN GOEGAP

Already in December did a visitor find a cave in the mountains with the remains of a springbok. In February a field assistant found the tracks of a leopard in the dry riverbed just below this mountain. Finally in April the leopard was spotted by three

tourists: a female and her young. The leopard is still common in Africa and the only big cat that is not close to extinction: because it is very shy and avoids humans. Accordingly, no sign of the leopards presence was found in May or June.

WOLFI

Don't be afraid, after leopards we do not also have wolves in Goegap. Wolfi is the name of the grey Ford Sierra station wagon I bought for the research station from the former field assistants Daniel and Lars in

April, and this for a very good price. However, when I got the car back from the garage after 7 weeks, the price had more than doubled. But I hope it will do its job for the next few years.

COMING UP IN THE NEXT FSM-TIMES

The title in the next FSM-TIMES is about elephant shrews and a proposed PhD project that will try to find out why these animals are monogamous, although the male and female of a pair do not like each other.

SGM-SPIEGEL

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