



# THE BARKING GECKO

Newsletter of the NamibRand Nature Reserve



April 2016

Volume 17 N° 1

## Embarking on a new adventure

It is always challenging beginning again, yet our new beginning which started with a tipped over diesel truck, a NRNR board meeting and our first Kgotla. Fortunately we were assisted by Nils, who chaired the meeting and allowed us to observe. Despite hitting the ground running, we have felt nothing but welcome and comfortable.

Having been involved with NAM-PILACE over the last few years and having been neighbours with Namib Rand Nature Reserve (NRNR) for a while we have been privileged enough to get to know members of NRNR and Nils. We visited Quintin and Vanessa often at Keerweeder, so the house felt welcoming and familiar from the word go. We managed to get entirely unpacked in two days and got to spend some time settling in and exploring our new home with our gorgeous kids. Both Connor (five) and Grace (just turned two) have found their feet and adore their new home, their own rooms and the beautiful space around us are all reason for that. We have had to call them in at 18:00 most nights and almost tear them away from their outdoor fun. Having kids in this environment poses some challenges and yet it also teaches us others. We are so fortunate to watch our children grow up in an environment where freedom is being able to run barefoot, to make mud pies all day and to look at haartebeest over the fence. It is a special, magical way of growing up with an understanding of nature, a respect for the world around us, interest and curiosity in and for the magical things we see. The magic comes at moments when we need it most, when the challenges of our remote life are affecting us, when we miss our families, when we wish we could phone someone up and say come and watch the kids, when one or both of us is having a long day – the magic is watching the kids run across the sand as the sun sets, hair blowing in the wind, with a background of oryx and dust. The magic comes in when we meet our colleagues, who are also friends and there is a feeling of belonging and understanding and togetherness. The people we are surrounded by, our new colleagues and new contacts will all be a wonderful part of this new journey.

Starting our new adventure with Namib Nature Reserve is so exciting and feels so momentous and yet it feels like coming home.

We are looking forward to this beautiful adventure. There is so much excitement and so much to look forward to and so much magic that we will get to witness and be a part of!

Thank you to all the people who have made us feel welcome and made us feel straight at home! Here's to many more stories to tell and many more fabulous days of working together, taking care of our little piece of the earth.

Best wishes!

Lee Tindall

### In this special Earth Day issue:

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Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness

Anonymous

Connor & Gracie, outdoor creatures from birth



Photos: Lee Tindall

Connor & Grace Birding up North



Photo: Lee Tindall

## News from the CEO

Sadly we had to bid goodbye to our Control Warden, Quintin Hartung and our Environment and Research Warden, Vanessa Hartung. Vanessa started her new job as a teacher at the Delta high school in January, while Quintin joined the Gondwana group in the beginning of March as their Group Environmental Officer. Their legendary enthusiasm and dedication for the NamibRand Nature Reserve will be missed and we wish the the best of luck in their new jobs!

We are pleased to announce that our new Control Warden, Murray Tindal and his wife Lee, our new Environment and Research Warden started at the Reserve on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2016. We are very lucky to have the Tindall's at the helm of the day to day management of the NamibRand Nature Reserve. They are well known in conservation circles and they have a proven track record in conservation and management. We have worked with Murray and Lee, who are also the coordinators of the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Landscape Association and know them as extremely dedicated and passionate professionals. They, along with their children Connor and Grace will make Keerweder their home and we hope that they will enjoy many years with the Reserve as part of the NamibRand family.



*Goodbye Vanessa and Quintin Hartung*



*Welcome Lee and Murray Tindall*

We are excited to share with you that our website has been re-designed and relaunched. Almost 40% of all websites are these days viewed on smartphones and tablets, to do so websites need to be "mobile friendly" and have the ability to shrink to various screen sizes. Our old website was a static, fixed size site and it could only be viewed on computers, so it was high time for a change. Please have a look at [www.namibrand.org](http://www.namibrand.org) for experience our new and fresh cyber representation! Your comments and views will be appreciated!

*Nils Odendaal*



*The new Website, please visit it at:  
[www.namibrand.org](http://www.namibrand.org)*

## **Earth Day** **22 April 2016**

Earth Day has become an annual event. It has become a day for people to remember to recycle their yoghurt tubs, to separate their rubbish and turn off all unnecessary appliances and lights for one hour. Every bit makes a difference and every light switched off makes a change. For a lot of us that live in the Namib, or off the grid, we live this daily- we have solar energy, solar geysers, we recycle what we can, rescue the items that are reusable, pass things on to charity instead of pinning them. The earth day initiative is awesome and is an opportunity for everyone to make a difference, no matter how small.

Here's what I think: Have a monthly earth day, quietly in your own home & in your own time.



- Turn off your lights—watch the stars, have a candle lit braai
- Recycle for the day, it may be habit forming
- Be conscious of water consumption, reuse your grey water if you can.
- Walk or cycle to work (if you can) or take a cab and share it with someone, you could even make a new friend.
- Use reusable shopping bags, they are so pretty these days!

As this is too late for Earth Day, how about Happy Earth Year!

*Lee Tindall*

## A Word from the Warden

### Coming to this place we now call home

The very first time we (my wife and son and I) drove into the NamibRand Nature Reserve and saw the sweeping plains of grass on Vreemdelingspoort and Kwessiegat, I knew that this was the area that I wanted to be in. Okay, it was back in 2012 after Namibia had experienced record rainfall and the Reserve itself nearly three times its annual average in places resulting in an incredible display of grasses waving in the wind with the dunes as a backdrop, but four years and little or no rainfall in between has not changed my mind any. At the time we were making our way to Excelsior to take up a management position at Drifter's Desert Lodge and wouldn't actually be working on NamibRand, but the overall area is what captivated me and minor details like my employer just needed some fine tuning.

My career in conservation seems to have inevitably drifted towards drier and drier environments, almost as if the shock of starting out in the desert would have been too much. A great defining moment in my childhood was when I watched 'Gorillas in the Mist' at age nine or ten and decided then and there that I wanted to be a Game Ranger. My first deployment many years later as a Field Guide was in the Sabi Sands Game Reserve, and while not quite the jungles of Rwanda and Uganda, the lush vegetation after the summer rains are a far cry from the sand and gravel plains of the Namib. I then moved on to the Eastern Cape where I again worked as a Field Guide on KwanDwe Private Game Reserve on the border of the Karoo. Suddenly the trees had all shrunk and the vegetation begun to show some adaptations to reduced water availability. Then we moved to Namibia and started work in the Erongo Mountains, but it wasn't long before we headed south to the vast open spaces of the Namib. At each step along the way there was just enough of the fauna and flora that were familiar to help me feel comfortable in terms of understanding how that ecosystem functioned while introducing a whole suite that peaked my curiosity and formed the bridge for the next move.

And so here we are, and I certainly hope that we will be around for a while, because I'm not really sure where we could go to get much drier than this!

Murray Tindall



Photo: Lee Tindall

Top: The contrast we all love so much . Greenfire Desert Lodge with a rainbow



Photo: Murray Tindall

Above: There is a beauty in the dryness and rough edges



Photo: Murray Tindall

Top: Colours & Textures change from hour to hour and season to season  
Sossousvlei



Photos: Lee Tindall

Left: First time in The Namib. View from Greenfire Desert Lodge. Grass as far as the eye can see. This sparked a love affair between Connor and the wide open spaces of the Namib, as well as Murray & my enjoyment and love for the dry heat and richness of the desert.  
Lee Tindall





## **News@NaDEET**

### **Meet NaDEET Centre's new Water Wise Washrooms!**

Learning to be water wise is a key part of the NaDEET Centre experience. With the new Water Wise Washrooms (WWW), saving water has never been easier. The new bathrooms have the same features as our old ones:

- a bucket shower
- washbasins without taps to prevent running water
- cups for brushing teeth
- a 150 litre tank with a level indicator to count cold water use
- shared solar hot water geysers with a water meter to measure hot water use.

In addition, the new Water Wise Washrooms boast many new features:

- a platform on which the whole structure is built
- a roof that protects the bathroom from the hot Namib sun, the unexpected rain shower and dust storms
- sliding doors that don't slam closed or open when our strong desert winds blow through. Two washbasins and a large counter providing all eight participants with enough space
- lots of hooks and benches
- a quilted shower curtain in the traditional Nama style
- LED lights which illuminate the outside stairs but are within the parameters regulated international dark sky reserves
- improved lighting inside the washroom with well-placed bulbs and LED strips.

The design of the bathroom took many months to finalise as we needed to balance multiple factors, namely educational opportunities, usability and cost. The final design has a large roof which provides ample shade for learners on hot days during break times and significantly cools off the inside of the washrooms. The sliding door provides for improved privacy and it is much easier to clean. To make the daily environmental audit more efficient, we relocated the water tanks, solar hot water geysers and the water meters. They have all been positioned together, in close proximity to the bathrooms (in front of the double bathroom units, which are used by the participants and at the back of the single unit, which is allocated to supervisors). This makes it much easier to monitor water use and to record it during the water count. Whereas previously participants were required to walk a short distance to fetch hot water, the new hot water heaters are now placed on the roof (which also makes it oryx proof). Although the hot water taps are still not located inside each bathroom (a purposeful decision to promote resource use awareness), it now requires less effort to take a hot shower.

The building process took about three months and was carried out by the hard work of two NaDEET staff, and two temporary laborers. Happily, other NaDEET staff helped out when available – even if for short periods.

The Water Wise Washroom project also gave us the opportunity to install an independent firefighting system. We now have two 5000 litre reservoirs one of which is dedicated to firefighting, 6 large fire hose reels and a new pipeline. We are currently working on the finishing touches such as

## **News@ NaDEET**

posters and additional methods to save and re-use water. Rain gutters will be added to the roofs to demonstrate how to harvest rainwater, an important tool for participants from wetter areas of Namibia.

Since NaDEET Centre's water usage is already very low - about 3000 litres per week when there is a programme with 40 participants, it is challenging to implement a cost effective recycling method for the small amount of grey water we produce. We have decided that the best way to utilize this resource is to grow trees. We are planting six new camel-thorn trees so that they can use the greywater, provide shade for participants and habitat for wildlife. As with many of our actions at NaDEET, we are planting seeds (plants and knowledge) for present and future generations in the belief that every positive action makes a difference.

Congratulations to Andreas Keding and Fortune Tjituaiza for the completing this beautiful project with few resources, and in challenging conditions including sand storms and 45°C + weather! NaDEET is extremely grateful to the donors of the Water Wise Washroom project, namely the German Embassy, ACS Namibia Project, Speich Education Fund, Ein Welt Lädchen and several private donors.

*Viktoria Keding*



*Old bathrooms dismantled.*

Photos: NaDEET



*Children with newly planted camel thorn tree*

Photos: NaDEET

## News from the South



Planting of Trees

Photos: Peter Woolfe



Removal of fences

Photos: Peter Woolfe



Collaring of game in the South: Left to Right Mark Jago, Peter Woolfe, Bernie Simon, Cherie Morkel

Photos: Peter Woolfe

Greetings to all from the South, and hoping all are well? Well 2016 started with the news that Quintin and Vanessa Hartung, were leaving the Reserve. It has been a great pleasure to work with the two of them and we all wish them the very best for the future. At the same time we welcome Lee and Murray Tindall and look forward to many years working with them. Josia has also left the Reserve after three years at Springbokvlakte. We wish him well and good luck with his studies.

Sadly the drought seems to continue and the end of the rainy season is approaching. What rain we did get was very patchy and inadequate. The Saffir mountain got 57 mm with the early rain while Sonop got 29 mm. The last rains delivered 21 mm at Swartkoppies and 20mm at Vista. All in all a pretty grim scenario. The effect on the game is visible and fatalities have been high. On the upside the Vultures are thriving, and we have had some excellent sightings, including one of over a hundred at the waterhole next to the Aandstêr Dina gate.

Two and a half years after the release of 21 haartebees on Springbokvlakte, and no sightings other than one bull, the herd were seen in the Saffir/Excelsior area after the early rains. So another successful release. The giraffe appear to have split up with one going solo and the other five sticking together, cheetah have also been seen drinking at the Aandstêr water hole, a mother with a juvenile, and two adults near Gorasis. Two warthog were also sighted near the Saffir mountain. So some exciting development regarding the fauna generally.

Other news is that we expanded the collaring of plains animals in the South, as part of the wildlife monitoring project of the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Landscape Association

With the help of Mark Jago from MET we re-collared one gemsbok and put a collar on a new one. We also collared 2 springbok. Ironically one of them survived getting caught in the fence after Elton by chance found it in time to rescue it, only to get taken out by a suspected leopard or hyena a few weeks later.

Five sections of the fence bordering Excelsior and Saffir were opened up to try and reduce the number of fatalities occurring along it. We also now look forward to removing the fence between Dina and Aandstêr as Dina becomes the latest addition to the Reserve. I have been waiting for this for sixteen years !!!!.

Twelve indigenous saplings (*acacia erioloba*,) were planted at three locations – Aandstêr water, 4 Tanks and Prosopis. All are doing well, except one that died at Aandstêr water.

We wish everyone a great 2016 as we continue what has begun as an exciting year.

Cheers from the team in the south.

Peter Woolfe



## ***Exciting news for Little Bugs!***

### ***Little Bugs brings together the Community***

With the help of UNICEF, Little Bugs was able to have private medical care for the all children as well as host four workshops for the community over the last two months. We had participants from Sesriem, Le Mirage and Farm Geluk attending these workshops and everybody not only thoroughly enjoyed it, but also learned a lot.

In February, Little Bugs was privileged to have Dr Claudia Martins, a qualified phycologist at the school for a whole week doing a full clinical evaluation on all the children at the school. The week ended with a workshop hosted by Dr Martins on Positive Parenting on Saturday 27 February attended by 25 parents from the community.

On 5 March a Nutritionist, Melanie Meiring hosted a fun, inter-active workshop on Nutrition. Judging by all the laughs and questions asked the participants really had a great time and went away with a lot of knowledge on nutrition as well as a “little recipe book”!

NADEET hosted a workshop on Environmental Awareness with the focus on Solar Cooking on 19 March and this was a real hit amongst the participants. They brought along three different solar cookers and the workshop was hosted with the lovely smell of bread baking and wors being cooked. After the workshop every one enjoyed a “boerewors roll” prepared solely with solar energy. The day ended with a lucky draw and five participants won a solar cooker each!

On Saturday 9 April a private doctor from Windhoek visited our school and all the children had a full medical evaluation done including an eye test and ear test – according to Dr Jordaan we have very healthy Little Bugs!! After that, our current program for the community ended with a workshop on Body & Mind where ways of relaxing and some unwinding techniques was demonstrated to the participants. The activities done included games, colouring and even some yoga! The workshop was hosted by Liezl Hoving from The Bodhi Room and everybody had a very relaxing time!

*Amanda Behr*



Amanda Behr

*NaDEET solar cooking workshop*



Photos: Amanda Behr

*NaDEET Solar Cookers*



*NaDEET staff showing Participants how it Work*

Photos: Amanda Behr



## Community Project

### Sisters doing it for themselves

We are very proud to announce that Namib Sky Community Trust's sewing project is growing at a rapid speed and the ladies are doing great on the machines!!

As noted in the last insert, the ladies receive training on the machines and once trained on a specific product they can then start earning money as they get paid for each completed item. We have bought some more beautiful material and the new range now includes animals, dolls and teddy bears made from colourful Shwe-Shwe material. The ladies amazed not only us but also themselves when they started making the little animals – only a few weeks ago they had never worked on a sewing machine and now they are making beautiful craft items.

Below are a few pictures of the items. Well done to you all!!!

Amanda Behr

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Photos: Amanda Behr

*These brilliant Rhinos and Ellies in fantastic colours are just waiting to cuddled and loved by children and adults alike*



Photos: Amanda Behr

*These wonderful creations come with a little birthcertificate and are made with a special lot of love*



Photos: Amanda Behr

*Ursula , using her newly acquired skill to make Art.*



Photos: Amanda Behr

*Janista, at her workstation, in the sewing room*



Photos: Amanda Behr

*These gorgeous girls are so full of smiles, they are very hard to resist and delightful for little ladies everywhere*



# **Greater Sossusvlei Namib Landscape Update Helicopters, Dart Guns & Moving Forward**

The Greater Sossusvlei Namib Landscape (GSLN) goes from strength to strength. We have several things on the go at the moment and are working steadily to achieve our goals before NAM-PLACE project closure in July. While it is the end of one chapter, the GSLN will begin its new story as a Section 21 company with a great and passionate board of directors. However, before we can look to that, we have had some great moments.

Last year in December, we undertook a massive collaring exercise. It was decided, in the interest of research and conservation, to collar a number of oryx, springbok and mountain zebra. The reason for this, is to see how fences affect the movement of the animals and how the migratory patterns change. We were incredibly fortunate that despite the heat, the wind and the limited time available to us we managed to collar some of each in various areas. The mission went as follows: First day meet, greet and collar at Solitaire. Carey, Pasquale, Kate & Matt offered to host us and the team and did so splendidly. Unfortunately, I was unable to be there, but Murray did a sterling job of hosting, planning and assisting. After a night of brief preparation and peaceful sleep, the day that followed was a great day, the relevant animals were found, darted and collared safely. From there we moved into the central landscape. We collared wildlife in the NamibRand Nature Reserve and retrieved a non-functioning collar at Nubib Mountain Lodge. Murray and I hosted the stellar team and friends and colleagues who were interested in assisting where possible and learning from the experts. While doing the collaring it was established that the collars on the mountain zebras was not a perfect fit. We decided to hold off on doing too many zebra and figure out how to remedy the problem. It was very fortunate that we were able to secure Mark Jago, MET Wildlife Vet and Cheri Morkel, Wildlife Vet Tech to do the darting and collaring. Bernie Simon, a pilot with great experience and huge game capture knowledge flew our vet team in and out safely. The next stop was Aansdôr, where Peter Woolfe hosted and assisted the team with what

This operation went smoothly, had success and was managed only because we had a number of people assisting us, many people in the background doing logistics and a huge number of people who quite simply thought that we could manage it with no difficulties! Thanks to: Michael Sibatani - NAM-PLACE project manager for assisting with making fund available, Hilma Eiki (Ned-Bank Go Green Fund), Mark Jago—MET Wildlife Vet, Cheri Morkel—Wildlife Vet Tech, Bernie Simon—helicopter pilot extraordinaire, Carey & Pasquale—Solitaire, Matt & Kate Cleverly - Conservationist & Hospitality Management team, Paula Amis— Professional Volunteer and helper, Peter Woolfe—host and helper.

The GSLN is so lucky to have many dedicated individuals forming the larger association. People whose passion and genuine interest in the cause and the furthering of the landscape is making a difference one action at a time.

There are too many to name, but every member's contribution is a valuable one, all thoughts heard are used well and trust and honesty has build good and open relationships. It is hard to run a business, have a life/job/etc. and still drive a huge process and vision such as this and it takes a community to make it work.

*Lee Tindall*  
**GSLN Secretary**

*An oryx sleeps in the shade after being darted. Utmost care was taken that the animals were not put under excess pressure and that no harm came to the animals' collared & darted*



Photo: Matthew Cleverley

## **Contact Details:**

Please note the following details regarding correspondence, as we have no cellphone signal at Keerwerder it is best contact as via Landline, email or whatsapp :

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### **Murray Tindall**

Co-coordinator

081 1241798

Warden@namibrand.org



Photos: Matthew Cleverley

*Top: The helicopter flight taking off and moving on after swiftly and efficiently taking care on an oryx*

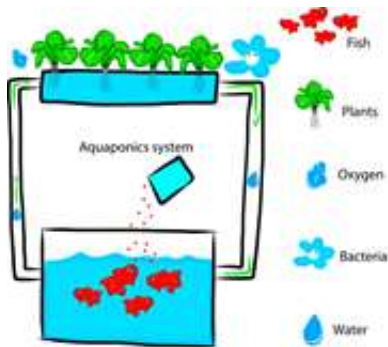
needed doing. The springbok in that area were darted from a vehicle, as the terrain is reasonably flat. While this took a while, one springbok was finally darted and collared.



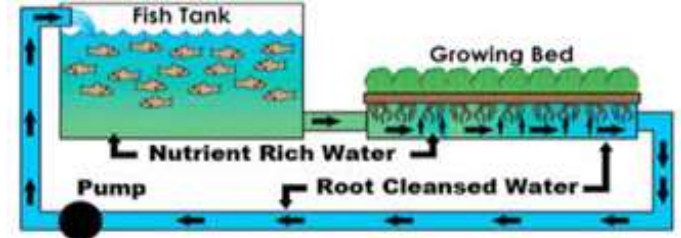
## AQUAPONICS IN THE DESERT

*Teaching children to grow their food & going green*

We at Little Bugs believe in sustainability, so to provide our children with a healthy food source which is crucial to their development, we have started our green patch project! In order to do this in the most sensible and eco-friendly manner we've done a bit of research and found the Aquaponics system.



The cycle of water .  
Diagram of  
Aquaponics system,  
very simply put and  
easy to understand



First things first, we need to know what we're dealing with here... So we got in touch with a man called Peka, from Namibia Future Farming (NFF). He invited us to visit one of his projects in Dagbreek school in Windhoek, so we could get familiar with the system. After meeting him, we were convinced that this method is as fantastic as it sounds - it's organic, educational, and so much fun!



Photo: Denis Heesemans

*Above: Laying the foundations for feeding the community*

The Aquaponics system combines aquaculture (raising aquatic creatures such as fish or prawns) and hydroponics (Cultivating plants in water) while using minimum resources. This way, we are able to grow fresh organic fruits and veggies while at the same time farming some fish! So the fish feed the plants, which purify the water which in turn goes back to the fish - simple!



Photo: Denis Heesemans

*Above: Little seedlings coming up out of the charcoal (which prevents evaporation and provides an alternative to soil)*

We needed a protected area large enough to grow our veggies, raise some fish and also why not make space to have a few chickens!? And so phase one started in our school's backyard...

Once the space was ready, time to hand over to a great man called Francois Du Toit. After setting up a small system in his home in Walvis Bay, Francois started helping friends set up their own systems and thought to himself 'why not do this for a living?'

So this is how we found him, and a phone call later he was just as excited as we were to get this going! He helped us find the fish, organized the parts and equipment, and made his way to Sossusvlei!

Thanks to 'Plascon' we were able to receive some old paint tanks (IBC containers) that we cleaned, sanded and cut for our grow beds. The system was slowly taking shape, and soon it was time to add the charcoal, the water and the fish!



*Left: Francois cutting the PVC pipes to size*

Photo: Denis Hesemans

The charcoal finally arrived all the way from Okahandja and after flushing it thoroughly the grow beds were filled. A test run and a few tweaks and the system was ready!

Our fish have survived the trip here and are doing well. For now we have 12 square meters of growing area, where we have sprinkled our GMO-free seeds in.

Soon our school kids will enjoy some fresh tomatoes, lettuce, squash, butternut, cucumbers, herbs and of course some tasty Tilapia! All straight from the garden!

Our plans are to get a total of three systems in place, making 36 square meters of growing area for fruits and veggies. Each system will have its own fish tank, and we will experiment with different aquatic creatures in each tank.

So the next time you visit Little-Bugs we might be able to treat you to some desert home-grown crayfish!

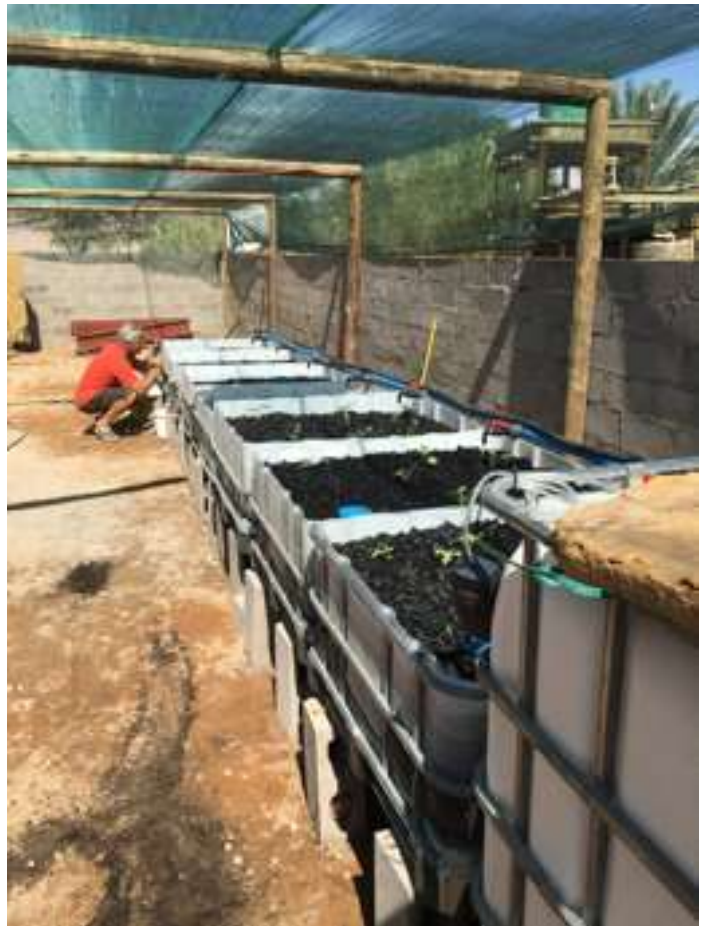
Here we are, with the first part of the garden operational, our seeds have begun to show signs of life, and the Namib desert just got a little bit greener!

This system uses only 2% of the water you would normally use in a conventional veggie garden, is powered by the sun and is 100% organic! We would be happy to show anyone who is interested in applying these growing methods, whether for home or business use.

We want to thank Francois Du Toit for his dedication and commitment to our project, Pekka from NFF for his expertise and patience, Plascon for donating the tanks, the Namib Sky team for the many hours of hard work, and UNICEF for helping us fund this exciting project!

To all the people who worked extra hard building this dream, WE THANK YOU!!!!

*Denis Hesemans*



*Above: Manie Nel, checking on the seeds progress*

Photo: Denis Hesemans



*Above: Seeds becoming plants, becoming food !*

Photo: Denis Hesemans



## Interesting Camera Trap Pictures



Top: A aardwolf (*Proteles christata*) on the prowl



Top: Tiny Elephant-Shrew (*Macroseriidae*) braving the great outdoors



Top: Horned Adder (*Bitis caudalis*) in the grass

Photos: NRNR Archives



Top: Spotted Eagle Owl (*Bubo africanus*)



Top: Quiver Tree (*Aloe dichotoma*) at Sunset



Top: Giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) in Namib Rand in greener times

Photos: NRNR Archives

### Thank you

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed to this issue of The Barking Gecko by providing articles/information: Nils Odendaal, Murray Tindall, Viktoria Keding, Amanda Behr, Denis Hesemans. Special thanks is extended to Danica Shaw, for spending precious time with me and showing me the "Word Publisher" ropes. The input and advice have been amazing and incredibly helpful in making this edition of the Barking Gecko happen.

The Barking Gecko is your newsletter and, as always, we invite you to keep on sending us your contributions of news and views, short reports, sightings, artwork and photographs.

*KINDLY NOTE: Photographs are under copyright and may not be reused without the permission of the photographer.*

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