

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER

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Dear clients,

This is the last newsletter of the year, can you believe it! We wish you all a wonderful Christmas and an amazing 2024! In this newsletter you can read about Malar stripes, which are those black stripes some animals have under their eyes. And of course, as every year, we have made a year overview! Always difficult to choose, as all jobs we do are worth mentioning 😊 Enjoy the holidays!

Kind regards, the Wildlife Vets Namibia team.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A WONDERFUL 2024!

Dear all,

Another year bites the dust (do you have the Queen song in your mind now 😊)! We don't know if it's just us, but for some reason this year has flown by. It has been a good year, with lots of interesting work all over the country. It's great to see that many guests are visiting Namibia again and that large parts of the country are greening up. How lucky we all are to be in this beautiful part of the world!

We would like to thank you once again very much for your support and trust in our services, and we look very much forward to be of your assistance again in the new year. We hope you enjoy the holidays with your loved ones and that you may have a great rainy season. Have a wonderful Christmas, and a fantastic 2024!

Best regards,

Ulf and Mariska



MALAR STRIPES

When you look at a cheetah's face, you will notice the black stripes under their eyes. These stripes are often called tear marks, but officially they are called 'malar stripes'. How the cheetah got these stripes, is explained in an old Zulu tale;

A hunter went out to get food for his family. As it was hot and he was a lazy man, he sat under a tree. He then saw a cheetah hunt down an impala, and was impressed by these hunting skills! The cheetah dragged the impala to a spot where three cubs appeared, and all began to eat. This brought the hunter to an idea... He would steal the cubs and raise them, so they could hunt for him. When the mother went for a drink and left the cubs, he stole all three and took them to the village. When the mother cheetah returned, she was extremely saddened, and cried the whole night and the next day. Her tears made long dark stains under her eyes. An old villager heard her, and asked what happened. The cheetah mother explained what happened, and the old villager realized it was the lazy hunter who took her cubs. The elders of the village were informed, and the lazy hunter was confronted. He was expelled from the village for stealing, and dishonouring the tribe's tradition of only using their own skills to hunt. The cubs were returned to the cheetah mother, but the stains under her eyes remained. Since then, the cheetah's tear marks are a reminder to hunters to always be ethical and honest in their ways of hunting.



Cheetah with the characteristic tear marks, which are called malar stripes © M. Bijsterbosch



Adult Lanner Falcon in flight, photo taken in Kgalagadi TFCA © Lars Petersson - www.larsfoto.se

Nice story right?! But of course, there is a more scientific explanation for these stripes! Not just cheetahs, but also several falcon and kestrel species have the malar stripes under their eyes. The stripes are actually a very handy adaptation for animals that hunt during the day. The dark stripes absorb more sunlight, which reduces the amount of sun glare entering the eyes, and thus improving their vision during the bright African days. This hypothesis was [successfully tested](#) in Peregrine falcons. The researcher found that Peregrine falcons that live in areas with more sun (higher solar radiation) have wider and darker malar stripes than those in less sunny areas.

Some gazelle species also have dark stripes under their eyes. As cheetahs evolved the stripes to help them hunt better, the gazelles maybe developed the stripes to better see predators? Nature is for sure interesting!



Thompson gazelle in the Ngorongoro crater © M. Bijsterbosch

WHAT A YEAR... 2023!



February Ultrasound examination to check if this royal-faced oryx was pregnant. We have our own portable ultrasound machine that we can bring along on request. With this machine we can for example examine animals for pregnancy, and we are able to estimate how far the pregnancy is. If needed, we can supply a signed certificate to attest the animals' pregnancy status.

January Hello?! Hello?! Hello?!
Checking inside the gaping mouth of a lion male.



March was a busy month, as we immobilized lots of animals on different farms in preparation for the Klawerberg auction in May. Checking the animal's health, vaccinating, inserting microchips, ear tags, horn measurements, photos... The whole shebang! Did you know the next Klawerberg auction is on **16 March 2024**? Make a note!



April A few years ago, this rhino bull had a massive crack in his front horn. Dr Ecksteen trimmed both horns, and as you can see, the front horn regrew nicely, except for a split in the top of the horn. To prevent the small, emerging horn crack at the horn tip from spreading down to the horn base, the front part of the split was removed, and the horn tip was smoothed.

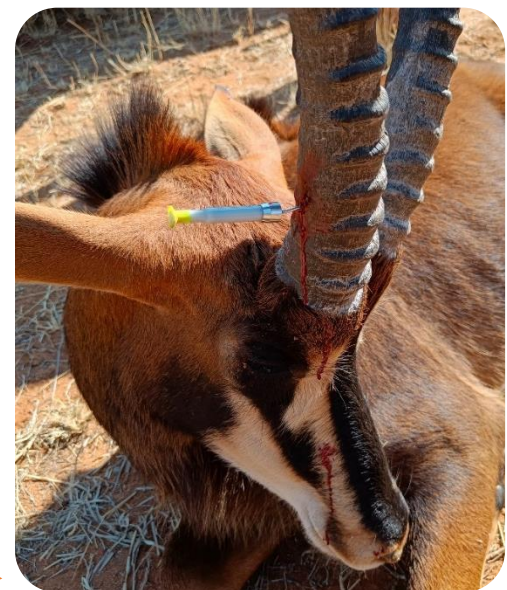
A nice example that clearly shows that rhino horn grows back! Many people do not realize that rhino horn is made out of nearly the same material as your finger nails. This also means that rhino horn can be sustainable harvested – one does not need to kill a rhino to get rhino horn! The problem is that international trade is forbidden by CITES. Unfortunately, due to this, the rhino has become a liability, rather than an asset. As it is risky to keep rhinos, people reduce rhino numbers on their property, which in turn leads to a decrease in habitat. We hope that world leaders and CITES wake up in time, and start a well-regulated legal horn trade to save this iconic species!



May We had a fun week with the vet students from UNAM's Faculty of Health Sciences and Veterinary Medicine at Okonjima. Each student was required to dart immobilize and handle an antelope under the supervision of Dr. Jago and us. We also had to stitch up a leopard male who was in a big fight, a nice chance for the students to be up close and personal with this special cat!



June oops! Instead of a nice big muscle, the dart hit the horn of this sable! Nonetheless, the sable went down quickly. How come? On the inside of the horn is a core of live bone with lots of blood vessels. The dart must have penetrated into the core, and thus the drugs still did the trick 🤔

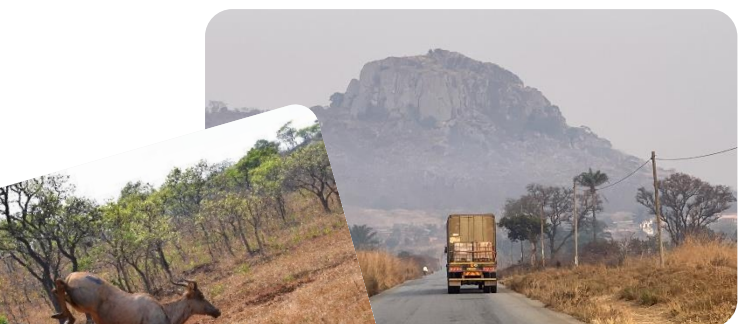


The live bone is covered by a sheath of keratin and other proteins (the actual horn).

July Dr Morné de la Rey, Africa's leading expert on animal reproduction and owner of Rhino Repro visited several farms in Namibia! He checked several rhino cows for pregnancy, and those who were not pregnant, he treated. It was very interesting and we learned a lot from him! You can read more about this procedure [here](#). Dr Morné will visit Namibia again on 18-20/21 January 2024. If you want to make use of his services please inform us ASAP, as the schedule is getting full.

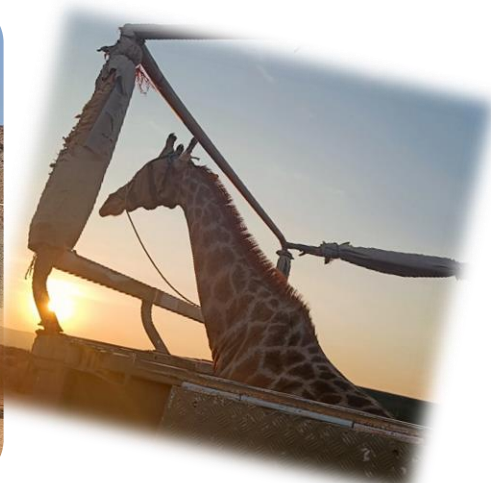


August On a few occasions this year we have assisted the Max Planck Institute with their project called the [ICARUS Initiative](#). Several species were dart immobilized and received a light-weight solar-powered ear tag. These tags 'communicate' with SigFox towers, who send the GPS location to the researchers and the farmer. Lots of information can be gathered from this data. Should you be interested in this project, read our [October newsletter](#) or contact us.



August We translocated tsessebes and giraffes to a reserve in Angola, 2200 km away! Curious to see the trip? Check out our [video](#) of the translocation!





↑ **September** 2023 was the year of the giraffe. Never have we worked with, and moved more giraffes than this year. Giraffes are one of the most difficult species to immobilize and handle, as they are big, strong, and very sensitive for the drugs we use. Once the giraffe is down, the team puts a mask, ear plugs, halter and rope on the head, and the giraffe is immediately reversed. We don't like to use many ropes on the giraffe, as we feel this creates unnecessary stress. We just use a halter rope, and with a big tow rope we tap the hind legs. As this feeling is annoying, the giraffe walks forward, and we can walk it into our field trailer.



← **November** We dart immobilized and moved the smallest antelopes of Namibia... Damara dik-diks! These little critters are very fast and masters in hiding! We dart them late afternoon and in the evening when they come out. That funny little nose is called a 'proboscis'; an elongated nose or snout.

October This big kudu bull got entangled in some fencing wire. Initially it was a struggle to get him, but eventually we were able to dart him. We had quite a few 'patients' entangled in wire this year, a good reminder to all fencing teams to make sure wire is not lying around in the veld!



→ **December** This brown hyena got a GPS/VHF collar on. As we got to her, we noticed her massive belly. Luckily we had our ultrasound machine in the car... She was pregnant!





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