



Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society

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Vice-Chairperson: TBA

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Member: Pieter Mostert (info@blueskynamibia.com)

Member: John Mfunne (jmfune@unam.na)

NEWS AGM 2010

The 2009/2010 AGM was held on 24 March at the Scientific Society and attended by 27 members and interested parties. Representatives of Deloitte & Touche, NEWS auditors who audit the books gratis, as well as of the Botanical Society, EcoAwards, Namibia Bird Club, Namibia Scientific Society, NACSO/WWF and NARREC - NEWS Partner Organisations - were present.

Wolfgang Schenck, the outgoing vice chairperson, conducted the evening and presented the chairpersons report - Dr John Mfunne who was abroad - including the financial statements.

The 2009 year was marred by unforeseen problems which hampered NEWS activities such as the resignation of the Director - Helge Denker - and the termination of the Office Coordinator. Although NEWS made only a slight profit for the financial year it was not necessary to delve into the reserves which now can be used to finance research projects and/or other worthy environmental causes. Wolfgang Schenck and Dr Ndafuda Shiponeni both resigned from the committee and Dr John Mfunne stays on as committee member although resigned as chairperson.

The new committee members for 2010/2011 are Tessa Mostert (co-opted during late 2009) who will oversee the treasury; Joerg Melzheimer (co-opted during 2009) as previous regional representative and Peter Cunningham (committee member between 2001 and 2007). The first committee meeting is scheduled for 20 April where the various portfolios will be allocated and be relayed to NEWS members shortly thereafter.

The following environmental newsletters of interest have recently been distributed and can be viewed at the following websites:

- NAMPOWER/NNF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP - NEWSLETTER NO 3 FEBRUARY 2010
WWW.NNF.ORG.NA/NAMPPOWERPROJECT.HTM
- BROWN HYENA PROJECT NEWSLETTER - Issue 29, March 2010
WWW.STRANDWOLF.ORG.ZA
- RAPTORS NAMIBIA JAN TO MAR 2010 No 1
WWW.NNF.ORG.NA/RAPTORS/INDEX.HTM
- THE ANNUAL MOLE - MAR 09 TO FEB 2010
WWW.NADEET.ORG

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People, Plants & Perfume by Karen Nott

On 10 March, Karen Nott of IRDNC (Integrated Rural Development for Nature Conservation) presented "People, Plants & Perfume" at the 1st NEWS public talk for 2010. The people part refers to the legendary Himba of the North West Kunene Region; the plants to the *Commiphora wildii* or Oak-leaved Commiphora (locally known as *Omumbiri*) trees which secrete an aromatic resin collected for the perfume industry.

IRDNC is involved with 40 CBO's (Community Based Organisations) which include conservancies and community forests in the Kunene and Caprivi regions. The main focus being the sustainable utilization of game or forest products and the diversification of livelihood strategies, but not changing the communities livelihoods.

Commiphora wildii is endemic to the North Western part of Namibia with the majority of the trees falling virtually entirely within the communal conservancies, most of which are Himba. *Commiphora* tree densities vary between 25 to 77 plants per ha with an estimated >3 million trees estimated in the Marienfluss area alone. The resin collected is a natural process for *Commiphora* and probably caused by drought stress according to Karen. Up to 85g of resin per tree can be collected with the bigger older trees exuding more than the smaller individuals. The Himba - mainly women - can harvest up to 2kg per day at N\$50/kg with each harvester earning N\$25/kg collected. N\$20 goes to the equipment used - e.g. scale, bags and drums, etc while N\$5 goes to the conservancy for administrative purposes. Currently 5 tons are harvested each year in this way with this expected to increase to >20 tons. The resin is then sold to perfume companies mainly located in France. According to Karen a still is planned for Opuwu to extract the essential oils locally thus creating more jobs in the immediate area and exporting the oils.

The presenter: Karen has always worked in conservation with a personal interest in plants. She has worked in Gobabeb, Etosha National Park, Polytechnic of Namibia and been with IRDNC for the last 10 years mainly working with the Himba communities.

Public talks are held once a month at the Scientific Society in Robert Mugabe Avenue opposite the National Theatre. Presentations are advertised to NEWS members as well as in the local press and free of charge.



Commiphora wildii in typical terrain in NW Namibia (top); Fruit and mainly leafless branches (middle); *C. wildii* showing browse damage by donkeys (bottom) (© P. Cunningham)

Office Coordinator

After various trials and tribulations NEWS has secured a temporary Office Coordinator in Mrs Hilde-Marie Botha from 12 April onwards. Hilde-Marie is recently retired from the Ministry of Education and although she still has some contractual consultancy obligations (hence the temporary position) we welcome her to NEWS.

Hilde-Marie brings a wealth of experience and should alleviate much of the administrative backlog as experienced during 2009.

Hilde-Marie's NEWS contact details will be forwarded to members shortly.



Research Funding

NEWS aims to support research and or any other needy conservation projects during 2010 and individuals and organizations are encouraged to apply for such financial support. Funding varies according to the project presented and will be evaluated on merit.

In the past NEWS supported research activities such as the African Skimmer and Black Mongoose; Recycling via the Recycling Namibia Forum as well as co-sponsorship of various environmental education posters.

Part of the funding obligations include a contribution to the biannual NEWS magazine Roan News as well as a public presentation informing members of the research activities and outcomes. Interested persons/organizations can contact NEWS for details which include a short project proposal for evaluation by the committee.

Internet threats

Conservationists say the internet has emerged as one of the biggest threats to endangered species.

The following is an extract from the BBC website indicating the modern treat of internet use:

Campaigners say it is easier than ever before to buy and sell anything from live baby lions to polar bear pelts on online auction sites and chat rooms. The findings were presented at the 175-nation Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites), which is meeting in Doha, Qatar.

Web effect

"The internet is becoming the dominant factor overall in the global trade in protected species," said Paul Todd of the International Fund for Animal Welfare. He said thousands of endangered species are regularly traded on the internet, as buyers and sellers take advantage of the anonymity - and vast global market - the world wide web can offer. Those trying to police illegal sales say the size of problem is almost impossible to estimate. They say the US is the biggest market, but that Europe, China, Russia and Australia also play a large part.

On Sunday, delegates voted to ban all international trade in a rare type of Iranian salamander, the Kaiser's Spotted Newt, which the World Wildlife Fund says has been devastated by the internet trade. However, more high-profile attempts to ban trade in polar bears, blue fin tuna and rare corals have all failed, leaving environmental activists dismayed, the BBC's Stephanie Hancock reports from Doha. A proposal from the US and Sweden to regulate the trade in red and pink coral - which is crafted into expensive jewellery and sold extensively on the web - was defeated. Delegates voted the idea down mostly over concerns the increased regulations might impact poor fishing communities.

Roll of Honour

We gratefully acknowledge the support of our corporate members, which allows us to pursue our mission to conserve the natural environment of Namibia and to promote appropriate protection, wise and sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development.

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