

THE GOLDEN MOLE

NaDEET's Endemic Newsletter



August 2007

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WATER IS LIFE!

This important phrase was the theme of the most recent *Bush Telegraph* mini-magazine. NaDEET was asked to produce an issue of the *Bush Telegraph* on the topic of water by the Wetlands Working Group of Namibia to celebrate this year's World Wetland Day (2 February) and World Water Day (22 March).

The *Bush Telegraph* explored the topic of water in a Namibian context. It focused on the ideas presented in this small abstract:

We are all dependent on water. A long time ago, humans only lived in places where we could easily get water. Today that has changed. With technology, we have increased our ability to access the water that exists. Unfortunately, we cannot increase the total amount of water available on Earth. We need to protect our water by saving it and keeping it clean for us and all other living things.

This issue of the *Bush Telegraph* was distributed to NaDEET's regular subscription list of approximately 7 500 learners and educators. In addition the Wetland Working Group distributed one copy to each school in the country together with a new book entitled, Caring for our

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The *Golden Mole* is produced by

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A Bustle of Activity at NaDEET Centre

Twelve Namibian school and youth groups have visited NaDEET Centre since March this year. All the groups, except for three, were from our regular schools including St. George's College, Deutsche Höhere Private School, Daweb Junior Secondary School, Dr. Frans Indongo Primary School, Cambridge Primary School and the Windhoek After-School Centre.



Patience Mamili explaining the Enviro Picture Game to the Windhoek After-School Centre children in August.

Photo: Viktoria Keding

We had three new school and youth groups that participated in the NaDEET Centre programme. The first was a youth group from Karasburg in the far South of Namibia– the Karasburg Clean-up Club. The Clean-up Club is an initiative from a Peace Corps volunteer to encourage action for a clean environment amongst high school learners in Karasburg.

The second new group was also organized by a Peace Corps volunteer working in a school in Bethanie (240 km South of NaDEET). She brought 40 learners from her grade nine classes. The learners had such a wonderful time that they have inspired the grade 10 life science teacher to also arrange a trip to NaDEET for his grade. They will be coming to NaDEET in September.

Our last new visitors to NaDEET are from a small farm school North-east of the Naukluft Mountains, Witkrans Primary School. The school principal, teacher and secretary together with all thirty of the school's learners came to NaDEET in July.



DHPS grade six learners preparing muffins for the solar oven.

Photo: Gesche Roxin

We also hosted a church youth group from Darmstadt, Germany, in August. The group came to Namibia for approximately three weeks primarily to spend two weeks volunteering on a farm near Windhoek and at a primary school. The youth then spent five days at NaDEET. Their programme included many of our regular activities. The dune walk was extended to a full day walk through the desert, and specifi-

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NaDEET Contributes to the 4th World Environmental Education Congress



The 4th World Environmental Education Congress (WEEC) was held in Durban, South Africa, in July this year. It was organised in part by the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) of which NaDEET is an active member. The 4th WEEC incorporated EEASA's annual conference which is normally held on a rotating basis in one of the southern African countries. I saw this as an important opportunity for NaDEET to network amongst environmental education (EE) practitioners from the region and from around the world. In addition, I wanted an opportunity to share the lessons we have learned in the design, construction and implementa-

tion of NaDEET Centre over the past four years.

The Congress aimed to engage the participants in the idea of change with the theme 'Learning in a Changing World'. All of us are constantly challenged to learn and live in a world that is in flux and whose direction is unknown. Over 700 presentation abstracts were submitted of which 400 were selected to share their thoughts and work at the Congress on this theme.



Viktoria Keding at WEEC in Durban
Photo: Andreas Keding

On behalf of NaDEET, I gave a presentation entitled "Sustainable Living and Learning at NaDEET Centre-Namib Desert, Namibia". My presentation reviewed our original design objectives and reflected on if and how we have managed to achieve them. In 2003 I gave a presentation at the EEASA conference held in Windhoek, Namibia, that addressed what we wanted to do at NaDEET and very importantly— why. This presentation at WEEC was a wonderful opportunity for me to document NaDEET's successes and its weaknesses since the 2003 conference. It also gave me an opportunity to share these ideas with other environmental education practitioners who have been or may be trying to initiate similar ideas. Below is an abstract from my presentation. In addition both the WEEC 2007 and the EEASA 2003 papers will soon be available on our website www.nadeet.org.

The Congress incorporated three full days of presentations as well as many opportunities to network and meet colleagues, especially at a party in a local aquarium and gala dinner to celebrate EEASA's 25th birthday. Over 1000 delegates from more than 100 countries worldwide took part in this Congress. The next WEEC will take place in 2009 in Montreal and the next EEASA conference will be in Swaziland in 2008.

Viktoria Keding

Sustainable Living and Learning at NaDEET Centre-Namib Desert, Namibia Abstract from WEEC paper presentation by Viktoria Keding

NaDEET Centre improvements and future goals

Throughout the past four years NaDEET Centre has continuously grown and improved itself, however, the original rationale and objectives have proven effective and appropriate. There are a few areas that NaDEET Centre would like to address in order to further its environmental learning opportunities. NaDEET Centre aims to actively include climate change education into the classroom (micro-level content). This new environmental 'buzz word' is already actively addressed through the environmentally friendly facilities at NaDEET Centre (macro-level content). Almost no fossil fuels are used before, during or after the NaDEET Centre programme except for our vehicle. However as Namibia continues to develop, its contribution to global warming and climate change also increases, which is often overlooked in light of temporary decreased poverty. Secondly, NaDEET Centre currently does not actively recycle its wastewater as grey water from the kitchen and showers goes into the sand. This water does benefit the local vegetation however it is being underutilised as an effective learning opportunity. After thorough research of different options, NaDEET Centre plans to build a small-scale solar distillation facility to recycle primarily wastewater from the kitchen. On average this is about 400 litres per group or 10 000 litres per annum. This water will be tested for its purity however current plans are to use it for a small-scale herb and vegetable garden. Lastly to improve upon NaDEET Centre's impact in the learners' homes and

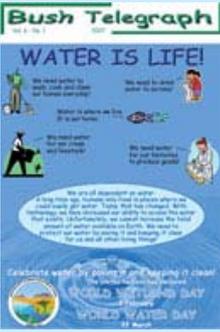
communities the design of the At-School-Programme needs to be re-evaluated. As funding remains difficult to secure, a more cost-efficient yet effective programme must be designed. This is currently in the beginning stages.

Conclusion

After four years and approximately 2000 learners, NaDEET Centre has proven to be an appropriate and effective environmental education centre. As a product of a programme evaluation conducted in 2002 of the AfriCat EE Centre, NaDEET has capitalised on the lessons-learned and first-hand experiences. The response of participants to the sustainable living activities and Centre facilities has been tremendously positive. Learners continuously remark in their evaluations that their favourite activity is solar cooking and that they found the water monitoring valuable. At a time when funding for non-profit work, especially environmental education, is increasingly scarce, it is vital that all environmental education centres monitor themselves and look to maximise the learning opportunities they provide participants. NaDEET Centre is therefore also a model for how other environmental education centres in Namibia could be improved to maximise their impact. Most importantly EE Centre facilities and 'free time' learning must support the 'planned' learning programme, for the centre to achieve its main educational objectives. NaDEET believes that this design philosophy will improve attitudes and promote change in participants' daily lives.

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Water. The *Bush Telegraph* complements the book and therefore, it is hoped that this collaboration will increase awareness of the *Bush Telegraph* and its readership. The WATER IS LIFE issue can be downloaded in a PDF file from our website: www.nadeet.org/educational material. If you would like to receive a hard-copy or join our mailing list, please send us an email with your postal details to nadeet@iway.na.



We are still continuing to look for funding for a *Bush Telegraph* issue on Wilderness Areas in Namibia. This topic was developed in a short workshop at the Game Rangers Association AGM in 2006.

The Bush Telegraph is a mini-magazine for Namibian youth. It aims to increase knowledge of and improve attitudes towards our environment through reading.

Lodges on NamibRand Help NaDEET to Reach Local Schoolchildren

One of NaDEET's primary goals from our inception has been to provide an environmental education opportunity for schools in the South of Namibia. Unfortunately residents of the South continue to be marginalized due to variety of reasons including the lengthy physical distances between communities. Information, development and opportunity take time to reach local citizens. The local lodges on NamibRand Nature Reserve have shown commitment to help NaDEET accomplish this goal.

Several schools have been given the opportunity to participate in the NaDEET Centre programme, due to financial assistance from Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge's 'Ostrich Egg Project'. The lodge is one of NaDEET's neighbours on NamibRand Nature Reserve, and has been raising funds from their guests through the sale of ostrich eggs. This project has benefited a local school in Maltahöhe, Daweb JSS, who has made NaDEET an annual outing for its life science classes for the past three years. A primary school from Reitoog, a small community to the North of NaDEET has brought its grade seven class for the past two years, also thanks to the Ostrich Egg Project. In addition to paying for the transport, programme, and accommodation costs of local schools to visit NaDEET Centre, Sossusvlei Mountain Lodge's project also provides funding for a soup kitchen and school fees for needy children in Maltahöhe.

Wolwedans Foundation, a newly established fund by Wolwedans another of NaDEET's neighbouring lodges, has recently assisted Cambridge Primary School. Having visited NaDEET on a regular basis since 2004, Cambridge was faced with unexpected transport problems this year. Wolwedans paid for the school's transport costs making it possible for this year's grade 7 class to learn about sustainable living in the Namib.

On behalf of all of the learners who have benefited from this generosity on NamibRand Nature Reserve, thank you!

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cally tailored for this group. Each day included time for the German youth to reflect on their Namibian experiences in the dunes. This is the second year that we have had such a youth group from Germany participate in the NaDEET Centre programme. We hope to make it an annual event.

Lastly we have hosted one adult group during the first weekend in May this year from the Namibian Environment and Wildlife Society (NEWS) and the Bird Club. Previously hosted by Tok Tokkie Trails, this annual event will now take place at NaDEET Centre together with Tok Tokkie's owners Marc and Elinor Dürr. The very successful four day weekend was filled with several walks, solar cooking, a water count and many relaxing evenings with friends and colleagues. It was a wonderful opportunity for many to learn about the unique wildlife in the Namib Desert and to experience first hand NaDEET's approach to sustainable living. NEWS has been very supportive of NaDEET's activities for several years including sponsoring Sherman traps (to catch and release live small mammals such as the hairy-footed dune gerbil) and a new telescope after our fire. NaDEET and NEWS have again collaborated in the past few months. This time to host an essay contest for grades 6-9 in the Hardap and Karas Region on the issue of apathy towards the environment. Upon conclusion of this contest it will be reported on in more detail in the next newsletter.

We still have five more school groups booked for this year. With the end of the Namibian school year in December, we do not anticipate more school groups to come as we are booked until mid-October. As in 2006, we hope to host another Desert Guiding course in November if there is enough interest from the Namibian guiding community.

Viktoria Keding

THE MOLE FILE

Fact No. 13: "A Lifetime in the Dunes"

The Namib Golden Mole spends its entire life in the sands of the Namib Desert. Its scientific name is *Eremitalpa granti namibensis*. The name *Eremitalpa* means 'sand mole'.



Share Net

NADEET thanks our 1 March–31 July 2007 donors:

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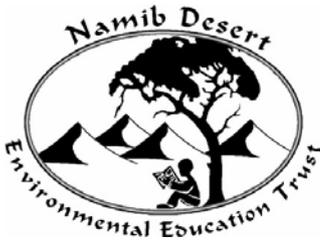
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