

## 11.1.2021 Epupa Falls

We enjoy watching the Kunene river either from the elevated wooden veranda or from our camp. There is always something to see, for example this Goliath Heron. This Goliath Heron is about 1.5m tall and therefore the tallest Heron in the world. The Heron's preferred hunting method for prey is to pose stock-still for a long period of time before striking. Other hunting methods are stirring up mud with their feet or flapping their wings to startle prey. Their prey – mainly fish – is speared with their beak.



The swimming and laundry pool next to the falls is also busy again. Girls come to fetch water balancing large drums on their heads. They do not leave without taking a dip in the river, too. We even see Himba women who wash themselves, their babies and their laundry. Normally Himba do not take a bath, but that is obviously because they usually live under most extreme conditions in a desert environment with hardly any water. Funnily the water turns ochre when they are having a bath....





Even without a modern mixer tap it is possible to easily mix hot and cold water and it works well. African bush engineering!

We have another visit to the Epupa Falls, who knows when we will be back again.



### 12.1.2021 Epupa Falls

Today we are not traveling far. “Camp Cornie” is only about 35km to the east of Epupa Falls. It was recommended to us and so we decide to spend a night there. We drive along the banks of the Kunene river, the road was only finished about 3 years ago. Prior to that it was a very bad road, with large boulders and heavy side tilt, for the 100km stretch it took 10-12 hours of driving. Today it is possible to be done in a third of the time. It’s a bit like riding a rollercoaster, as the road was just built into the landscape without levelling out anything. Actually, it is no problem, we just have to shift gears all the time which means a strain on our clutch.



Camp Cornie is idyllically located at the banks of the Kunene river. The old trees are nicely integrated into the campsite and spend shade. Cornie and his wife Thea including four dogs, a cat and a pet porcupine have created their own little paradise.





The different engineering solutions for outdoor-bathrooms and their fixtures are always interesting to study. Easy, pragmatic and workable solutions are needed out here in the bush.

Cornie, who was born in Zambia, has seen and has done everything already. Now he and his wife Thea are running their camp and take care of the Himba who live in their neighborhood, for example he is providing medicine to them.

It is so interesting to chat with them that we totally forget the time. He also solves the mystery about the dead crocodile which was swept onto the rock at the Epupa Falls camp. As crocodiles take their share of the local goat population, the Angolans poison them with Cyanide to protect their herd.

### 13.1.2021 Ruacana

Just as we want to leave in the morning, we are lucky to get to see their pet porcupine who shows up briefly before going to bed. The Himba brought the porcupine as a baby and Thea has fostered it, otherwise it would not have survived. This is why the porcupine is very attached to her, is constantly at her side and follows her around everywhere, so cute to watch.



We are driving eastbound along the Kunene river aka the Angolan border until we reach Ruacana. While driving we notice many palm trees without their heads. Cornie had explained to us that also Himba make alcoholic palm wine from the sap of the palm tree. They tap the highest section of a palm tree and collect the sap coming out. The sweet liquid will ferment and within two hours already produce up to 4% alcohol. There are other methods possible where the palm tree survives during the process and can also be tapped repeatedly numerous times. He has learned this method in Angola and tries to introduce this to the Himba, but not very successfully, yet.



Many villages line the road and when a car approaches the Himba come to the road to beg or sell something. Since the road has been completed, many Himba have moved

from the hinterland to the road. As there is much more traffic than before, they can sell more of their merchandise and also have more opportunities of transport.

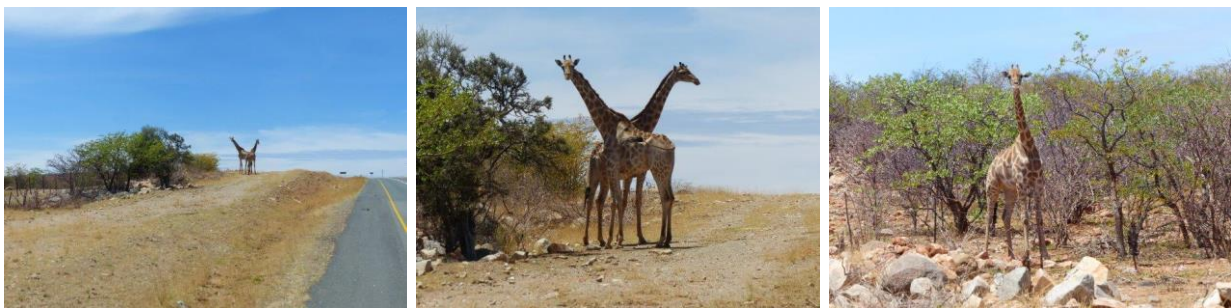


Ruacana once had a waterfall with a drop of about 125m, but since two power stations have been built there (combined the largest hydroelectric power station of Namibia) the once mighty waterfall was diminished to a little creek. A few sun-bleached road signs still point to the falls, but a visit is actually not worth it anymore. From Ruacana we still drive to Omakanga, where we have a rest for the night.



### 14.1.2021 Oppi-Koppi Rest Camp, Kamanjab

It's about 200 km from Omakanga to Kamanjab, where a mechanic lives who has knowledge about Unimogs. On the way south we pass the western fence of the Etosha National Park and indeed spot a few springbok, zebras and giraffes who have escaped from the park. It's not too difficult to escape, as the fence is not in the best condition. In the old days the Etosha fence was managed by fence patrol teams each of them responsible for a stretch of 40 km. After independence, these teams fell victim to cost cutting reasons, too.



Soon after we reach the veterinary fence and are asked if we carry any fresh meat. Then all our tires are disinfected to prevent any Foot and Mouth Disease Virus to be carried to the south. Afterwards, our tires look almost like a piece of art.



We stay again at the Oppi-Koppi Rest Camp where Werner changes the diesel filter from our tank no. 2. Somehow, when driving this tank the engine seems to not get enough diesel. Maybe it's due to a blocked filter, however it does not look very dirty.

### 15.1.2021 Oppi-Koppi Rest Camp, Kamanjab

This morning we visit Lars Falkenberg in his Falkenberg Garage, we want him to have a look at our right front wheel, which wears down unusually hard only on the outer side. He and his team readjust the wheel alignment. As his workers are under the truck, they see that two bolts which hold our cabin are missing. One is broken and the other one completely gone. We would have had a major problem if on the African badly corrugated roads the other two remaining bolts would have broken as well. How lucky we are that they spotted this problem.







We are just busy fixing our Unimog at Lars place when unexpectedly Conny and Peter roll onto the yard as well. It's a small world. Their Ubelix needs some attention, too. A steel bar on the front bumper holding the headlights is broken and needs to be welded on.



This badly damaged truck is also on Lars' yard. Will he be able to get this truck roadworthy again...?

### 16.1.2021 Oppi-Koppi Rest Camp, Kamanjab

There was a little surprise for Dewi in the bathroom today. The bathroom is not very well



lit up and as she wants to wash her hands she sees something dark in the sink. The scorpion laid rolled up in the sink's drain and was not immediately visible. She got a little fright, when she realized what it was. Not all scorpions are deadly, but the black ones are poisonous. This is certainly a huge one, about 10 - 12 cm long.

The nests of the weaver birds are truly an amazing piece of architecture. It is hard to believe how a bird can weave such a sturdy nest with its beak. Often, the nest is attached to a branch only by a blade of grass.



We learn about a new species of tree, the African Star Chestnut (*Sterculia Africana*) and its interesting nut-fruit, which we have not seen before.



### 17.1.2021 Grootberg Pass

Our Unimog has realigned front wheels, a tightened belt and replaced bolts, so we are ready to hit the road again. We want to drive to Torra Bay at the Skeleton Coast, therefore have to first drive westbound towards Palmwag and then cross the Grootberg Pass. Now we are in Damaraland, in the past the main settlement area of the Damara tribe. The name Damaraland is still commonly used, but officially it's now called Kunene Region. We would have loved to visit Palmwag as we haven't been there for a long time, but we would need to cross the veterinary fence once again. As we just stocked up on game meat and steaks in Kamanjab, we better give it a miss.





It's a fantastic view from the top of the Grootberg Pass, there is also a little picknick shelter. Although it is a little windy, we decide spontaneously to stop here for the night. We haven't stopped here for long, when a rental car with a roof tent stops beside us and we are greeted very friendly: it's Piro and Harry, whom we herewith meet for the fourth time - unplanned! Can this still be only by chance anymore...?



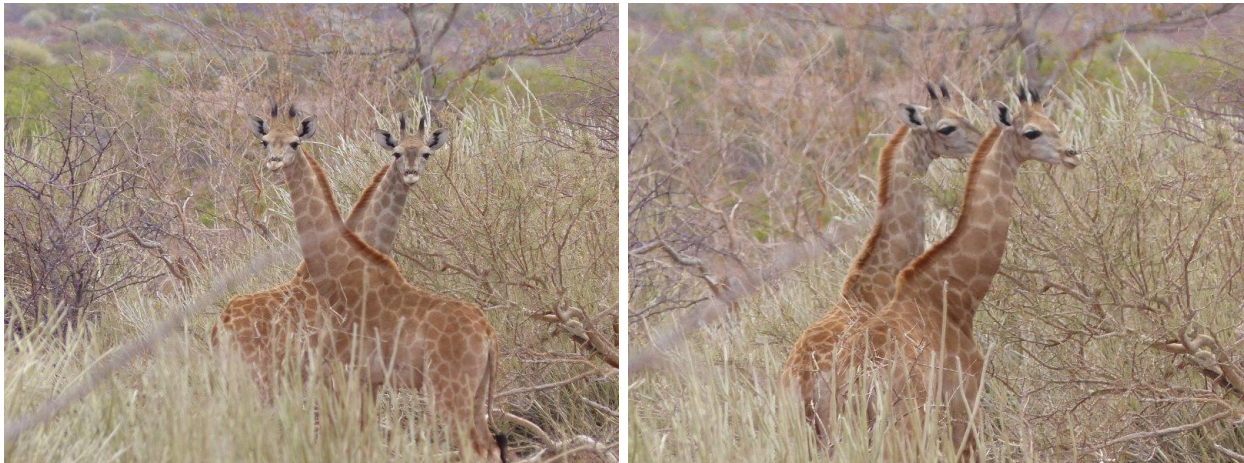
In the evening we are spoiled by a great sun set.



During the night we are woken up by some noise next to our car. We check it out with torch light and see a big Hyena standing behind our Unimog, but she disappears quickly. She was probably hoping for our leftovers.

### 18.1.2021 Richtung Skeleton Coast

In the morning we see her large footmarks, going right around our truck. It is astonishing how many animals are active during night hours – but we would not have expected a Hyena on the top of the pass. The picknick shelter is ideal for breakfast, afterwards we drive further westwards. A few wild giraffes cross our path, mama-giraffe has twins.



The roads are very dry and if another car overtakes us, they always leave a huge dust cloud behind. Luckily it doesn't happen very often as there is very little traffic. On the tiny cemeteries we see more often granite headstones, even in the very country side. Surely, granite headstones are not cheap, how can people afford them?



We startle one more giraffe, before we turn towards Torra Bay. Soon we come across the first Welwitschia Mirabilis. This plant is highly adapted to desert conditions and can survive only on the humidity provided by the morning fog; she is also featured on the state coat of arms of Namibia.

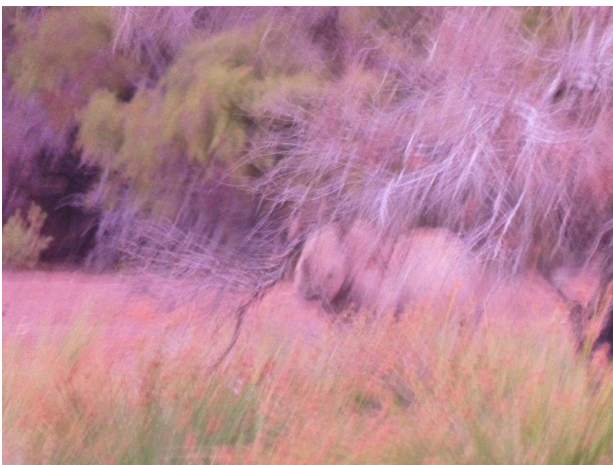


Driving towards the coast, we slowly drop in altitude. Our destination for today is an unofficial campsite at a waterhole not far from the entrance gate of the Skeleton Coast National Park.



This is a nice camping spot, inbetween two waterholes and hidden from the road behind a hill. We see some animal tracks and markings, but they do look a little bit older.

At the small cliff we find a wind protected spot for our campfire where we set up our outdoor kitchen.



At dawn, Werner starts to sreen the area with his binoculars and just in that second he spots a rhino! We would have never expected a rhino out here in the desert. If we would have looked around a few minutes later, we would have missed it or it would have been to dark to spot it. Very exciting!

### 19.1.2021 Towards Skeleton Coast

The birds make an incredible noise in the morning and wake us up. A large flock of Sandgrouse has landed at the waterhole for a drink.



We like this spot and decide to stay another night. There is a lot to see and explore around here.



In the evening we climb up the little hill, from the elevated position we have a much better view of the waterholes. Of course we hope that the rhino would come back again. Unfortunately, our wish is not granted, but a little mouse shows mercy, our only wildlife sighting for this evening.

