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Celtic Blessings

O King of the sun's
brightness
who alone has
knowledge of our
purpose
be with us everyday,
be with us every night,
be with us every night
and day,
with us every day and
night

Grant O God thy
Protection,
And in protection,
strength,
And in strength,
understanding,
and in understanding,
perception of justice,
And in perception of
justice, the love of it,
And in the love of it, the
love of all Life,
And in all life, to love
God
God, and all goodness.

Dear members of the Botanical Society and all other plant lovers,

A last greeting for the year 2025, showcasing the beautiful living **Namibian Indigenous Christmas Tree**, submitted last year by **Jessica Steyn** of **NamibRand Nature Reserve**,

We sincerely thank each one of you for your commitment to the Society and the support you have given us during the year, we are motivated to carry on, doing what we can to showcase our precious flora, to increase awareness of plant poaching and to continue helping make our National Botanic Garden a **MUST SEE** place of interest.

We wish you Peace and Joy in this Festive Season, safe travels there and back and a Prosperous New Year. May the rains be plenty!

With kind regards, **Ellen Gudde**, Koos Barkhuizen,
Frances Chase, Barb Curtis, Jaco Fourie, Braam Harris,
Jackson Hamutenya, Luise Hoffmann, Albertina Kampungu,
Sonjia Meier, Mignon Nekuta, Leevi Nanyeni,
Manda Steynberg, Diana Thompson, Sally van der Lingen



- ❖ Don't forget, we are asking for photographs of your live decorated Christmas indigenous tree to use as our Christmas card in 2026
- ❖ Send your photos to: nambotsoc@gmail.com

Ghaub: Botsoc & the Bird Club . . . August 2025

Ellen Gudde

Fifteen nature enthusiasts (Luise Hoffmann, Manda Steynberg, Raghild Redecker, Walter Redecker, Christien Boshoff, Koos Barkhuizen, Barrie Watson, Franz Klein, Mike Houlden, Annelene Sigg, Annette Rathenam, Frauke Luhl, Hille Schwarting, Anna Muller and Ellen Gudde) visited “Ghaub, Private Nature Reserve and Farm” in the Otavi mountains for an extended long weekend. The excursion was made possible by the very kind and generous invitation of Martin Rust, Director of One Namibia. Sincere thanks go to Martin, his parents (owners of Ghaub) and the staff.

The comfortable lodge is far removed from the hustle and bustle of the town; and a place with limited Wi-Fi connection, which can become a challenging adjustment for many a city dweller so dependent on their phones. On route, on the district road off the B1, the visitor may already enjoy spectacular wildlife sightings such as antelope, rhinoceros, and hundreds of warthogs of all sizes. The wildlife at the lodge is accustomed to visitors; roaming freely on the well-kept lawn. The mammal list grows quickly with species such as Smith’s Tree Squirrel, Duiker, Scrub Hare, Warthog, Vervet Monkey and Chacma Baboon. A watering hole allows visitors to watch birds and antelope. Mike followed his passion searching for geckos, lizards and the Kalahari Tree Skink. A very social dinner in the heated dining room (yes, it was cold!) completed an awesome first day.

The program was casual and the group adjusted quickly to the relaxed atmosphere. The following morning a group walked up Lion Hill, past three well-equipped camping sites, stepping over many fresh tracks from the previous night; including those of a snake and a leopard, which apparently visit the area regularly. I trust and hope that campers, particularly those with small children, are made aware of these nightly visits. It is obvious that Namibians are not sissies! It was great fun identifying the tracks in the loose sand, as well as the trees along the path. Koos, with his vast knowledge of plants, awarded bonus points for correct answers, which were eagerly accumulated, and gladly exchanged for a tot of Jaegermeister after dinner. The trees showed early signs of spring, and owing to a good rainy season, were still green and lush. Luise had marked the trees at Ghaub many years ago and they still carry labels, which was fortunate for many of us, particularly, when the *Elaeodendron Crocium* (bushfeld saffron) was positively identified (*Right bottom*). In the garden we found evidence of great drama in the plant world: a *Combretum imberbe* (leadwood tree) had been strangled by a Strangler Fig over many years – the Strangler Fig survived and thrives.



Continued on page 3

Ghaub, Botsoc and the Bird Club cont . . .

Franz and Anna atlassed the two pentads covering the lodge area with their boundaries in the middle of the garden at the pool! Frans recorded 60 birds – which, according to him, was less than he expected.

From “Lion Hill” the view is endless and accordingly beautiful with wildlife: warthogs, rhinoceros which are guarded 24/7, red hartebeest, zebra and kudu. A flypast by an African Hawk-Eagle excited all, particularly the photographers. Many LBJ’s were spotted in the thickets, which included Bleating Warbler and Yellow Apalis. A more energetic group decided to walk along one of the many advertised hikes. They lost their way and later, at dinner, boasted about the 2200 steps they had taken!

A visit to the Ghaub cave, the third largest in the country, was organised for the next day (*Right middle and bottom: inside the cave*). Very brave Annelene and Franz dared to proceed along a treacherous and slippery path far into the cave; Raghild, who wears sandals to all occasions, Christien, Koos and Manda were well advised to be more cautious. Caving at Ghaub is, by all accounts, a dangerous undertaking! Annette joined visiting tourists in a thanksgiving service at the nearby Maria Bronn church and school, which is also well worth a visit, when in the vicinity.

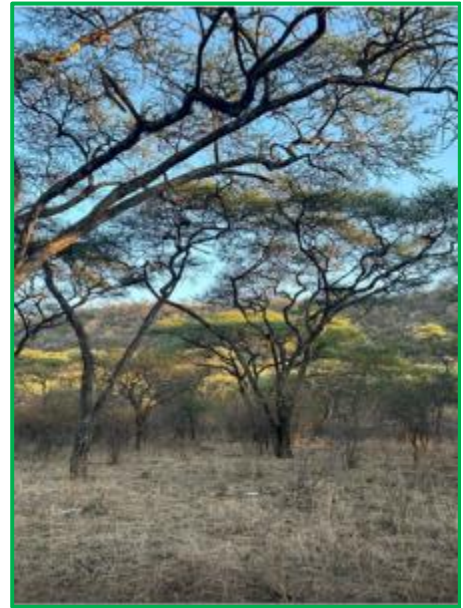
The highlight of the visit, certainly for the birders, was a visit to the neighbouring farmer, Hartmut Freyer, at farm Gauss. After some hearty welcomes and reminiscing of childhood memories, the group spent considerable time at the dam, to watch and photograph Quail Finches and Cinnamon-breasted Bunting. Purple Roller and Swallow-tailed Bee-eater and, most probably the same African Hawk-Eagle as mentioned before, this time with a youngster. Eland, Springbok and Blesbok were added to the mammal list.

On the way back home Koos and Christien’s beautiful hideout at Olienhoff Guesthouse, near Otavi, was visited.

Koos has experimented with germinating indigenous seeds and has planted over 100 indigenous saplings. The Botanical Society waits in anticipation to visit the forest in a few years time!

The weekend offered something of interest to Everybody. Sincere thanks go to all had a part in making the time so enjoyable and interesting.

Photographs: Raghild Redecker



Coming up . . .

2026

| | | | | |
|-----|----------|----|-------|-----------------------------------|
| Feb | Saturday | 14 | 08h00 | Guided Walk in the Botanic Garden |
| | Thursday | 20 | 19h00 | Illustrated Talk at the NBRI TBA |
| Mar | Saturday | 14 | 08h00 | Guided Walk in the Botanic Garden |

Special Membership Categories

| | |
|-------------|-------|
| Welwitschia | . . . |
| Moringa | . . . |
| Lithops | . . . |

In the Bot garden . . .

A rare sighting in the Desert House of the Botanical Garden happened during the November Guided Walk. Most of the visitors had already meandered up to the hospitality area, but a group of bird enthusiasts lingered, were rewarded and spotted this snake dining on a lizard.

Most snakes will leave you alone if you leave them alone. They have their place in the environmental system. Sightings of snakes in the Garden have been rare and you don't need to shy away from visiting this gem in the heart of Windhoek.

dt

The snake is a Stripe-bellied Sandsnake (*Psammophis subtaeniatus*). It is a constrictor, like a python, and therefore a non-venom snake (harmless).

It feeds on lizards and other little rodents. We are happy to have it in the garden, it shows a healthy ecosystem.

Leevi Nanyeni, Curator of the Garden and a registered snake catcher.

Photo: Zandre Vogel



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