

Press release by the **Gondwana Desert Collection**

to: the media at ITB

from: Bush Telegraph (contact details below)

for immediate publication

3 texts (Engl.) – Main text, box: origin, **box: fascination**

23 photos



8 March 2006

Subject: **Wild Horses of the Namib** (near Aus in the south of Namibia)

Text: 570 Words / 3.270 Characters

Box: Fascination

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A Symbol of Unlimited Freedom

The Wild Horses of the Namib attract thousands of tourists each year. And every so often they cause headlines and relief efforts. Like in 1991/92, or again in 1998/99, when the horses were starving as a result of drought and weaker animals perished. As soon as photos of the emaciated animals are published, grannies raid their money-boxes, teenage girls sacrifice their piggybanks for fodder or for catching the horses and taking them to farms. The readiness to rush to the rescue is as overwhelming as some humanitarian aid organisations can only dream of. Why is it that the Wild Horses touch people deep down in their hearts? What is it that gets us so enthusiastic about them?



19 - A rare sight: stallions battling it out. Photo: Klein-Aus Vista

No doubt the mysterious origins of the Wild Horses are part of their allure, but it is not the real issue. Rather, we are fascinated because the horses have gained the freedom to live according to their own rules. They have broken free from their man-given role of stud, show-jumper or hobby-companion. They have rediscovered their natural behaviour and their own social rules. Don't we all dream of liberating ourselves of the constraints of civilisation?

We are also fascinated by the habitat which the horses have chosen: vast desert instead of paddock or stable. Which city-dweller doesn't yearn for a place where he can be alone and enjoy some breathing space? - And we are fascinated because the Wild Horses have conquered an alien world. Like Tom Hanks as a modern Robinson Crusoe in the movie 'Castaway', cast from the protected space of civilisation, they have learnt to defy the harsh conditions of their new surroundings and survive. With the difference, however, that they evidently enjoy their 'island'.



20 - Photo: Klein-Aus Vista

Freedom, space, nature – these are the qualities which man has lost as a result of civilisation and for which he yearns from deep within. It is no coincidence that these elements are often found in advertisements for cars or cigarettes. Freedom, space and nature are also the reason why Germans have been emigrating to Namibia since the age of industrialisation and why holiday-makers from Europe come to visit the country year after year. The Wild Horses have something which not only fascinates us, but for which we actually envy them.

But the envy turns into pity as soon as freedom and nature take their toll - that is, when horses starve or even perish

during a drought. Man's compulsion to intervene may be an echo of his guilty conscience towards the creature which - in his zealous attempts to take control of Earth - he crammed into reserves and zoos. With regard to the Wild Horses there is another factor: they are often seen as domestic animals for which man feels an added obligation to care. But these horses are no longer domestic. They are part of nature, uncontrolled by man, and as such subject to the rules of nature. The death of weak animals at times of drought is the natural cycle taking its course.



This does not mean that the horses should be left to fend for themselves. But the time has come to replace the myth around the horses with a realistic picture. And to get us to think about whether the skinny horse that we pity isn't happier than the handsome steed in its dark stable. Or happier than us in our two-bedroom apartment on the fifth floor.

21 - Taking a sand bath. Photo: Telané Greyling

A similar article on this topic was published in the Gondwana News 2006 (included in your press kit). For text and pictures in print quality see the enclosed CD or 'Info Downloads / Press Releases' at www.gondwana-desert-collection.com.

Captions

- 19 - A rare sight: stallions battling it out. Photo: Klein-Aus Vista
- 20 - Photo: Klein-Aus Vista
- 21 - Taking a sand bath. Photo: Telané Greyling
- 22 - Photo: Telané Greyling
- 23 - Photo: Telané Greyling

Information:

Gondwana Desert Collection
 Marketing Manager Miriam Spatz
 Tel +264 (0)61 230066
 Fax +264 (0)61 251863
 Email info@gondwana-desert-collection.com
 Web www.gondwana-desert-collection.com



Press contact:
 Bush Telegraph CC
 Editor Sven-Eric Kanzler
 Tel +264 (0)61 224822
 Fax +264 (0)61 255148
 Email kanzler@mweb.com.na
 Web www.bush-telegraph-namibia.com