

# FAIRY CIRCLES

– truly a fairy tale



Danielle Bruckert

# Fairy Circles

For Frost

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The book is dedicated to NaDEET, a foundation for education, research, and preservation of the Namib Desert. All proceeds from sale of the hard-copy book will be donated to NaDEET.

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# FAIRY CIRCLES

- truly a fairy tale

*This book belongs to:*

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On the South West coast of Africa there is a magical place called Namibia.

My family and I are travelling there for our vacation.



Namibia is like a land that time has forgotten.

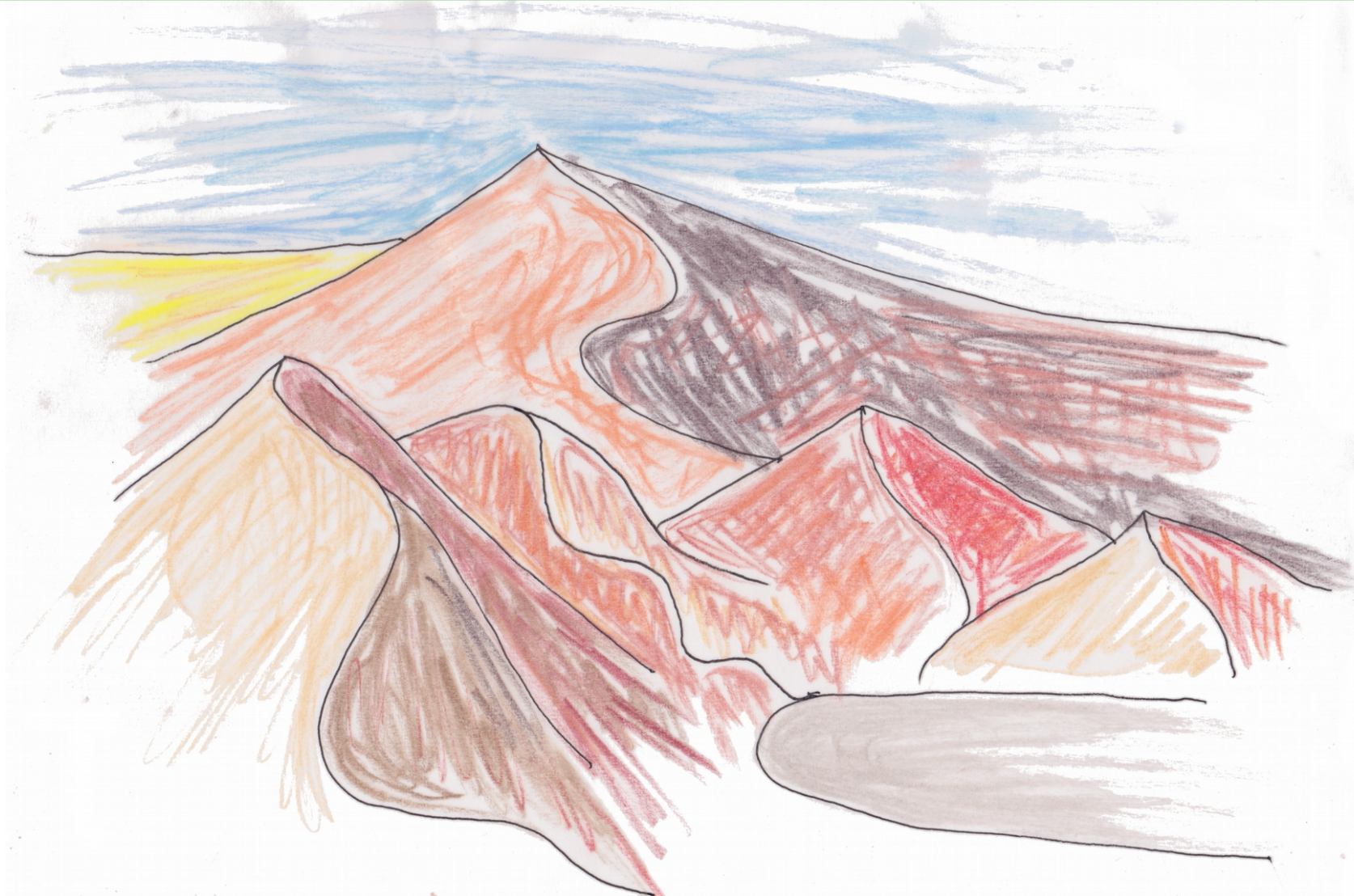
The land has been untouched for so long, many people believe it has turned magical.

For example, the Welwitschia, is like a living fossil -A plant that may have been alive for over a 1000 years! Yet only has two leaves.



. ...That's kind of magical.

Or the wonderful colours of the desert, which change with the changing light of the day.



Some of the highest dunes in the world are there.

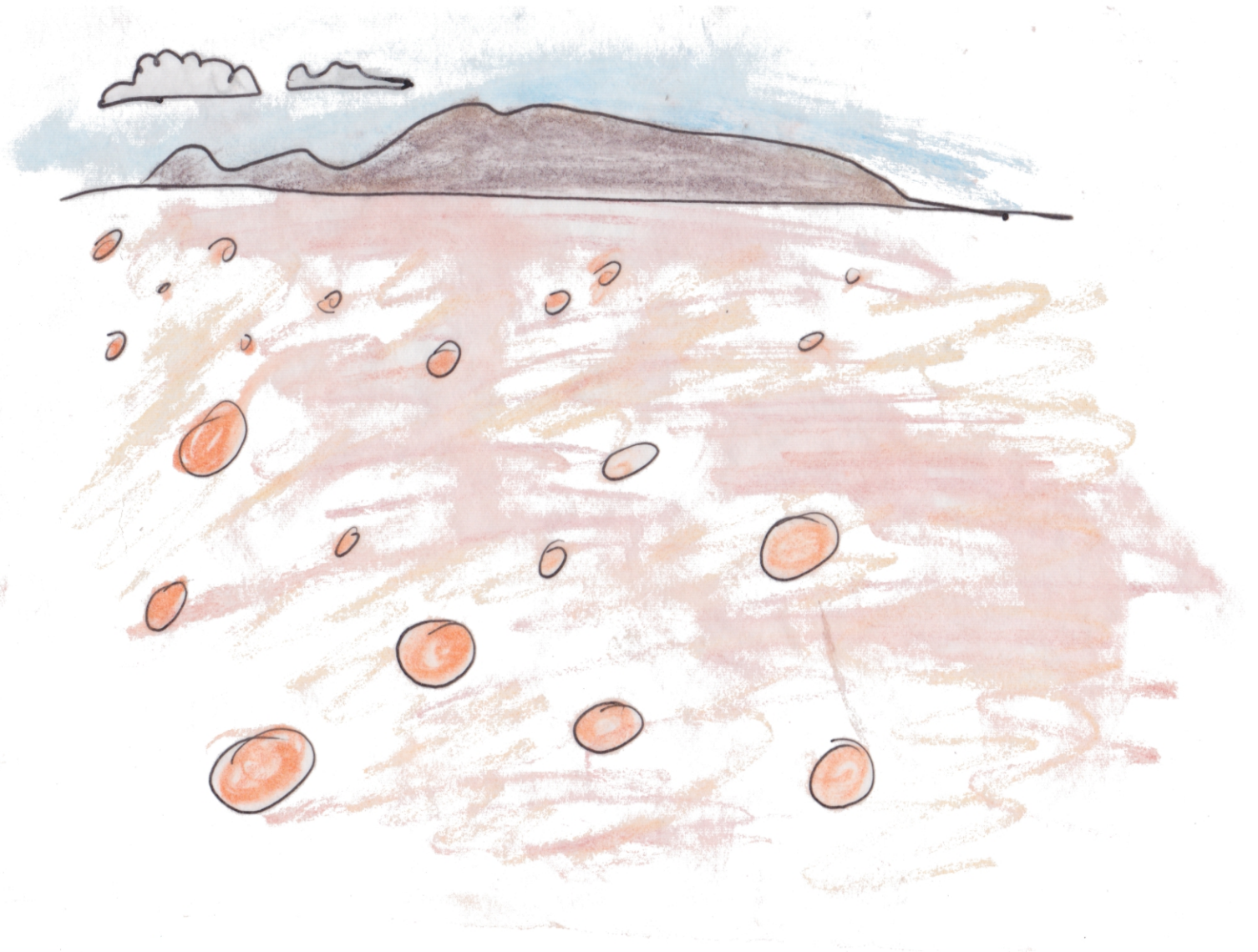
The desert itself is one of the oldest, which is why it is such a deep red in places.

There are the Tsaris mountains, that seem to show the many layers of the earth's crust.



There is a place where the Swakop River carved spectacular moonscapes in the granite rock around 450 million years ago.

And then, there are the **FAIRY CIRCLES**.



They dot the Namib Desert like a spotted handkerchief.



Scientists think these circles may be created by termites,

...or perhaps by fungi.

(a fungi is a little bit like a mushroom, or, that is to say a mushroom is a type of fungi)



But they don't know for sure.

I think they are created by fairies.



After all, why else would they be called "Fairy Circles?"



Fairy Circles only occur in the Namib Desert, in the west of Namibia, on the edge of the escarpment where the desert's rain fall is highest.

Perhaps this is because the fairies choose to only hold their magical fairy conferences in the Namib Desert, since it is such a special magical place.

Or perhaps it is because there are lots of big open spaces with very few people, or even animals, in the Namib Desert.

Do you think they dance in the day or night?

I bet they choose to dance on the plains of the desert in the small hours of the morning.

Or perhaps they dance during the day time when no one is looking.



Wherever and whenever they dance, they leave the perfectly formed fairy circles. Where nothing grows inside, only around the edge.

Fairy Circles come in lots of different sizes. Most are a few metres wide. Some are very big, big enough to hold a small herd of goats or calves; Others are very small, so small you can hardly see them.

Fairy Circles may be less than 1 metre, up to as big as 30 metres wide!



Perhaps the big ones are made by big fairies, and the small ones are made by small fairies.  
Perhaps the big giant ones, like this one, are made by a Giant Queen Mother fairy, who is the biggest fairy of them all.



Perhaps she has many minion fairies with her to help with the dances.

The first ever symposium about Fairy Circles was held in 2015. (A symposium is a big meeting where lots of experts get together).

They held it in the Namib Desert - of course!

I bet they had lots of fun and learnt a lot.



...But.... they all agreed, they are still not sure what causes Fairy Circles.

When we get to see the Namib Desert, I want to ask  
Mum and Dad if I can get up really early,

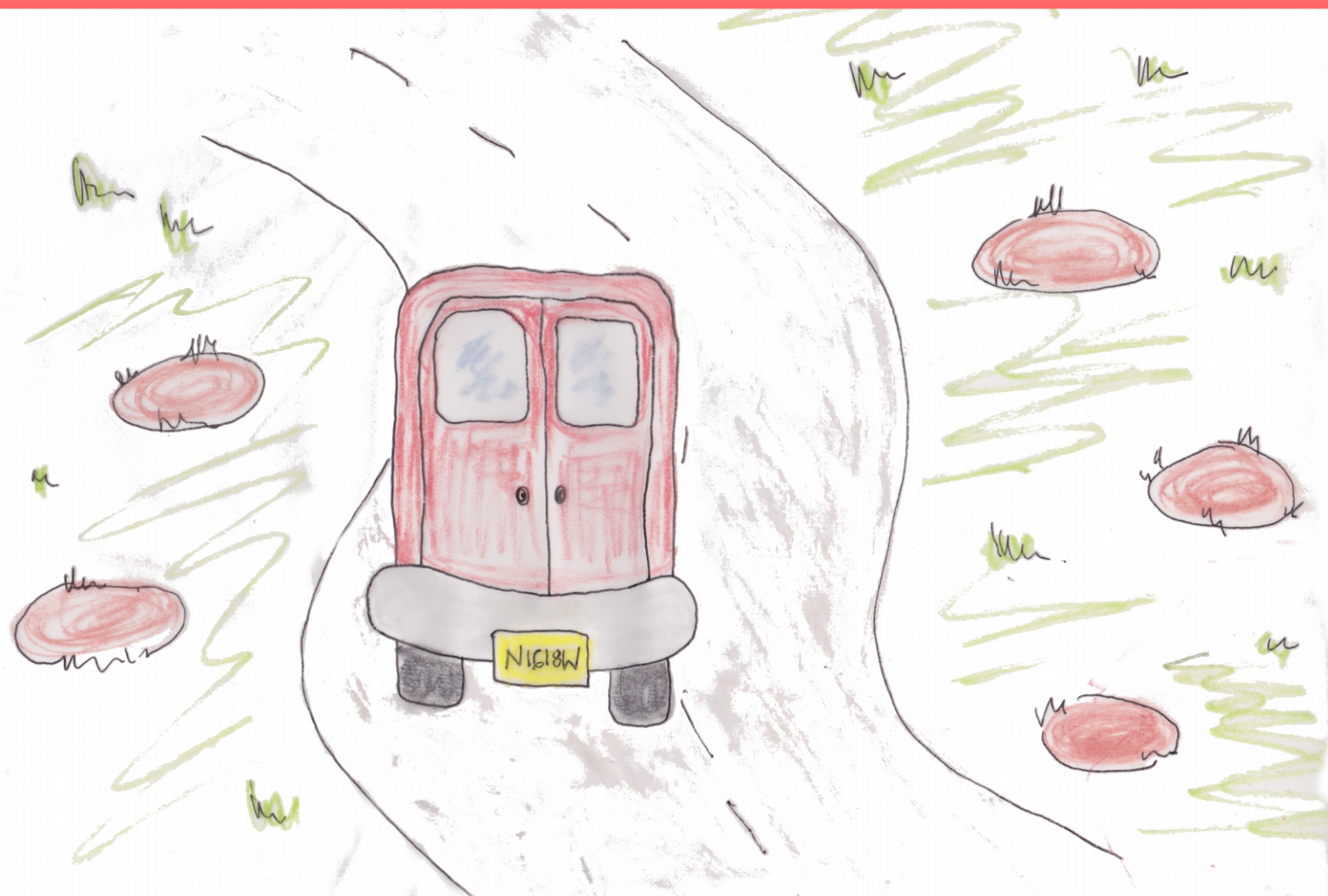


to see if I can catch the fairies dancing.



What do you think causes Fairy Circles?

I still think it is fairies, and I really hope I will see some, so then I can tell you for sure.



With or without the fairies help,  
if we all do our part to help look after the environment,  
the fairy circles will be around for a long time,  
for all of us to enjoy!



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Support NaDEET here:

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More about fairy circles here:

<http://www.fairycircles.com/>

# THE END



### Acknowledgements

Thanks to all those who have made their photos available in Creative Commons.

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### *Creative Commons contributors:*

*Thorsten Becker, Feenkreise, Hans Stieglitz.*

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*Thanks to The Namibian, for permission to feature a quote from their article on Fairy Circles: [www.namibian.com.na](http://www.namibian.com.na), full article can be found here:*

*<http://www.namibian.com.na/index.php?id=134604&page=archive-read>*

*Danielle Bruckert*

# FUN FACTS

# Fairy Circles

Fairy Circles are mysterious in nature and appearance. No one knows what causes Fairy Circles, although there has been a lot of research completed on the topic by scientists. The most common theories are:

- sand termites;
- algae or fungi beneath the surface;
- residual plant toxins (residual poisons remaining after the death of certain plants);
- competing vegetation ecosystems;
- fairies (or perhaps dragons, or gods, but mostly fairies;-).



Fairy Circles occur only in the Namib Desert. They are mainly found on the eastern border where the rain fall is highest.



Albi Bruckner, organiser of the 2015 Fairy Circle Symposium, and NamibRand founder, comments “I’m glad they didn’t find the cause, as it makes such a great story.” We fully agree! There are not many magical things left in this world, this is one of them.

Fairy Circles range from around 1 metre up to 30 metres. Really big Fairy Circles are sometimes used by local tribes as a kraal for livestock.



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THE NAMIBIAN - NEWS - NATIONAL | 2015-03-12

## Fairy circle symposium leaves the mystery unanswered

HELGE DENKER

*THE fairy circles of the Namib - large circular patches of bare ground pockmarking endless grasslands - have attracted wide-ranging scientific attention, public speculation and media coverage for many decades.*

CNN has referred to them as 'nature's greatest mystery'.



# Namibia

Namibia lies on Africa's West Coast.

It is bordered on the East by the Kalahari Desert, and in the West by the Namib Desert and the Atlantic Coastline.

The only permanent rivers in the country form the Northern and Southern borders.

Its neighbouring countries are Angola, Botswana, and South Africa. The tip of the Caprivi Strip extends towards Victoria falls, where four countries, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia meet. Namibia is one of the least populated countries in the world. At the time of writing it is second only to Mongolia. There are approximately 2.2 million people in 825,000 square km.

The official language is English, but there are twelve different languages spoken in Namibia, including nine tribal languages. The Damara and Nama languages utilise 'clicks' similar to that of the Kalahari bushmen.

There are many amazing natural wonders within the country:

- The Fish River Canyon is the largest canyon in Africa, and takes five days to walk through.
- The Ovahimba tribe in the North, despite being one of the wealthiest tribes in the country, still live the same way they have for hundreds of years.
- The Welwitschia plant is called a 'living fossil', as some plants have been alive for over 1000 years.
- The Skeleton Coast is famous for its large number of ship wrecks, victims of the coastal fog and unforgiving waters of the Atlantic Ocean.
- The quaint and picturesque coastal town of Swakopmund provides details of Namibia's German colonial heritage, and lots of fun for tourists.



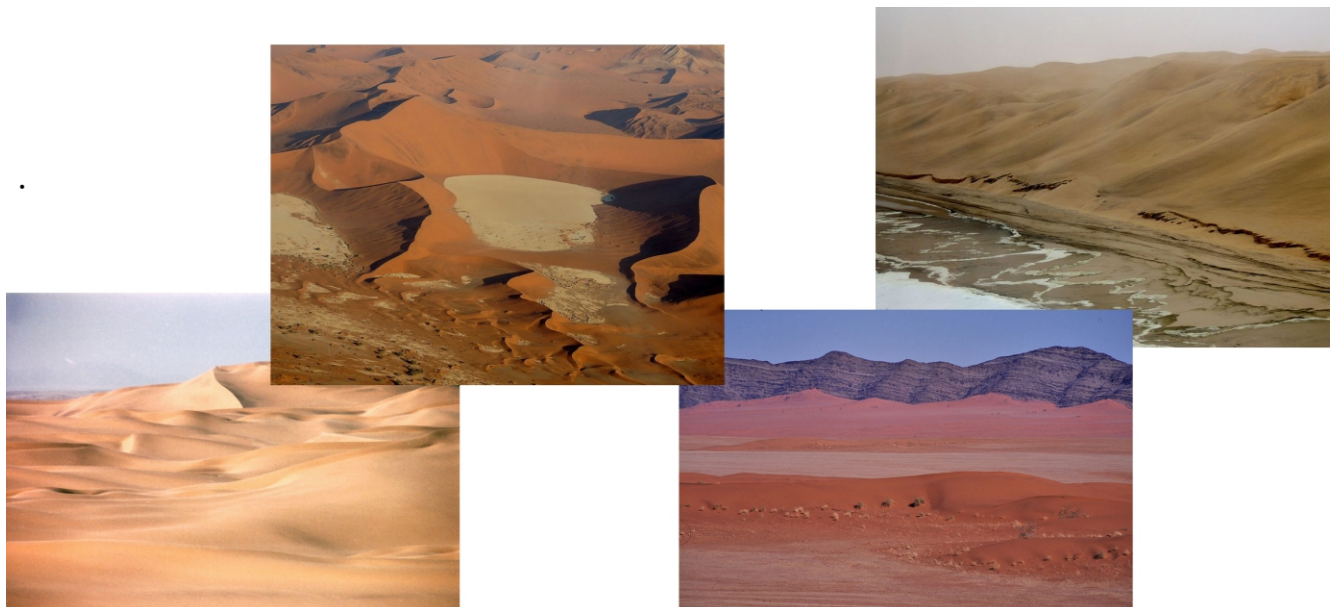
# The Namib Desert

The Namib Desert is where Namibia derives its name from. It stretches the length of Namibia's West coast, and includes the infamous stretch of coastline known as the Skeleton Coast. It spreads inland from the coast up to the sharp rise of the escarpment, with the Tsaris and Naukluft mountains prominent border features.

The Namib is one of the most diverse deserts in the world, and may be one of the oldest. It has one of the largest number of endemic species of any desert in the world. With the annual rainfall between 2mm and 200mm, depending on the area, it is Southern Africa's only true desert.

An increase in eco-tourism has seen many livestock farms in the Namib converted into wildlife sanctuaries, allowing the endemic species to thrive. Animals found in the Namib include the majestic oryx (or gamsbok), Namibia's national animal, large numbers of fur seal, the endangered desert rhino and desert elephant, and many more.

The Namib hosts some of the highest permanent dunes in the world. Dune 7 is approximately 1250ft high. The stunning Sossusvlei Valley provides opportunity to climb some of these dunes, with Big Daddy being the most popular for ascent, and a very close second in height to Dune 7 at approximately 1150ft.



# QUESTIONS

*What causes Fairy Circles?*

- A. fungi B. termites C. fairies
- D. no one really knows

*Where do they occur?*

- A. Namib Desert, B. Sahara Desert,
- C. Kalahari Desert D. on my dessert;

*Where is Namibia?*

- A. Africa, B. Asia, C. America, D. Atlantis

*What is a Welwitschia?*

- A. plant, B. animal, C. fossil, D. insurance



Here are some ideas for a project about Namibia:

1. Research one of the topics in this book and create a story board or article with pictures and information about what you have found.
2. Draw a painting of one of the plants or areas in this book.
3. Apply to join one of the young researcher's camps in the Namib Desert.

When travelling to Namibia:

4. Create a travel journal when you are visiting the Namib Desert, including pictures and interesting information about where you have been.
5. Collect some samples of rock, sand, plants, feathers, and other items that can be found in the desert (ensure not to disturb the natural habitat).

# ACTIVITIES



# Adopt a Fairy Circle of Your Own!

*Help the Namib Rand Conservation Foundation, and fairy circles everywhere!*

## ADOPT-A-FAIRY-CIRCLE

Mysterious bare circles in the sand dot the landscape along the edge of the Namib Desert stretching from the north-western Cape into southern Angola. These bare patches have been named "fairy circles." These circles, which support little flora, are an integral part of the distinctive landscape of NamibRand Nature Reserve. Dune valleys and grassy plains are often speckled with fairy circles, making NamibRand the ideal place to view these unique phenomena.



Fairy circle valley



Numbered disk of fairy circle



If you love the concept of fairy circles, for a very modest sum of ZAR1000 you can adopt your very own Fairy Circle, to help protect the desert and the fairy circles for future generations to come.

The NamibRand Conservation Foundation (NRCF) is a not-for-profit organisation. It seeks to promote and assist in any way with environmental conservation, education and research undertaken on the NamibRand Nature Reserve and the south-western Namib region. The Namib Rand Conservation area is where NaDEET lives.

**NRCF**  
NamibRand  
Conservation  
Foundation





## About this Project

All proceeds from sale of the book will go directly to NaDEET for the benefit of nature conservation and desert research and education in Namibia.

This book is available for free for distribution, attribution must be provided to <http://www.freekidsbooks.org> and <http://www.nadeet.org/> .

Any proceeds from this book must be donated to NaDEET. No derivatives.

## About NaDEET

The Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET) is a non-profit, Namibian trust established in 2003. The NaDEET Centre is located 100 km south of Sesriem/Sossusvlei on the NamibRand Nature Reserve, and the head office is located in the coastal city of Swakopmund. NaDEET believes environmental education must not only increase awareness and knowledge but also eco-friendly attitudes and skills in Namibia's youth and educators to promote participation.

*To contact NaDEET write to [admin@nadeet.org](mailto:admin@nadeet.org)*

*More information about NaDEET is available at:*

*<http://www.nadeet.org/>*

## About the Author

Danielle Bruckert

Danielle's heart was taken by Namibia when she first arrived. People always ask her how she could leave the country some call God Zone, hopefully this book will help explain. She spent many years flying over the beautiful Namib Desert, as a charter pilot, and when asked about the strange dotted landscape she loved explaining to passengers “They're made by fairies, of course, why else would they have such a name?” . With a passion for children's books, and a desire to promote literacy, Danielle created the website 'Free Kids Books' to share free children's books and literacy material, where many of her own books can be found.

*To contact the author write to [danielle@redskyventures.org](mailto:danielle@redskyventures.org)*

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On a visit to the Namib Desert, the mysterious phenomenon of Fairy Circles is discovered.

Are they really caused by fairies?

A fun look at fairy circles and the Namib Desert with a creative mix of fact and imagination.

## MORE BOOKS!

Other books available from the author:

