

Northwest Namibia – Field Report

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Fantastic news from the north-west, the Hoanib River has been in flood every few days for the past week. Not every ephemeral river in the area flows every year, but this year the Hoanib has been thoroughly doused, which is great news for the giraffe!



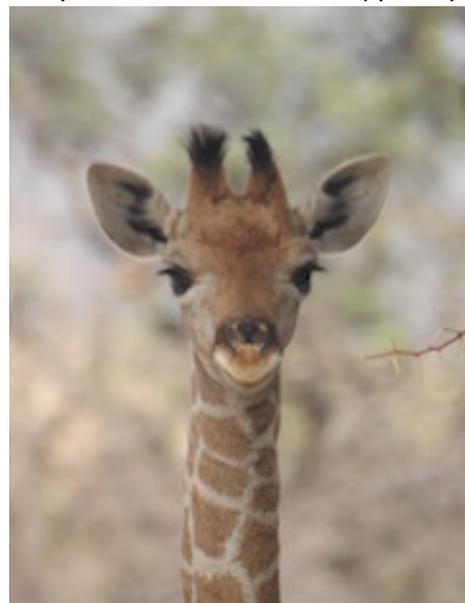
Standing in the riverbed you can almost hear the trees reaching into the sand to suck each drop into their parched trunks. Of course this will mean new growth and a renewed food source for giraffe, elephant and all the other large herbivores of the area. For now however, the muddy layer left behind by the flood hides myriad pitfalls for the 4x4, so for this fieldtrip I was unable to catch up with the Hoanib giraffe. Instead I headed straight from the Obias tributary through the winding paths of the mountains surrounding Okongwe.

Along the way were two groups of giraffe, a mix of Hoanib and Hoarusib individuals, suggesting the flooding river may have displaced some groups into the mountains. The presence of giraffe from both rivers associating in the same groups is also further evidence that these giraffe may share overlapping home ranges. I also spotted HSBF8 (one of our GPS satellite collared giraffe) in the mountains south of the Ganamub River and was delighted to see that she was accompanied by her brand new calf 'Welcome'.

An early start from camp in the Tsuxub River brought me north to the Hoarusib River, where there was more good news. This river had also been in flood, but luckily the sun had dried the upper layer into a crisp new shell that was driveable for my trusty Beast. While the river was no longer running, there was an eerie mist hanging over Purros and the surrounding mountains, and the low clouds brought a drizzle of light rain every morning.

It seems that calving is the order of the day in the Hoarusib River at the moment, and I spent a lot of time trying to distinguish between lots of fluffy ossicones and knobby knees. It is wonderful to see the young calves grouping together and playing, often bumping each other in the backside or running and kicking out with their front legs, skills they will use later in defence from predators.

The Hoarusib River had its usual contingent of large giraffe herds. This time of year it seems that all the bachelors, sub-



adults and females without calves band together, while the mothers and new-borns seek out some privacy in the mountainous areas away from the river. One group in the riverbed comprised 24 individuals and it took me quite a while to make sure I had them all correctly identified, photographed and recorded!

The Beast, as ever, performed like a boss in the challenging circumstances. This month we would like to extend particular thanks to Tyres 2000 who have kindly come on board to sponsor my research vehicle's tyres.



Despite the challenging driving conditions, in total 21 groups of giraffe comprising 75 individuals were identified. Six new giraffe were added to the database, including one male, one female, and four brand new calves. We also caught up with a few of our adopted giraffe from GCF's *Adopt-a-Giraffe* programme (<https://giraffeconservation.org/adopt-a-giraffe/>), so stay tuned for the next AaG Update report.

A big thank you to GCF, University College Dublin, and to the sponsors for making this conservation research possible. Stay tuned for the next update from the field!



