



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

QUARTERLY UPDATE
April – June 2018



@giraffe_conservation



@giraffeconservationfoundation



@Save_Giraffe



With Namibia's three-term system, there are long school holidays during April and May. As the Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) focuses on primary school groups, holidays tend to slow down our participant numbers. Thus, to keep our numbers up and our team busy during school holidays, we have started to invite other groups from different institutions such as orphanages, after-school programmes and youth groups. During these holidays, KEEP was joined by an after-school programme, by a group of special-needs students, and our team visited a holiday camp group on a farm outside Okahandja – all activities well in line with our aim to spread the word about (giraffe) conservation and raise environmental awareness with as many Namibian children as possible.

At the beginning of May, the GCF KEEP team attended the three-day Annual Conference of the Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN), of which we are a member. What a great opportunity to meet other environmental education (EE) stakeholders in Namibia to share experiences and discuss challenges. We caught up with many old friends and made as many new ones. The conference was hosted at the Oshikoto Nature Reserve,



approx. 60km from Otjiwarongo in the Otjozondjupa Region. Each annual conference has a theme and this year we discussed the role of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), NGOs and Youth in promoting innovative strategies for peaceful co-existence with the endangered wildlife. The KEEP team presented on its role in promoting peaceful human-wildlife co-existence and in true GCF fashion, the slides illustrated our work with many images and the presentation was well received.

We also used the holidays for some staff training by experienced former game ranger and specialist guide Michael Whitelock. After our recent changes in staff, the new KEEP team is excited to put their own stamp on the programme to keep it fresh and relevant. Together with Michael, our educators Naemi and Martha revised aspects of the field programme to incorporate their newly acquired skills

and knowledge. GCF is committed to delivering a high-quality EE programme in Windhoek.

After a well-deserved school holiday for the students and also some rest for the KEEP team, field days started immediately after schools re-opened. At our return to Daan Viljoen Game Reserve (GR), we were excited to find the dam still full of water. What a difference to last year.





In recent months, the dam has become one of the spots where we regularly find a variety of animals. At this stage, we are pretty sure that the animals will have access to open water until the next rainy season. Isn't that great news? However, we can't say the same for all the trees and grasses. The grasses already started drying out and trees are shedding their leaves, reminding us that winter is here (the freezing temperatures in the morning may be another indicator ...).

No field day is like the next and we work hard to make the most of what these days have to offer for our students. The children see a lot of new things and learn heaps in just a few hours that they spend with us. One class was fortunate to encounter a huge python crossing their path on its way to take a swim in a small pool near the dam. At 2 to 2.5 metres long she was rather impressive, and we later observed her pooping in the shallow water. This was an exciting experience for both students and teachers alike, most of whom had never seen a snake before and were rather scared initially. Word spread quickly and the following days the students begged us to show them the python too. While we would have loved to oblige, we didn't see her again that week but are hoping to spot her again sometime in the future.



On other animal news, there is an exciting new addition to our giraffe family in Daan Viljoen GR. We are happy to announce that we were correct in assuming that one of the adult females was pregnant – we suspected that we saw a baby moving inside the mother's tummy earlier in the year. We spotted the cutest baby giraffe in early June – just a few days before World Giraffe Day. We are holding off on naming the baby until we can determine its gender, but we are taking suggestions for names from all the student groups in the meantime.

World Environment Day is celebrated on 5 June every year and GCF's KEEP team was invited by the



Ministry of Environment and Tourism to attend their annual festivities. Themed 'Beat Plastic Pollution – If You Can't Reuse It, Refuse It', the event involved stakeholders from different Namibian organisations and schools, who's representatives presented on good waste management practices and avoidance. Our team learned a lot about waste management and we already started sharing our new knowledge with our Khomas students in the field.



June has another important environmental day to celebrate and one that is particularly meaningful for us: World Giraffe Day on 21 June – the longest day (or night!) for the tallest animal. Similar last year, St. Paul’s College Primary made an early booking to secure this important date for their students and help us raise awareness for these gentle giants in the wild. As you can see from the photo, the students had a great time and surprised our team with a special giraffe song that they had learned for the occasion.



So far in 2018, KEEP has hosted a total of 1,342 students. Our next months are quite busy with many firm bookings and additional ones already pencilled in. There are still a few open spots available in September and October though, so if you know of a school or group that might be interested in taking part in our programme, please put them in touch.

As you know, GCF could not implement KEEP without our donors. Funding remains one of our biggest challenges. Most of our participants are from under-privileged communities and depend on the government schools’ feeding schemes. KEEP provides a healthy snack and a sandwich for these students when they join us in the field. Finding a donor for these meals is still an ongoing struggle for us. If you would like to help us provide these nutritious snacks, please contact us. Your support would make a big difference and remember that your contribution does not necessarily have to be financial.

A big thank you goes to our everyday partners, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for allowing GCF to continue to run this programme at Daan Viljoen GR and the Ministry of Education for allowing students and teachers from the Khomas Region to join us for a memorable day in the bush.

Thanks again for your support.

