



# Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

QUARTERLY UPDATE  
October – December 2021



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We have come to the end of yet another year of raising environmental awareness of young Namibian primary school students in the Khomas Region. The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF)'s Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) is wrapping up for the year, and as usual, we would like to applaud all the schools, groups and other organisations that have joined our fun-filled field-based environmental education programme this year. You all made this year worthwhile, and we hope to see you and many others in the coming year.

In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, KEEP hosted a total of 2,064 students and 85 teachers from 20 different schools, orphanages and after-school programmes. Considering the temporary school closures and restrictions on movements in Namibia, this is an impressive number, and we are proud of this great achievement.



The year 2021 started off well for KEEP. In the first quarter of the year, our team hosted groups from five different schools, all of which were repeat participants. We love to host repeat schools because it shows that schools value our programme and realise the importance of KEEP for their students. Our KEEP team is indeed doing an amazing job and we are thrilled that some schools have made KEEP a fixture in their annual calendars. During the year, we also hosted a few new schools. One of the new additions was Faith Primary School, where the staff showed so much interest and enthusiasm that a whole contingent of teachers including the principal joined their students during the field outing. The principal highlighted that her team of teachers too wanted to get this field experience and as a faith-based school they are passionate about their pupils. Hosting a school principal was a first for KEEP and we hope that more of our participating schools will follow suit and bring their principals or heads of departments along to experience KEEP first-hand and see the benefit their students gain from participating in KEEP.

As you may already know, we do not limit participation in KEEP to school groups only. During the school holidays, we extend our invitation to orphanages, after-school programmes, and youth groups to increase our reach and offer our amazing field EE programme to a wider range of participants. Our aim is to inspire



as many young Namibians as possible to develop a passion for nature from a young age and start taking responsibility for looking after our fragile Namibian environment. During the April-May school holidays, KEEP hosted two orphanage groups from age five to 18. While accommodating a group of such a wide age-range can be somewhat challenging, our team is always happy to host and engage with interested groups. It is such a privilege to spend time in the bush with children from different backgrounds and see their faces light up with joy when spotting an animal and learning about environmental issues that are relevant to their communities.



In addition to our normal outings, the KEEP team also held two virtual sessions with Grade One students from different schools in the USA via Zoom. This was a first-time experience for our team and an exciting opportunity for them to share their giraffe knowledge. The young students asked lots of questions about giraffe, what they eat, how they drink, how tall they grow, and much more making it an interesting experience for all involved. The American children were eager to learn more about Africa's giraffe and find out some fascinating facts. Our KEEP team has again shown that in times of a global pandemic, you need to be flexible and look for new and innovative ways of engaging with young people in Namibia and around the world. The team is excited to offer these kind of sessions to other children around the world to share their passion for the environment and giraffe. If you are an educator and interested in participating in an online question and answer session with the KEEP team next year, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Winter is normally the busiest season for our KEEP team, with most schools wanting to take advantage of the cooler days to be in the field. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was also the time that COVID-19 cases increased. Namibia was hit hard by a third COVID-19 wave between May and August (the colder time of the year here on the southern hemisphere) and just as last year, our KEEP field programme was brought to an abrupt halt when all primary schools were temporarily closed. The KEEP team worked from home for a few weeks and explored alternative ways of engaging with primary schools and their students during this time. Under the banner of 'bringing nature to schools' and in collaboration with the National Botanical Research Institute, they initiated a tree-planting project. The project aims to



bring students and their teachers closer to nature by bringing nature to them. The team worked with five primary schools in Windhoek and planted 25 indigenous seedlings during the National Arbor Day week in October. Training sessions on how to care for the trees long-term are planned for early next year. We hope that the students will gain an understanding of the importance of indigenous plants in their local environment and inspire them to appreciate the value of planting more indigenous trees in their homes and communities.



For the third year in a row, our team has hosted the third-year Nature Conservation students from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) as part of their programme's EE module. This year we were very pleased to host first, second and third-year Nature Conservation NUST students. We feel that it is important to provide these students with a hand-on experience of EE in action in addition of the theoretical knowledge they gain during their course. And for our team it is always a fun outing – and a very proud one to show our former lecturers and fellow students what we do.





Every year in June, we celebrate the most important day for giraffe: 21 June is World Giraffe Day (WGD) – the longest day or night for the tallest animal. Initiated by GCF in 2014, WGD is celebrated around the world to raise awareness for giraffe and celebrate these iconic animals. This year's WGD was dedicated saving the last West African giraffe. There are only about 600 West African giraffe remaining in the world and they all live in Niger, one of the world's poorest countries.

This year, our KEEP team was again joined by several print and film journalists in the field. Our team enjoys showing visitors our amazing programme and get them to experience our team's passion for conservation first-hand. However, the most exciting part is for these journalists to experience the excitement of our young participants. For many students this is their first outing of its kind and they have never seen giraffe or other wildlife in the wild.

In other amazing news, the series of eight short environmental education videos that we produced in partnership with the Namibian production company Tribefire Studios last year aired on One Africa TV daily during June and July 2021. We received lots of positive feedback and our KEEP team have gain some celebrity status in Namibia: they often get recognised by the students in the field or when visiting new schools to introduce the programme. We are very proud to have reached a wider audience with our EE message and to share our passion and love for the environment widely. The episodes are available on the GCF website and YouTube channel. If you have not watched them yet, don't miss out and have a look here: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4VFia68Sc57ykrwLSZ\\_\\_joRbykhY2i6\\_](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4VFia68Sc57ykrwLSZ__joRbykhY2i6_)



Besides the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, an unexpected challenge for our KEEP programme this year were bushfires that affected the Daan Viljoen Game Reserve, where our field trips take place. The fires burned nearly 70% of the Reserve, destroying important habitat for wildlife and their food sources. Several field days had to be cancelled and our hiking route had to be adapted after the fires. However, as with any situation, there is always a bright side: the area we use for our programme was not directly affected by the fires and now, as a result, it is teeming with wildlife. In the weeks after the



fires, we had daily sightings of zebras, oryx, kudu and to the great excitement of our participants – giraffe. We also got treated to rare sightings of monitor lizards, an ostrich egg, and quite a few leopard footprints. At this time of the year, we take a moment to review and reflect on our achievements and experiences for the year. As we prepare to wave goodbye to the year, we are quietly proud and happy with what we have achieved this year and the progress our environmental education programme has made in the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic. We will take some time off for the festive season to spend with our families and friends.



A few schools have already made their bookings for 2022, but there are still many open spaces in our 2022 calendar, so please get in touch.

As always, we would like to thank our generous donors for their continued support. Allowing us some flexibility with budget lines has been an amazing help during these difficult times. With salaries secured and our KEEP team intact, we are excited to continue implementing our successful KEEP field programme.

Wishing you all joy this festive season and a happy, healthy New Year.

**Thank you for your continued support.**

