



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

UPDATE
December 2022



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2022 has certainly been a remarkable year for the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) and more specifically for our Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP). As the year draws to a close, we are excited to update you on our successful year of raising environmental awareness among young Namibian primary school students.



Before we begin to reflect on our highlights and achievements for the year, we would first like to express our sincere gratitude to both new and 'old' (or rather repeat) schools, groups, and all other organisations that we had the pleasure of hosting for a fun-filled educational field day and that kept us so very busy this year. From your resounding positive feedback, we are confident that you have enjoyed your participation and at the same time learned a lot about your environment, conservation and – most importantly for us – about giraffe! We applaud you all for contributing to KEEP's goal of promoting environmental learning for our future decision-makers and feel honoured by your trust in our team.



In Namibia, the school year started early in 2022 and our KEEP team was pretty much busy from mid-January offering young Namibians a unique opportunity to learn and explore nature firsthand in Daan Viljoen Game Reserve. Previous years were often up to a slow start with school bookings coming in hesitantly as teachers concentrate on their annual planning and sports events at the beginning of their first term. 2022 was different



and bookings filled up very quickly. In the past, it was at times difficult to persuade schools to join us in the field last-minute cancellations were often a problem. However, as our KEEP programme becomes more widely known and as our team has been seen on local TV, many schools now approach us to make their bookings without prompting from us. Quite the opposite – as our calendar filled up, there were waiting times and schools have already started securing their spaces for 2023. If your school would like to join us next year, get in touch now to make your booking and avoid disappointment.



This year, KEEP hosted the largest number of participants in a single year since we started the programme in 2016. We reach an impressive total of 3,078 students accompanied by 263 teachers from 26 different schools and organisations! It appears that after being cooped up during the Covid-19 pandemic, everyone wanted to get out into nature. What a great achievement for our team – let's see if we can match this number again in 2023.





While most of the schools we hosted this year were 'KEEP regulars' (schools that bring their Grade 4 students every year), we also hosted a few new schools and some interesting groups. In April, we had the pleasure of hosting a group from the School of the Visually Impaired in Windhoek for the first time. Accompanied by their teachers, some of whom were also visually challenged, the students showed a passion for the environment and were eager to learn about different animal and plant species found in the reserve. We had fascinating discussions about a variety of environmental issues we face in the country. While our team did not know what to expect, it has shown that our programme is suitable for anyone and that our team can adapt to different challenges. In their feedback, the teachers expressed gratitude to GCF for providing their learners with a life-changing experience. It almost broke our hearts to hear that this was the first-ever field trip for their school. We look forward to hosting another group from this very special school again next year.

Amidst the busy KEEP field days, we managed to update our KEEP Field Workbook and print the new edition. We added a brand-new section on sustainability and we also included a few pages from the GCF Nature Workbook that our team uses for environmental education and outreach throughout the African continent. We pride ourselves in updating all our teaching materials regularly, so they stay up-to-date, relevant and in line with the Namibian Primary School Curriculum. Both Workbooks have become a thought-after teaching resource in many schools as more and more teachers from further afield than the Khomas Region learn about it. We regularly receive enthusiastic feedback from teachers who like the well-structured resource that has great value for classroom use as an additional teaching tool. A steady flow of requests from teachers from schools in other regions is coming in, so we are





now looking for additional funding to make the Workbooks available to a wider audience in Namibia. Hopefully, we will be able to fulfil more of these requests in the future.

As you will know, June is the most important month of the year for all of us giraffe-lovers and in particular for GCF: 21 June is World Giraffe Day – the longest day (or night!) for the tallest animal. This special day was first initiated by GCF in 2014 to celebrate this iconic animal and raise awareness for their plight. This year's WGD was dedicated to raising funding for our most ambitious giraffe translocation yet: to bring giraffe back to Mozambique. Years of civil unrest have driven giraffe to the brink of extinction in Mozambique and today, there are only 250 giraffe remaining in the country. Together with the Mozambican government and other partners, we are planning to move over 350 giraffe to four key areas in Mozambique over the next five years. The KEEP team celebrated WGD in style and GCF's social media pages were full of happy faces from our giraffe friends showing us how they too celebrated giraffe. The KEEP team also made sure their voices were heard loud and clear by promoting this special initiative during a radio interview on the Namibian radio station Radiowave.



The KEEP team participated in a three-day workshop organized by the Sabine Plattner African Charities (SPAC), that focuses on the protection of nature through education and community-driven empowerment. 150 teachers from six different Namibian regions participated in a three-day training workshop in Windhoek to improve environmental education in their classrooms. As part of this training, the teachers joined the KEEP team for a nature walk in Daan Viljoen Game Reserve to gain hands-on experience and put their environmental knowledge to the test. This was a great opportunity to promote our programme to schools beyond the Khomas Region while at the same time provide additional EE materials as every teacher took home copies of our amazing educational resources in addition to the toolkits they had already received as part of the workshop. While some of the teachers were not too excited about the hike initially, everybody returned with new knowledge and lots of enthusiasm for their beautiful country.

Another highlight this year was our participation in the 40th Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA) Conference, which was held in Windhoek in August. EEASA is a multiorganisational association of educators, researchers, policymakers, students, and practitioners who engage in the relationships between the environment and social processes including politics, economy, and development. This year's EEASA conference



was themed 'Education for a post-COVID-19 recovery and attaining the SDGs: reconsiderations, challenges, and opportunities' and the KEEP team presented on how they successfully navigated the challenges of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their programme. The conference provided a wonderful opportunity for environmental education stakeholders from Southern Africa to network, exchange ideas and opinions, and raise awareness for the concept of education for sustainable development in various sectors.

Our KEEP team certainly networked and even made new connections at the EEASA conference. Recently, we were paid a visit by a group of teachers and students from the Ambrosius Primary School in Oranjemund, who travelled approx. 800 km to hand over the proceeds of a coin collection in support of giraffe conservation. The principal and students had been impressed by our KEEP team during the conference and wanted to contribute. In total they had collected over N\$800 in small change. It was a privilege for GCF to receive this generous donation from the school and see the commitment to their environment by these enthusiastic visitors.



Collaborating with partners is at the core of GCF's values and conservation approach. In August, the KEEP team co-hosted a group of primary school students at the National Botanical Garden of Namibia to teach them about Namibia's flora and its importance. Together they explored the botanical garden to identify plants, learn about their needs and uses, and how they adapt to the environment. During the excursion, the KEEP team also had an opportunity to demonstrate and engage the students in some of our KEEP field activities and talk about giraffe.



In October, the KEEP Coordinator attended a 5-day training workshop on Environmental Education and Sustainable Development together with a group of NUST Natural Resources Management BSc students at the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET). This was a great opportunity to refresh some knowledge but also to share her experience and at the same time promote our programme to young Namibians who are about to enter the environmental sector in a professional capacity.



As always, we would like to use this opportunity to thank all our generous donors for their continued support and also wish you all joy this festive season and a happy, healthy New Year.



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