Northwest Namibia Programme
July 2023 - May 2024

In Namibia, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) runs a comprehensive giraffe conservation programme. One important aspect focuses on monitoring and supporting the long-term conservation of Namibia's desert-dwelling giraffe. These giraffe roam throughout the northern Namib Desert in the country's northwest and our programme area covers a total of > 30,000 km^2. The area is comprised of communal conservancy land in the east and extends into the Skeleton Coast National Park bordering the Atlantic Ocean to the west, in the north it stretches to the Kunene River and the Angolan boarder and south to the Hoanib River. In this stark landscape of dunes, gravel plains and dry riverbeds many wildlife species thrive including the desert-dwelling Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa angolensis*), a subspecies of the Southern giraffe (*G. giraffa*). For more information on our study area, have a look at previous reports on Northwest Namibia.

This is the longest-running monitoring and research programme on giraffe in Africa and it offers a unique and valuable opportunity to better understand these iconic animals and provide invaluable conservation and management lessons for other giraffe populations throughout Africa. Analysis of our data has shown that bi-monthly monitoring trips are sufficient for critical long-term population data collection.

The positive news from the last years is that the giraffe population in northwest Namibia has increased steadily to 472 individuals. Most interesting is that we continue to encounter new adult giraffe during our surveys. While we are not exactly sure where they are coming from, it appears that they are literally coming out of the 'rock work', walking from far away into the area. An added complexity for the Hoanib River population is the recent introduction (translocation) of a male lion which almost immediately has continued the local desert lion tradition of hunting giraffe. Within only

a two-month span, the new lion has hunted three giraffe. We anticipate that this trend may continue, which is sadly part of natural selection and how nature works.

In our continuous efforts to be at the forefront of using the latest technology to understand giraffe movement better, while at the same time prioritising their welfare, we continue to work with partners on GPS satellite tag development. Most recently our efforts are focusing on small, lightweight ear tags

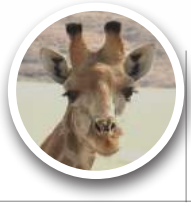
TWIGA TRACKER IN NUMBERS

Newly deployed GPS units **9**

24 **Active GPS tracking Units**

Jackson **used the largest home range**

2,077km²



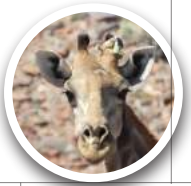
Present **used the smallest home range**

82km²

Recorded data points **62,709**

Kitty **walked the most**

2,912km



Vera **walked the least**

742km

Average distance walked over 6 months

152km

Average distance walked per day

846km

GIRAFFE PER RIVER SYSTEM

	Females	Males	Juveniles	Total
Hoanib River	88	70	4	**162**
Hoarusib River	81	88	5	**174**
Far North	53	80	3	**136**
Total:	**222**	**238**	**12**	**472**

which are quick to deploy and have a minimal impact on the animals. GCF's Twiga Tracker Initiative, the largest GPS satellite tracking study ever conducted on giraffe in the wild, continues to show larger movements, expanding home ranges, and increasing giraffe distribution. In the far North of Namibia, we are observing the largest movements with very limited food availability and hence giraffe need to walk large distances to ensure their survival – and to find mates.

Analysing our movement data, it appears that overall, the tagged giraffe have reduced their movements over the last year. With relatively good rainfall in some parts of their range, this could be a result of increased browse availability along many of the riparian areas they use. Furthermore, flowing rivers after good rains in early 2024 have limited giraffe movements between river systems.

NORTHWEST NAMIBIA PROGRAMME IN NUMBERS

Total known giraffe population in Northwest Namibia
472

Total giraffe sightings
1,146

New adult giraffe identified
8

Percentage of giraffe population spotted
65%

DNA samples collected
3

Distance travelled by field team
9,095km

Total giraffe population sampled for DNA
49%

Individual giraffe spotted
309

Field days
44

Students & community members trained
4

New calves observed
16

Average herd size
3.2