Northwest Namibia Programme
January - June 2022

GIRAFFE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION

At our home base 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 > 30,000km^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. It is confined by the Kunene River and the Angolan boarder in the north and extends south to the Hoanib River.

Namibia is well-known for its successful community-based natural resource management approach where local people gain management rights to their designated local land and natural resources including wildlife and plants. Approximately 20% of Namibia is managed and protected by communal conservancies, and over 46% of the country is under some form of private, communal, or public conservation management.

This collaborative conservation approach has contributed to large-scale habitat protection and positive populations trends of most wildlife in the country.

With only a few millimetres of annual rainfall, the northwest is arid to hyper-arid and all wildlife is well adapted to this harsh environment. However, these conditions mean that many species survive at the very edge of their adaptive abilities and as such the ecosystem is fragile. Climate change, historical poaching, and overgrazing have led to some degradation of the environment and impacts on wildlife. Nevertheless, it remains one of the most beautiful and remote refuges for Africa's remaining mega-fauna.

In this stark landscape of dunes, gravel plains and dry riverbeds, African savannah elephant, black rhino, lion, cheetah, and numerous other

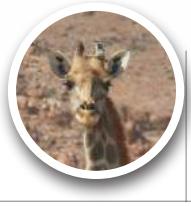
species thrive, as does the desert-dwelling Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa angolensis*), a subspecies of the Southern giraffe (*G. giraffa*). GCF's long-term giraffe conservation monitoring and research programme – in fact the longest-running programme on giraffe in Africa – in this remote part of Namibia offers a unique and valuable opportunity to better understand them and, through what we learn, provide invaluable conservation and management lessons for other giraffe populations throughout Africa.

After years of drought, we were delighted to finally receive good rainfall and see all ephemeral rivers flow

TWIGA TRACKER IN NUMBERS

Operational GPS Tracking Devices **45**

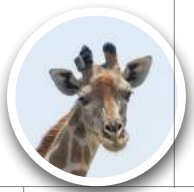
Sunburst used the largest home range **1,128km²**



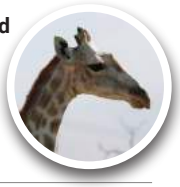
Present used the smallest home range **44km²**

Recorded data points **120,640**

Lynne walked the most **975km**



Blondie walked the least **215km**



Average distance walked over 6 months **474.2km**

Average distance walked per day **5.25km**

GIRAFFE PER RIVER SYSTEM

	Females	Males	Juveniles	Total
Hoanib River	73	67	11	**151**
Hoarusib River	69	81	14	**164**
Far North	49	69	13	**131**
Total:	**191**	**217**	**38**	**446**

repeatedly during this year's wet season. This provides an essential lifeline for plants, wildlife, and local communities. With lots of additional food and water available and the rivers running, most giraffe temporarily moved away to higher grounds. Towards the middle of the year the giraffe started to return to the dry riverbeds, and we were treated to a baby boom with an additional 15 giraffe calves identified. Interestingly, many other wildlife species also experienced a similar boost in numbers – a typical trend in the bust and boom desert environment and a welcome sight after several tough years.

The giraffe population in northwest Namibia has increased steadily with 446 in our individually identified database! All of this despite the local desert lion population resuming their legacy of hunting giraffe in the Hoanib River. Such is nature! Overall, there are many positive signs for the conservation of all these animals who have adapted to the harsh desert environments of Namibia's northwest.

We continue to see some of the largest movements and home ranges of any giraffe in Africa, especially further north in the area. All of which makes perfect sense as compared to other areas food is less in the dry northwest, and giraffe must walk further distances to survive and find mates.

NORTHWEST NAMIBIA PROGRAMME IN NUMBERS

Total known giraffe population in Northwest Namibia
446

Total giraffe sightings
350

New adult giraffe identified
3

Percentage of giraffe population spotted
44.80%

DNA samples collected
9

Distance travelled by field team
14,613km

Total giraffe population sampled for DNA
47%

Individual giraffe spotted
289

Field days
57

Students & community members trained
6

New calves observed
15

Average herd size
3.71