

Twiga Tracker Initiative: Giraffe Tagging Report

Orupembe and Puros Conservancies, and Skeleton Coast National Park, Northwest Namibia

23 July – 3 August 2025

Background

The Orupembe and Puros Conservancies were established after Namibia gained independence in 1990. As part of the Namibian Community Based Natural Resource Management programme, all community conservancies are legally registered, have defined borders, and are managed by the people who live within these borders. Together, these two conservancies cover more than 7,000 km² and are home to a small population of approx. 400 semi-nomadic Ovahimba people.

The ephemeral Hoarusib and Khumib Rivers run through the two conservancies, that border the Skeleton Coast National Park. The area is arid to hyper arid with very little rainfall. Despite the harsh conditions, it supports a variety of wildlife adapted to this dry environment, including African savannah elephant, springbok, ostrich, oryx, and Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa angolensis*). Between the two rivers and their tributaries, the Hoarusib River is home to the largest number of Angolan giraffe, especially near Puros village. Currently, our database includes approx. 190 individually identified Angolan giraffe in the Hoarusib River and 149 in the northerly Khumib River.

Since 2016, GCF has carried out regular bi-monthly photographic surveys of the Angolan giraffe populations in both river systems. These surveys provide fascinating insights into their survival strategies and how they adapt to such harsh environments.

Objectives

As part of GCF's Africa-wide Twiga Tracker initiative, we set out: (1) to GPS satellite tag, using SpoorTrack tail units, Angolan giraffe in far Northwest Namibia in the Hoarusib and Khumib Rivers and their tributaries. The focus was on subadults and adults that had recently moved into the study area, allowing us to monitor their movements

and collect long-term data; (2) to re-tag individuals which had older ossicone units (Savanna Tracking) and ear-tags (GSAT/CERES); and (3) to continue the first-ever long-term monitoring of GPS satellite tagged individuals to track survival and movements.

Data from these tagged individuals will broaden our understanding of how Angolan giraffe spatially utilize the large landscape, corridors and areas of connectivity. Our individual-based Angolan giraffe database for Northwest Namibia makes it easier to keep track of all known individuals within the study area.

Importantly, the newly developed SpoorTrack tail units are lighter, and capable of recording data at higher frequencies. These new devices support our commitment to animal welfare and the use of improved technologies.

Results

Nine Angolan giraffe (two males and seven females) were successfully fitted with SpoorTrack tail units during the seven-day operation. Among these, three older units were removed and replaced with newer light-weight tail units. The replaced units were on adult females, two in the Hoarusib River and one in the Khumib River. Some of these individuals were first tagged in 2017. These individuals will now continue to provide valuable long-term movement data spanning several years.

Acknowledgements

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