



## Twiga Tracker Initiative: Giraffe Tagging Report

Sesfontein Conservancy and Skeleton Coast National Park, Northwest Namibia

31 August – 6 September 2025

### Background

The ephemeral Hoanib River stretches for ~270 km from western Etosha National Park (NP) through communal conservancies through the Skeleton Coast NP to the Atlantic Ocean. Despite flowing only seasonally, the river supports a rich ecosystem and forage source in the hyper-arid landscape of Northwest Namibia. The relatively dense vegetation along the Hoanib River and its tributaries includes Ana, Camelthorn, Mopane and *Vachellia* trees amongst others, which provide linear habitats for wildlife and livestock, as well as corridors to move through, supporting connectivity across the landscape.

The Hoanib River flows through the Sesfontein Conservancy, a community conservancy instrumental in wildlife conservation outside Namibia's formal protected areas. The conservancy spans over 2,400 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to more than 2,000 people. The region faces challenges such as climate change and variable rainfall, which test the resilience of local people, their livestock and the desert-adapted wildlife.

The area supports a variety of wildlife species, including African lion, African savannah elephant, steenbok, springbok, ostrich, oryx, and Angolan giraffe (*Giraffa giraffa angolensis*). Angolan giraffe numbers in the lower Hoanib River have declined in recent years, likely due to lion predation and subsequent movement out of the river system into adjacent areas. We currently estimate a population of 81 Angolan giraffe that are observed regularly.

### Objectives

Since 2016, GCF has carried out regular bi-monthly photographic surveys of the Angolan giraffe populations in the Hoanib River, and selected individuals were tagged to monitor their movements and survival over time.

As part of GCF's Africa-wide Twiga Tracker initiative, the tagging operation focused on the Hoanib River and its tributaries with key objectives: (1) to re-tag individuals with GPS satellite tail tags that had lost their old tracking units or which had stopped working to continue their long-term monitoring, and (2) to GPS satellite tag new individuals to understand how Angolan giraffe spatially utilize the large landscape, corridors and areas of connectivity.

The newly developed SpoorTrack tail units are lighter and capable of recording data at higher frequencies. These new devices have shown high performance in our initial testing and support our commitment to animal welfare and the use of improved technologies.

### Results

Five Angolan giraffe (3 female, 2 male) were successfully fitted with SpoorTrack GPS satellite tail units over a six-day period. Of these, two individuals (1 female, 1 male) were successfully re-tagged. Locating these individuals took several days, and we suspect that increased predation and good rains this year encouraged them to move out of the river, foraging and exploring nearby areas. Despite these challenges, the operation was successful, and the newly tagged Angolan giraffe will allow us to monitor movements along the Hoanib River and surrounding areas.

### Acknowledgements

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