Living with wildlife –

the story of

≠Khoadi-{//Hôas Conservancy

≠Khoadi-{//Hôas – after the Khoekhoegowab phrase for ‘elephants corner’
# KHOADI-I//HOAS CONSERVANCY

Living with wildlife – the story of #KHOADI-I//HOAS

Conservancies enable conservation and development over large areas...

MILESTONES AND SUCCESSES

1990 – the Grootberg Farmers’ Union is formed
1996 – policy changes allow communal area residents to benefit from wildlife and tourism
1998 – #KHOADI-I//HOAS Conservancy is registered in June
2000 – the Forum for Integrated Resource Management is established
2000 – #KHOADI-I//HOAS becomes part of the annual North-West Game Count
2001 – implementation of the Event Book monitoring system in #KHOADI-I//HOAS Conservancy
2002 – gembok are reintroduced to #KHOADI-I//HOAS
2004 – #KHOADI-I//HOAS becomes financially independent and is able to cover own operating expenses
2005 – Grootberg Lodge opens, making #KHOADI-I//HOAS the first conservancy in Namibia to fully own its own lodge
2005 – #KHOADI-I//HOAS becomes part of the annual North-West Game Count
2006 – implementation of the Event Book monitoring system in #KHOADI-I//HOAS Conservancy
2007 – #KHOADI-I//HOAS is one of the first conservancies in Namibia to reintroduce black rhino
2008 – the Ministry of Environment and Tourism awards the rights to the Hobatere Tourism Concession to the conservancy
2009 – #KHOADI-I//HOAS becomes one of the first conservancies in Namibia to fully own its own lodge

QUICK FACTS

Region: Kunene
Size: 3,364 square kilometres
Approximate population: 3,200
Main language: Khoekhoegowab
Date of registration: June 1998

A CONSERVANCY IS...

- a legally registered area with clearly defined borders and a constituted management body run by the community for the development of residents and the sustainable use of wildlife and tourism
- managed by a group elected to serve the interests of all its members
- a place where residents can add income from wildlife and tourism to traditional farming activities
- a place where wildlife populations increase as they are managed for productive gain
- a place where the value of the natural resources increases, enhancing the value of the land
- a forum through which services and developments can be channelled and integrated
- zoned for multiple uses to minimise conflict and maximise the interests of all stakeholders

A LITTLE HISTORY

Prior to Namibia’s independence in 1990, communal area residents had few rights to use wildlife. Wild animals were often seen as little more than a threat to crops, livestock and infrastructure, as well as community safety. Ground-breaking legislation passed in the mid-nineties laid the foundation for a new approach to the sustainable use of natural resources. By forming a conservancy, people in communal areas can now actively manage – and generate benefits from – wildlife and other resources in their area, encouraging wildlife recoveries and environmental restoration. While a conservancy is a natural resource management structure, it is defined by social ties. Conservancies unite groups of people with the common goal of managing their resources. Today, over 60 communal conservancies embrace one in four rural Namibians, underlining a national commitment to both rural development and conservation.

#KHOADI-I//HOAS offers an enchanting mix of

- vast, diverse and spectacular landscapes – the Etendeka Plateau, the Klip River...
- an exclusively Namibian environment diversifies economic opportunities and drives economic growth
- charismatic, free-roaming wildlife – elephant, rhino, giraffe, predators and plains game...
- interesting cultures and dynamic communities committed to sustainability – people living in #KHOADI-I//HOAS share a common vision for managing their area and its resources
- people are living with wildlife, are managing natural resources wisely and are reaping the benefits...
- about as many people, most of whom speak Khoekhoegowab, a language shared by the Damara andNama. The area that is today the Conservancy is likely to have been used by the Damara for centuries. In the second half of the 1800s, Topnaar and Swartbooi Namibians entered the region from central Namibia to settle at Sefrifontein to the north and Francfontein to the south, respectively, and had a considerable influence on the region. The German colonisation of Namibia from 1884 and the South African administration of the country after World War 1 heavily influenced settlement patterns, with land in the area being allocated as white farmland. Some of these farms were subsequently reincorporated into the Damaraaland ‘homeland’ created after the recommendations of the Odendaal Commission of 1954.
- The registration of the conservancy was initiated by the active local farming community, the Grootberg Farmers’ Union. The request to form a conservancy was submitted to government without the help of an external support organisation, and #KHOADI-I//HOAS was registered as one of the first four conservancies in Namibia in 1998.

- the event book monitoring system in #KHOADI-I//HOAS
- Hobatere Tourism Concession to the conservancy
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Low rainfall and high evaporation rates have created a distinctly arid environment generally with shallow soils, resulting in difficult farming conditions. This has led to the forced resettlement of the colonial period, as well as by the modern community living in the conservancy was probably shaped in part by these, as well as by the forced resettlements of the colonial period.

Much of the spectacular environment of the ≠Khoadi-//Hôas Conservancy was formed by catastrophic events that heralded the separation of the supercontinent known as Gondwanaland around 120 million years ago. Between 132 and 125 million years ago, an unimaginable series of eruptions from volcanic fissures deposited extensive lava fields across what later became the edge of south-western Africa. The lava eruptions accumulated as a series of basalt layers, now wonderfully visible as the western edge of the Etendeka Plateau — the views from the rim of the Etendeka Plateau are truly breathtaking to the distant horizon, ranges upon ranges of layered, flat-topped basalt mountains glow deep red in sunset colours, hinting at the volcanic upheaval that created them millions of years ago, as Africa started to become Africa...

Since the establishment of conservancies, wildlife numbers in communal areas have rebounded from historic lows prior to independence. ≠Khoadi-//Hôas is especially rich in wildlife, which includes desert-adapted elephant, black rhino, giraffe, mountain zebra, eland, kudu, gemsbok, black-faced impala, springbok, duiker, steenbok, klipspringer, warthog, ostrich and baboon. Predators include lion, leopard, cheetah, jackal, spotted and brown hyaena. A high degree of endemism has developed throughout the Namibian escarpment, and the diverse habitats of the conservancy are home to a variety of birds, including many of the country’s near-endemic species such as bare-cheked babblers, Carp’s tit, rosy-faced lovebird, Rüppell’s parrot, Hartlaub’s francolin, violet wood-hoopoe, Rüppell’s korhaan, Damara hornbill, Monteiro’s hornbill, white-tailed shrike, Herero chat and rockrunner. More than half of the reptiles, 25% of the snakes, and over 40% of the lizards occurring in the area are also endemic.

Plant life in the conservancy is as interesting and diverse. Around ten endemic trees occur here, including several Commiphora species. Mopane dominates much of the conservancy, while other distinctive species include kobas, bottle tree, ringwood and shepherd’s tree. Annual rainfall ranges between 250 millimetres in the north-east and 100 millimetres in the south-west. Over three-quarters of all rain falls during the first three months of the year, but varies tremendously from month to month, year to year and place to place. This often forces wildlife to move over large areas in search of food, way beyond the boundaries of the conservancy.

Around ≠Khoadi-//Hôas... The conservancy lies south-west of Etosha National Park and shares a very small border with it, as well as with the adjacent Hobatere Tourism Concession. To the east, ≠Khoadi-//Hôas borders onto private farmland, a part of which is jointly managed in freehold conser- vancies. To the south and west, ≠Khoadi-//Hôas shares borders with //Huab, Torra and Ehi-Rovipuka Conser- vancies and the Etendeka Tourism Concession.
#Khowdai-//Hôas facilitates access to diverse training and capacity building, empowers individuals, especially women, to actively take part in decision-making, as well as instilling a renewed sense of pride in cultural heritage.

The conservancy creates a range of new livelihood options for its residents, including employment and income from tourism, guiding, craft production and other sales and services based on the sustainable use of natural resources.

Farming with goats, sheep and cattle is still very much a part of most livelihoods in #Khowdai-//Hôas, often supplemented by small scale gardening, as well as by income from employment, pensions and remittances. Farming is difficult in the harsh environment, and the conservancy has significantly improved the livelihoods of many people in #Khowdai-//Hôas. Numerous jobs have been created in the tourism industry and the conservancy itself employs more than ten people.

The conservancy distributes meat from trophy hunting and own-use hunting, as well as some cash payments to residents. The conservancy has invested in a variety of capital developments and has donated some money to the schools.

Grootberg Lodge, a hidden treasure perched on the convoluted edge of the Etendeka Plateau, with panoramic views over the Kip River valley, provides excellent accommodation. It is the first lodge in Namibia to be entirely owned by a conservancy, and was built with funds provided by the European Union. The lodge is managed for the conservancy by private tourism operator Journeys Namibia through a joint venture agreement. The lodge creates the main income source for the conservancy, as well as providing significant employment and training opportunities. Journeys Namibia also manages Hoada Campsite as part of the agreement. The campsite is tucked away amongst granite boulders along the road between Kamanjab and the Grootberg Pass.

The lodge and campsite create ideal stop-over options on the way to or from the northern Kunene Region, but are also a real attraction in their own right, especially by offering visitors the unmatched experience of tracking black rhino. In 2008 the Ministry of Environment & Tourism (MET) awarded the rights to the Hobatere Tourism Concession on the northern Kunene River to #Khowdai-//Hôas, opening up another important income opportunity to the community.

The conservancy spends money and provides community and individual benefits in various areas. Areas and amounts vary from year to year, depending on factors such as conservancy income and priorities. Private sector jobs are created through agreements with private sector partners. The pie chart shows the main expenditure and benefit areas in 2010.

Benefits to the conservancy and its members come from a variety of sources. Sources and amounts vary from year to year, depending on factors such as agreements with private sector partners, and market fluctuations. The pie chart shows the main benefit sources in 2010.

The pie chart shows the main expenditure and benefit areas in 2010.
The conservancy is part of the annual North-West Game Count, carried out by the Ministry of Environment & Tourism (MET) in collaboration with the conservancies and with the support of NGOs. The census is the largest annual road-based game count in the world, covering over 7,000 kilometres of road transects in an area of around 70,000 square kilometres.
Conservancies are full of opportunities...

The variety of environmental assets and cultural resources in the Khoa-di-//Hoas Conservancy provides untapped potential.

Challenges... Khoa-di-//Hoas faces the challenge of balancing farming activities with the environmental limitations of an arid ecosystem, as well as optimising benefits from natural resources amongst a society with a long tradition of livestock herding. Stocking rates are very high in many areas of the conservancy and pastures have been overgrazed, particularly around the post and water points where livestock congregate. The close cooperation with the Grotsberg Farmers’ Union enables Khoa-di-//Hoas to address this issue in a coordinated way.

Human wildlife conflict is perhaps the largest challenge for the conservancy, yet this tends to be the case where people coexist with wild animals, especially if these include elephants and large predators. Elephant conflicts have been reduced in the conservancy through dedicated waterholes for wildlife and the protection of water infrastructure. The diversity of predators causing conflicts with livestock, while a real challenge for residents, also indicates a significant conservation success — as a result of increased benefits from wildlife, predator populations have shown important recoveries across much of the north-west. Importantly, elephants and predators are of great value, both to the ecosystem and tourism, and in the long run benefits gained from them should outweigh the costs of living with them. If people outside national parks are to continue to tolerate the presence of dangerous wildlife.

Located on a key tourism route into the north-west, Khoa-di-//Hoas has a variety of opportunities to increase benefits from existing tourism traffic, as well as drawing more people into the area. Grootsberg Lodge and Hoada Campsite already offer excellent accommodation options, and Hoada is currently being upgraded to provide more facilities. Craft sales can generate important income, especially for women, and strategic development that maximises the area’s tourism potential while mitigating pressures on the environment can facilitate a bright future for Khoa-di-//Hoas Conservancy.

The Concessions Policy of the Ministry of Environment & Tourism has enabled communities to benefit from neighbouring state controlled resource areas, and the Hobatere Tourism Concession, a high-value wildlife refuge on the western border of Etosha National Park, holds great opportunities for the conservancy to increase community benefits. Negotiations are currently being held with tourism operators to explore management options for the existing lodge site, as well as new development possibilities in the concession.

With the support of the private sector, the community-owned Grootsberg Lodge has already established itself as a great destination, with rhino tracking being a defining experience — not only for Khoa-di-//Hoas, but for a visit to Namibia. By further enhancing the tourism experience in the conservancy and capitalising on neighbouring Hobatere, Khoa-di-//Hoas can enable a bright future for the conservancy and its residents.

Come to Khoa-di-//Hoas — be part of the future...

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