CONTENTS

2  Foundation of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF)
3  Message from the Ministry
4  Supporting government, supporting the environment
6  The NNF’s growing contribution to conservation
8  NNF empowers communities in Caprivi
10 Fishing is not just about catching fish
12 The NamPower/NNF Strategic Partnership
15 Profiling Namibia
16 Wildlife management in Namibia
19 The valuable contribution to the NNF by Chris Brown
20 Giraffe Indaba
22 Adapting to climate change - the market-first approach
24 Community Forests and Conservancies
26 Strategic partnership for biodiversity hotspots in Namibia
28 Nedbank Namibia and NNF partnering for Namibia
30 Conserving the African wild dog for the future
32 Best practice for managing transboundary waters
34 Trans-boundary fisheries management
36 CBNRM Programme - An African success story
38 NNF/Avls Environmental Education Fund
40 NNF - an unsung administrative partner
42 Farewell to Ben Beytell
43 Hu Berry - Loss for conservation in Namibia
Conservation is not only the responsibility of our government and NGOs. It is also the obligation of every citizen.

Our young country boasts a modern and far-sighted constitution, the first in the world to include the protection of the environment. And we all love to quote Article 95. After more than two decades of independence, the Namibian nation benefits from this collective approach.

Over the past 12 years the Conservation and the Environment in Namibia magazine has carried an inspirational message of dedication, success and development. Our aim has consistently been to present stories about interesting environmental topics to a diverse readership.

Our target audience is Namibians of all ages, places and professions. We have cautioned writers to tell their tales simply, because we hoped that even schoolchildren would find it interesting and understandable. The magazine was never aimed at scientists or academics. It was devised for you and me.

When we introduced the concept of Conservation and the Environment in Namibia more than ten years ago, we convinced local corporate businesses to support our effort, because we wanted them to commit to the cause, whether they were in banking, brewing or providing fuel. We like to show off with the fact that this environmental 'project' you are holding in your hands right now is funded solely by Namibian businesses. We want Namibians to feel that they own part of the collective message, and we want to demonstrate not only conservation values, but principles that articulate that it is in the best interest of Namibians to support what is ours, on all levels. We should all be part of Team Namibia - in conservation, business, industry, education and the services industry. In our big country, every small gesture counts.

To sell this concept was not that easy in the nineties. 'Eco' was not yet the buzzword. We had to convince clever marketing teams not to use valuable space for traditional advertising. We argued that it would not serve our collective purpose. Instead we asked for their commitment towards the cause, as a mission statement in black and white, because we were convinced that this would make their clients and workforce proud.

Little did we know then that a decade later, environmental credentials would indeed become a valuable 'selling point'. So here we are in our second decade - still going strong!

Since we were not there to report on the creation of the Namibia Nature Foundation 25 years ago, we feel honoured to celebrate the success of the NGO's first quarter century.

We are proud of an organisation that kept up with the times and with change, and that continues to provide much-needed support on many different levels in a way that would have made the founders proud.

Riéth van Schalkwyk
rieth@mac.com.na

Weaver, Steve Felton, Barbara Paterson, Ann Scott, Alice Jarvis, Mike Scott, Peter Tarr, Andy Tutchéng, Paswell Chisanga, Rolf Sprung, Jonas Ngishidi, Faith Chambara Munebyru, Robin Lines, Chris Weaver, Dorothy Wamunyima, Denis Tweedle, Rachel Malone, Sally Wood, John Mendelssohn, Linda Baker, Marla Pimenta

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LOUW’S LEGACY TO CONSERVATION IN NAMIBIA

By the late 1970s, Louw had been closely associated with the Skeleton Coast Park for nearly twenty years. Practising as a lawyer in Windhoek, he initially came to know the terrain through clients applying for prospecting rights in the area. During these visits he became increasingly captivated by the extraordinary beauty and diversity of the landscape. He also became progressively more aware that the remoteness and untouched nature of the terrain could easily be destroyed by over-utilisation, and that entry to the area by tourists and four-wheel drivers needed to be controlled because of the sensitivity of the desert surface to vehicle tracks, the removal of historical artefacts, the disfigurement of rock paintings, the indiscriminate removal of plants and the dwindling numbers of game.

In the mid-eighties Polla Swart, Director of the then Directorate of Nature Conservation and Resorts, urged Louw to continue with his efforts to establish such a foundation. The first step was to formalise the constitution, and then to “sell” the concept of the foundation to conservation-minded companies and individuals, initiate fundraising and appoint trustees. On 29 July 1987, with the support and patronage of Mr KWR List of the Ohlthaver and List Group and the appointment of Douglas Reissner as its first director, the NNF was launched as a non-governmental, non-profit organisation governed by an independent Board of Trustees.

The primary aims of the NNF were to promote sustainable development, conserve biological diversity and natural ecosystems, and utilise natural resources wisely and ethically for the benefit of all Namibians, both present and future. The NNF was tasked to:

- Initiate, support and promote activities that conserve Namibia’s environment, protect biological diversity and foster the sustainable and ethical use of natural resources; support and promote initiatives that strengthen Namibian institutions to understand and manage natural resources better; raise and administer funds for conservation and Namibia’s environment; plan, develop, implement and administer projects to support the mission of the Foundation; provide small grants to worthy institutions; promote and support initiatives aimed at public awareness and education on the environment and sustainable use of natural resources; and establish and maintain good, open channels of communication with partners and potential partners.

To achieve these goals, the NNF has been working in close collaboration with the Namibian Government, NGOs, international bilateral and multilateral donors and the private sector.

Author and photograph: Amy Schoeman, Venture Publications

While Louw Schoeman’s 30-year involvement in the Skeleton Coast has become his lasting legacy in Namibia’s conservation history, it is not widely known that he was the original founder of the Namibia Nature Foundation, an organisation initially established to act as a conduit for funds donated to the official conservation authority for specific conservation purposes. Since being formally constituted in 1987, the foundation has evolved steadily to become the leading conservation NGO in Namibia.

Louw’s belief that such a foundation was fast becoming a necessity, was initially prompted by a lecture given by Professor Clifford S Crawford of the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, USA, on the over-utilisation of travel destinations such as the Grand Canyon, Petrified Forest and Death Valley. Professor Crawford argued that “...unless tourism in dry climates is kept within the bounds of ecological tolerance, the future of the industry, as well as the resource it exploits, will soon be irreversibly damaged.”
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NNF ON ITS 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS

We at the MET are proud to have been associated with the Namibia Nature Foundation - or the NNF as it is known to most of us!

Founded in 1987, the NNF was initially established to help the then Department of Nature Conservation to raise and administer funds for the conservation of wildlife and to manage protected areas. Since then, the work of the NNF has expanded, both in scope and in volume, to encompass the whole field of environment. We have been privileged to work closely with the NNF on a range of conservation and sustainable development programmes - through co-implementation and support, and to assist in the financial management of critical programmes supporting our country.

The NNF may have started by supporting the protection of national parks and endangered species. However, it has expanded to targeting environmental management, its people and wildlife. From rhinos to wild dogs, from supporting the establishment of conservancies and national parks, to the sharing of resources and providing policy guidance, training and education. As a collaborative partner the NNF has been as solid as a Namibian rock on issues of environmental management and conservation.

The NNF has worked and continues to work within the basis of the environmental clauses in our National Constitution and works to implement national policies and programmes. Its newly launched Strategic Plan highlights the link it has with Namibia’s Vision 2030 and the support it has provided for our and other ministries in building our country.

The NNF has been a major NGO partner of most Directorates of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, and has evolved into a well recognised national institution that provides support to all relevant aspects of the environment in Namibia, from sustainable development to wise and ethical natural resource management.

I would like you to join me in congratulating the NNF on a job well done over the past 25 years. For the next 25 years we look forward to continuing a strong partnership that will help us conserve Namibia together!

Honourable Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah
Minister of Environment and Tourism
A collaborative partnership with the authorities

SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT, SUPPORTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Since its inception, the key aim of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) has been to support the work of the Namibian Government regarding wildlife conservation, natural resource management and rural livelihoods development. In doing so, this support initially focused on the work of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), through fund management and programme support. Over the years it has expanded to collaborative partnerships with most ministries in Namibia.

The relationship with the MET has been vital for the growth of the NNF. We are proud of the valuable role we have played in the successful completion of a large number of important programmes.

Fund management
Providing support in managing funds was perhaps the key raison d’être for the NNF back in the early 1990s, and the range of funds managed on behalf of the MET (and others) over the history of the NNF is vast, with a huge A-to-Z range of project types - from managing funds for aircraft to do aerial monitoring to fund management for mountain-zebra observation.

The range of donors to the MET whose funds the NNF has managed is extensive, varying from international organisations such as the UNEP and UNDP, and national development sponsors such as USAID, to other NGOs such as the WWF and local companies like Rössing Uranium.

Independent fund management is often a requirement of many donors of programme support, and this is a service the NNF has been able to develop and provide.

Given the many obvious benefits from these MET programmes, the NNF’s role as fund manager provides us with a great sense of achievement.

Programme support
The NNF has also provided valuable programme support to the MET, examples of which include the the Southern African Elephant Survey and Monitoring Programme (ELESMAP) project and Country Pilot Partnership (CPP) programmes. These are just two of many that highlight the partnership and diversity of the relationship.

The Southern African Elephant Survey and Monitoring Programme (ELESMAP) was a project managed by the NNF in the mid-1990s.
**ELESMAP**

ELESMAP was a project managed by the NNF in the mid-1990s. It was funded by the European Union, participating governments represented by the MET in Namibia, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The central aim of the project was to carry out a census of elephant populations in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa and Malawi, while also providing valuable secondary information regarding elephant range and distribution.

The census was a considerable logistical challenge, given the elephants’ contiguous range of around 300,000 square kilometres, the variety of landscape types, the different population densities of elephants in each country, and the variety of aerial sampling designs needed to be developed/adapted. Through its complexity, the programme encouraged the development of local capacities with regard to census design and data analysis. This development of monitoring capabilities and the data provided have enabled regional cooperation on the management of elephant populations, providing the foundation for conservation of this important threatened species.

**Country Pilot Partnership**

The NNF has been integral in the development and rolling out of Namibia’s CPP Integrated Sustainable Land Management (ISLM) Programme, which operates across eleven regions in the country and to which the NNF has been providing field support to pilot projects in the Erongo, Kavango and Caprivi regions.

Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the programme is aimed at piloting a wide range of practical initiatives in local communities, from the introduction of conservation agriculture to the development of small-scale aquaculture, to help assess their viability as livelihood diversification strategies. Such diversification is vital in the face of unpredictable weather, desertification and the potential for climate change to impact on current livelihoods.

A key aspect of the programme has been the direct involvement of local communities from day one, with inception meetings and planning based on community wants and needs – a true visioning exercise. The NNF has been one of the organisations that has been instrumental in ‘bottom-up’ community involvement through its support in regional offices, and in so doing has sought to ensure the sustainability of project sites into the future, when donor support may not be available. Whilst some pilot projects have been a success, others have been less so. However, the nature of the programme has been to test these approaches to provide future assistance to the MET and other key partners in the support given to local communities, and developing diversified livelihood options across Namibia.

**Building capacity**

Since 2005, in addition to the relationship forged through fund management and programme support, the MET and NNF have jointly hosted Fellows from the UK-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI). On request this highly regarded international programme provides postgraduate economists to partner countries across the world, with the joint aims of providing and developing technical economics capacity and giving practical experience to the individual Fellow.

The programme is funded jointly by the recipient country and the ODI, making this a unique form of technical support that has been practised successfully in over 40 countries since the 1960s and in Namibia since the early 1990s.

Based part-time within the Environmental Economics Unit at the Directorate of Environmental Affairs and part-time at the NNF, with the NNF providing the requisite financial support, successive ODI Fellows have been able to provide key economics assistance to both institutions. So far four Fellows have carried out their Fellowship at both institutions (for a period of two years each). Indeed, the joint nature of this Fellowship post is in itself unique amongst the 100 or so international fellowship posts, further demonstrating the cooperative relationship between the institutions.

**Support into the future**

The NNF will continue to strive to support Government through the important work it carries out with regards to the environment and sustainable development. By continually improving this support, we hope that we can continue playing a valuable role in linking high-level Government initiatives with local communities on the ground, and in so doing make a positive impact on local living standards across the country.

**Author:** Luke Sweeney, MET NNF ODI Fellow

**Photos:** Helge Denker & NNF
The WWF initially became involved with the NNF in 1992, when the NNF was requested by the then Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism to manage WWF funds provided to the Ministry to support conservation activities in the West Caprivi Game Reserve and Bushmanland East. Over the years the NNF has evolved from a financial management service provider to a major conservation organisation in the field.

These two conservation organisations have faced many challenges together. In 1993, the NNF was technically bankrupt, but a large institutional support grant from the USAID-funded Living In A Finite Environment (LIFE) Project enabled the NNF to recover and develop into a self-sustaining organisation. The grant was aimed at building a cost-recovery system into the NNF’s operations and bolstering its institutional capacity by paying for key management costs until the cost-recovery system became effective.

With these concerns in the past, the NNF is now a major conservation player in Namibia. Although it continues to provide a valuable financial management service, the NNF now also provides hands-on advice and support to rural communities in different regions of the country by providing technical support in Community Based Resource Management (CBNRM), most notably in the Caprivi and Kavango regions.

**The KaZa TFCA**

The Caprivi and Kavango regions border Angola, Zambia and Botswana, three of the five members of KaZa, the developing Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area. With Zimbabwe and Namibia, the five KaZa members
will integrate wildlife management and tourism development. KaZa should also harmonise trans-boundary fishery policy and management practices. The NNF is working with local fishermen, traditional authorities, conservancies and the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to introduce effective trans-boundary fishery management systems with counterpart stakeholders in Zambia and Botswana for equitable sharing of the Zambezi River system. This cutting-edge approach entails the establishment of community fish sanctuaries and negotiations at village level across national borders.

In the Caprivi Region, the NNF is working with the farming community, communal conservancies and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry to introduce Conservation Agriculture. This minimal tillage approach to crop production is reducing deforestation, increasing crop production on smaller but more fertile plots, and assisting with the maintenance of wooded tracts of land that are conducive to wildlife movement.

In the Kavango Region, the NNF has long been an influential Namibian and regional catalyst to river-basin management. The Every River Has Its People Project earned a solid reputation for engaging local communities in river-basin management, through the introduction of conservancies, land-use planning and zonation, together with the diversification of livelihoods, including craft production. The NNF’s support to Kavango conservancies has gradually expanded to the promotion of the Khau- dum Conservancy Complex, creating a synergy between the park and communities, safeguarding the Khau-dum National Park and improving livelihoods of residents of neighbouring conservancies where wildlife moves freely.

**Coordination conservation efforts**

At national level, the NNF provides many valuable conservation services. It plays a strong role in coordinating the NACSO Natural Resources Working Group. This technical group is composed of members from NGOs around the country and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. This synergetic group assists conservancies to map their boundaries, design and implement management plans, manage and monitor natural resources, set game-hunting quotas, and implement game translocation. The NNF’s contribution to natural resource management has strengthened the Namibia CBNRM Programme, with many of the practices developed now being replicated elsewhere in the world.

Namibia’s lands sector has also benefited from advice and support to the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement in the creation of innovative land-management policies for communal areas, and the NNF’s work with the Kavango’s regional stakeholders in the creation of land-use plans.

More recently, the NNF started playing a stronger role in combating climate change. Most predictions are that Namibia will become even drier. It is therefore crucial for stakeholders to understand the potential negative consequences of climate change and how these impacts can be mitigated through adaptive management practices. As a key player in the CBNRM sector, the NNF is well poised to share its experiences with the management of water, land, wildlife, fish, and livelihood diversification to assist stakeholders across the country to prepare for and counter the consequences of impending climate change.

The NNF’s evolution into a key player in natural-resource management has been built on a strong foundation: the organisational strength of the NNF in providing sound financial management services for partners. The emergence of the NNF from its own financial problems in the early 1990s to its prominent national role in conservation and development over the past 20 years has been both remarkable and pleasurable to follow. This is a tribute to its staff, its board, and its directors over time, who have all worked together to create one of the most successful and highly respected conservation NGOs in Southern Africa.

**Author:** Chris Weaver
**Director of WWF in Namibia**

**Photo:** Helge Denker

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Standard Bank is very proud to be an internationally recognised financial institution with representation in several countries worldwide. This does not only prove that we are a well-established and trusted bank, but also allows our customers to benefit from the highest expertise and knowledge.

Although we are a large global bank, our roots are firmly entrenched in Africa where we are represented in numerous countries through more than 6,000 points of representation. This surely makes us a giant on the African continent. The group has played a central role in the development of the Southern African economy for more than 140 years. This has been done by constantly aligning its presence in the market with evolving trends of the region’s economies, and delivering relevant banking and financial services.

Our three main pillars of business are Personal and Business Banking, Corporate and Investment Banking, and Wealth. Across these areas, our staff aspires to provide our customers with bespoke banking solutions.

We are proud to be able to take our services to the people of Namibia through our extensive retail network and ATMs. In our efforts to continuously make banking more accessible to the Namibian people, Standard Bank recently opened branches in Mukuru, Otjiwarongo and Opuwo.

Standard Bank’s CSR initiatives are aimed at achieving and sustaining positive social development of the communities where we operate. Through various community interventions, our effective community re-investment will further reinforce our values and achieve our business objectives. In 2011 the Standard Bank’s CSR program invested N$3.6 million into Namibian communities.

**Mpumzi Pupuma**
**Managing Director**

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Moving Forward
Three key projects have become essential ingredients in the strategy of the Namibia Nature Foundation to empower communities to manage natural resources and improve their living standards, not only in Caprivi, but also in the rest of Namibia.

The NNF works with a host of communal conservancies across Namibia, providing technical support and financial assistance through the Natural Resources Working Group (NRWG), which links it to other NGOs supporting conservancies under the umbrella of NACSO, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations.

After the rains, the Zambezi and Kwan-ndo rivers often flood much of Caprivi, destroying crops. But for the rest of the year most of Caprivi is dry. The soil is sandy, and sufficient rainwater to grow maize or millet is by no means certain. For many Caprivian farmers, trapped between having too much and too little water, poverty is the norm. Hence an innovative rural development programme was born. Managed by the NNF, the Community Empowerment programme has three main elements: conservation agriculture, chilli growing and fish farming.

- Jenny Mubita walks for 30 minutes to the trial plot to till the land before it becomes too hot. It’s hard work digging holes in the sandy soil, but last year she saw the bumper harvest that other farmers produced, and she is keen to repeat their success.
- Rosemary Poniso has two things in common with Jenny: she is a widow and poor; and just a few nights ago the elephants came and ate her entire tomato crop. But while Jenny is planting maize, Rosemary is tending to another precious crop: chillies.
- At Mwalala pond, near Bukalo village, villagers are busy hauling in a net to sort the unwanted catfish, brought by floodwaters, from the valuable Tilapia they will harvest later in the year for food and to sell.

Conservation agriculture

Nobody knows for sure what climate change will bring. Namibia is likely
to become much drier, but erratic weather may bring more frequent flooding. Making the most of the land available will become increasingly important; and that’s what conservation agriculture does.

Jenny pulls a line of string taut along the length of her 10 x 20-metre plot. Using a measuring stick, she marks spaces for holes and carefully digs them out, using another stick to measure the depth. When the work is done, she will bring manure from her cattle kraal and drop a piece in each hole, and when the rains come, the precious seeds will go in. Each completed hole lies 2.5 cm below the surface of the field, to attract and hold water. To lessen the impact of rain, a mulch of stalks from last year’s crop is laid on top.

The harvest promises to be good. Each woman in the trial has two plots: one for maize or millet, and one for cowpeas or groundnuts. The plots are rotated to enrich the soil.

Jenny is happy with her day’s work and sets off home to till her own field until the children come home from school. Although her crop yield does own a small number of cattle, and she’s looking forward to next year, when the project will introduce an animal-drawn ripper that will till the soil more efficiently than a plough, the soil is tilled to enrich the soil.

Two techniques have been developed over the years by NGOs in southern Zambia and Caprivi. Chilli ‘bombs’ take advantage of the enemy by using elephant dung. This is mixed 50/50 with broken chilli. When the elephants come to the field, hot coals are placed on the bombs, and the pungent smell keeps the giants at bay. The other method is to soak rags in a mixture of old engine oil and chillies, and to hang them from wire to form ‘chilli fences’.

Wildlife benefits too

Keeping the elephants away from the crops is also part of a strategy to establish wildlife corridors through which elephants in particular can move freely. This way the crops are safeguarded, and villagers don’t come into confrontation with the elephants, which can provoke them, causing further damage.

Conservation agriculture is an important part of the strategy. Smaller fields with greater yields can be cultivated away from wildlife corridors, and are easier to guard with novel methods such as chilli bombs.

Chillies for export

The chillies bought for bombs by NGOs assisting the farmers can be low grade, but as the farmers gain experience, they can produce Tabasco-grade chillies for export. In 2010 a start was made with production. The farmers have to handpick the ripe chillies daily, and select the best grade. The chillies are salted and packed into drums and exported to Zambia, and from there on to other buyers. If production could reach 20 tons a year, it would be worthwhile exporting directly to South Africa and the USA.

Cash crops such as Rosemary’s tomatoes and chillies, and Jenny’s groundnuts and surplus maize, will make all the difference to rural households – as will fish farming.

Low-input fish farming

All over the world fish are farmed in large ponds for commercial sales. But natural fishponds cost much less. They don’t require digging and lining, or expensive water tanks and pipelines. Fingerlings (young fish) are bought with NNF project money from private fish farmers, and each pond is stocked with up to 3 000.

Mwalala pond is relatively small and shared by 15 households. To date only one harvest has been produced. This was in 2009. The fish caught were tilapia, and the villagers ate almost all of them. “People are hungry in the dry season,” says NNF’s Priscah Lilungwe. The ‘low input’ is important, she stresses. The people here are poor and need the maximum results from the minimum input. The fish are fed on leftover millet and maize grain, and the pond is fertilised with cattle dung, which encourages the growth of plankton.

Priscah is enthusiastic about the future: “At Silumbu they took 5 000 big fish, and the Sibula Mundi pond near Lake Liambezi is very big, with thousands of fish. They have four or five harvests a year.” This is a commercial proposition for an area hungry for income.

In Caprivi, as is the case elsewhere, people are adapting to climate change. In Caprivi’s conservancies, with assistance from the NNF, the challenge is to harness natural resources and to benefit by conserving them. In an area bounded by rivers, it is best to go with the flow.

Author: Steve Felton, WWF NACSO
Photos: NNF
FISHING IS NOT JUST ABOUT CATCHING FISH

The constant hum of the ship’s engine is suddenly drowned out by the whining of winches. A bell sounds to call the crew to their stations. Although I’m not part of the crew, I climb out of my bunk to get dressed. This is easier said than done. Leaning against the bunk, I struggle to keep my balance, standing on one foot while the other is halfway down a trouser leg.

A couple of oranges rolls across the table as the floor of the cabin rises towards me. I want to make a bid towards catching them, but then think better of it. I’m not cut out for this, I think, my stomach churning. Trying to ignore the queasy feeling and holding on firmly with both hands, I find my way out and up the stairs to the bridge.

I am on the Resplendent, one of Hanga-na’s wet-fish trawlers, to do participant observations for a research project. From the elevated position on the bridge, I look back over the deck to where members of the crew are waiting for the trawl gear to come up from the depth of the ocean. As soon as it appears, the laborious process of getting the massive net on board and the catch below deck begins. Winches and heavy metal cables are being manipulated and the guys move about the deck following a plan I don’t understand. All the while the vessel is rolling heavily in the swell. I wonder how these men stay on board. Bad weather increases the danger, explains the skipper, causing accidents to happen so much more easily. As captain, he is ultimately responsible for the safety of every person on board. But today’s weather isn’t that bad, he chuckles. “It’s just my lack of sea legs that makes it appear worse.”

Namibia’s hake harvesting fleet comprises around 120 vessels, including wet fish trawlers, freezer vessels and long-liners. At the time of independence,
Namibia inherited severely depleted fish stocks, a result of irresponsible fishing practices by foreign fleets, and a legacy of the scientific management approaches of the past.

For the last hundred years, traditional fisheries management has been founded on the assumption that the dynamics of fish populations could be predicted based on a few parameters, and that the way to manage fisheries was to control fishing. The failure of this approach is obvious today, and the collapse of the world’s fish stocks sends out a clear message.

**Rebuilding fisheries**

Since gaining independence, Namibia has worked hard at rebuilding her fisheries. But old habits die hard, and so it is hardly surprising that the traditional, science-based management approach remains prevalent in fisheries management worldwide.

At the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development, Namibia made a commitment, along with neighbouring nations South Africa and Angola, to implement a holistic management regime, often referred to as the ecosystem approach to fisheries management, or EAF for short. According to this new paradigm, fish stocks should not be considered in isolation but as parts of complex social ecological systems.

For fisheries management this means that it is important to think about the role of hake, horse mackerel and sardine within the larger context of the social-ecological food chain. This involves asking questions about what it is that we as a society value about fisheries. What should the goals of our management regime be? Obviously, the long-term health of the fish populations and the wider marine ecosystem are central to such questions, as are the social, cultural, and political contexts of fishing.

The Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) is currently partnering with the Benguela Current Commission (BCC) and the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation to investigate what the sociopolitical circumstances of fisheries might be in the Benguela Region, and how this context might be integrated into fisheries management.

**Ecosystem approach**

The BCC has a mandate from Namibia, South Africa and Angola to promote an ecosystem approach to ocean governance in the region. An essential element of the BCC mandate is to increase the explicit inclusion of social and economic issues in the fisheries management decision process. Issues such as poverty, food security and unemployment are big factors that are already playing out in the political arena.

Because traditional fisheries management is geared towards considering basic biological facts and stock estimates, sociopolitical considerations are treated in less rigorous and often unstructured ways. It is therefore important to create spaces where these considerations can be carried out openly and transparently. As a pre-requisite for such transparency, fisheries managers and decision-makers need better information and knowledge on the social, cultural and economic elements that are relevant to fisheries in the BCC countries.

As part of the project on the human dimensions of fisheries, the NNF has facilitated a series of workshops to bring key people in the region together for roundtable discussions on what the human dimensions of fisheries mean and to agree on priority topics for further research. By the end of 2011 the project will produce baseline reports and research recommendations for key fisheries in the three countries.

The NNF human-dimension project is at the cutting edge of fisheries management and research worldwide. Although an EAF has been accepted as the preferred way to address fisheries management questions, implementation has been slow. A key barrier is that managers are not yet equipped with the tools or the required information to grapple with the many sociopolitical issues around managing fisheries.

**Author:** Barbara Paterson, NNF consultant  
**Photo:** John Paterson
Recently reported mortality incidents have involved various raptor species, including eagles, vultures and owls. Pictured here is a booted eagle, Aquila pennatus.

**Namibia’s rich biodiversity includes 676 bird species – nearly two thirds of those found in Southern Africa. Unfortunately many of these (9%) are increasingly under threat, including birds of prey.**

In February 2005, the Namibia Nature Foundation initiated a workshop where a comprehensive raptor action plan was developed.

In view of the rapidly increasing power-line network coverage across Namibia, the national power utility, NamPower, was approached due to a concern about the potential threat and unknown extent of mortality of large raptors on power lines, particularly as wildlife electrocutions often cause inconvenient outages, resulting in blackouts and high maintenance and repair costs.

NamPower addressed these issues in October 2008 by joining forces with the NNF in a strategic partnership. Initially advised by a power-line/wildlife conflict expert from South Africa, Chris van Rooyen, this groundbreaking initiative is managed by the NNF and endorsed and funded by the European Investment Bank.

The mission is, ultimately, to develop a comprehensive biodiversity information resource initially focusing on birds - the Environmental Information Service (EIS) www.the-eis.com - that will assist NamPower, regional electricity distributors (REDs) and other environmental and industry role players in Namibia to manage power-line impacts on the natural environment and vice versa.

Considerable progress has been made in achieving the project objectives,
which are directly related to a dynamic action plan developed in consultation with stakeholders. The aim is to:
• promote awareness/communication about the risks that power lines pose to birds, and birds to power lines;
• report, monitor and manage power-line/bird interactions; and
• incorporate bird/wildlife mitigation into the planning of future power-line networks.

A countrywide series of workshops was undertaken to promote awareness, build capacity and gather information on wildlife/power-line incidents in Namibia. The target audience included NamPower and RED staff, landowners and managers (that is farmers, conservancies, mines, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and other institutions), and all other interested parties.

An incident-reporting database has been implemented to record bird/wildlife interactions with power lines (such as mortalities, roosts, nests, outages, and so on). Recently reported mortality incidents have involved various raptor species (including eagles, vultures and owls), bustards and flamingos, and even small-spotted genet and giraffe!

There is growing concern about collision incidents involving Ludwig's bustards (recently up-listed to Globally Threatened) and kori bustards in the south. Bustards (and some other birds) appear to have a ‘blind spot’ and may not be able to see power lines ahead of them, even if the lines are marked.

A workshop was organised in October 2010 to discuss how this problem could be addressed.

Flamingos also a concern
Repeated incidents of collisions of lesser and greater flamingos on power lines crossing migration routes are also of concern. Flamingos often fly at night, in groups and sometime at low altitudes, and do not appear to be able to see standard mitigation devices on power lines. Furthermore, outages caused by nesting sociable and red-billed buffalo-weavers are a persistent and ongoing problem that results in much unnecessary expenditure to utility companies.

It is only through dedicated repeat surveys of power lines that the impact on bird populations may be determined in a scientific way. Pilot surveys and investigations have already been initiated. The present focus is to roll out a comprehensive series of dedicated surveys, especially in areas where problems are experienced or anticipated. The results will be used as a basis for planning and initiating mitigation measures in cooperation with power-line suppliers. In particular, problems associated with species flying at night (including flamingos) and bustards will be addressed by working closely with specialists and related initiatives. This includes a project to determine the flight paths of flamingos in Namibia with support from the Go Green Fund. Different types of mitigation measures will be used experimentally, and their effectiveness monitored – so stay tuned!

Exciting news is the recent approval of three student projects to investigate red-billed buffalo-weaver and sociable weaver nesting problems, and a project on bustards and power lines in Namibia.

Environmental Information Service (EIS) Namibia

Guideline documents on high-risk factors for birds and an environmental checklist have been compiled for use by planners of new power-line routes. However, one of the most important and exciting mitigation tools is the EIS, which feeds the findings/resources of...
the Partnership to power suppliers and EIA practitioners and other planners.

What is the EIS?
- a free, online information resource for Namibia (www.the-eis.com);
- a search and retrieval system for data (including databases, spatial data, literature, links to relevant websites and organisations, and other resources); and
- a repository for data and a mechanism for sharing data.

The EIS is well on its way to becoming the ‘one-stop-shop’ for public environmental information in Namibia, both through providing data directly and by providing links to other sources of information. Its users include government staff, NGO staff, researchers, consultants, EIA practitioners, students and many other people who are involved in environmental issues, within Namibia and further afield.

The EIS already includes a large volume and range of information. Because it is still under development, new information and new features are being added on an ongoing basis. It includes an upload option that allows anyone to submit data, and has a number of features that allow users to interact with it.

Why do we need an EIS?
Wherever possible, planning and decisions should be informed by up-to-date, reliable data and information. This is as true for environmental issues as it is for other areas. Much environmental information exists which is not easily accessible, such as literature, reports, GIS data and databases. Often finding out what information exists and then obtaining it is a long and time-consuming process requiring many phone calls and visits to offices. The EIS brings data and information together from a wide range of sources with a user-friendly search interface and makes it freely available for download.

Who can use the EIS?
Anyone with Internet access can use the EIS for free. There is no need to register or pay to search for or download information and data, although you are encouraged to register as an EIS user so that we can keep you informed when new data and features are added.

What is in the EIS?
The EIS incorporates a wide range of data types, including:
- literature: books, reports, journal articles, theses and more
- links to other useful websites and data sources
- environmental impact assessment materials
- environmental legislation
- links to environmental organisations

Special features
The EIS responds to its users’ needs. With the support of NamPower, a fully customised ‘Birds and Power Lines’ tool has been developed to support decision-making processes regarding the placement of power lines in relation to birds, especially those species that are impacted by, and have an impact on, power lines. This tool allows the online viewing of spatial (map) data so that the user can, for example, interactively view maps of power-line distribution and overlay hotspots of sensitive bird species distributions with maps of key factors such as topography and known incidents between birds and power lines. Used appropriately, this innovative tool can assist NamPower in planning new power lines so that the environmental impact will be minimised.

Acknowledgements
We wish to thank the staff of NamPower, Cenored, Nored and Erongo RED for their ongoing interest and support for the project; all the other interested organisations and individuals for their willing cooperation and contributions; and especially the NamPower/NNF working group for its invaluable support. The European Investment Bank is thanked for generous funding for the project.

*All project workshop reports and newsletters are available on www.nnf.org.na/nampowerproject.htm

Author: Ann Scott, Alice Jarvis and Mike Scott
Photos: John Mendelsohn & Ann Scott
In a spate of rash madness, Drs Bert Toxopeus (of ITC, now the Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation of the University of Twente in The Netherlands) and Chris Brown (then the head of the Directorate of Environmental Affairs at the MET) hatched a plan to produce an environmental profile of the Caprivi Region. That was in 1996, 15 years back.

After two years’ experimenting to work through technical challenges such as using satellite images to produce sensible maps of vegetation and soil types, as well as months of agonising navel gazing to work out what the profile should sensibly say, An Environmental Profile and Atlas of Caprivi was published in 1997. Since then, the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) has supported the production of many more profiles, either by commissioning their production or through providing various kinds of support. Each profile was designed to produce a synthesis of what was known about the subject, as well as assemble whatever other information was also available. Two products were thus produced by each profile project: a published book and a compendium of data.

To date, other profiles produced include ones on the four central-northern regions of Namibia (2000), the eastern communal areas of Namibia (2002), the Okavango River Basin (2003), the Kavango Region (2003) and, most recently, the Okavango Delta (2010). Other profiles have also focused on key sectors in Namibia: Woodlands and Forestry (2005), Health (2001), Farming Systems (2006), Human Demography (2010), and Poverty (2011).

The support and vision of donors and collaborators on Namibia’s various profiles is to be commended, and the books and data assembled will remain as legacies of their support for many years to come.

Perhaps Namibia’s biggest profile was published in 2002: An Atlas of Namibia: a portrait of its people and land. This profile was accompanied by a compilation of data, mainly consisting of all the mapped information in GIS databases, and has been a valuable resource for many across the country. As an example of its popularity and value, the Atlas has been reprinted three times, while most of the other profiles are now out of print, although available free online at Namibia’s environmental information service (EIS) - www.the-eis.com.

Importantly, hundreds of copies of all the profiles have been distributed free of charge to schools, libraries and other bona fide users, while many copies have been offered for sale to help ensure they were available to a broad audience. The value in sharing such information more widely and now free online is something the NNF and its partners are proving to be priceless as a resource tool.

In 2007, the NNF, collaborating with NamPower, decided to develop a strategic partnership and support an effort to bring together all the digital data assembled by the profile projects (and many others) and to make these freely available on the web. As highlighted above, the result is Namibia’s EIS, which is available online at: www.the-eis.com.

All the geographical profiles focusing on regions of the country adopted a ‘supply-and-demand’ approach. This involved first describing and mapping the presence of natural resources and then overlaying information on demand, typically as measures of human and livestock numbers. These overlays provided opportunities to identify areas where pressures were higher or lower, for example areas of woodland which might be severely exploited by large numbers of people who require firewood or wood for building materials.

To obtain such measures of human demand, methods were developed to map and thus count individual households throughout the regions being profiled. These demographic data, and others assembled by the profiles projects, have proved valuable to all sorts of development projects, such as ones planning roads or the supply of water and electricity. From the beginning it was decided that all profile data should be made available to anyone and everyone for free, irrespective of the intended use. This meant that planning and other development projects could save considerable sums of money by using the existing profile data. Estimates made of the value of these ‘free data’ showed that the savings made by the country were considerably greater than the total amounts initially invested on compiling the data and publishing the profile books.

This is one measure of the value of the profile projects. It is much harder to guess the degree to which information in the published books has been useful, but continuing demands for the books suggests that they remain useful resources. Although hard copies on paper are no longer available, PDF copies of most of the books can be obtained online. The support and vision of donors and collaborators on Namibia’s various profiles is to be commended, and the books and data assembled will remain as legacies of their support for many years to come.

Author: John Mendelsohn, RAISON
When people in Africa think about land, they invariably think about agriculture. Yet Africa has no comparative advantage when it comes to farming. Soils are moderate to poor; almost 70% of the continent is dry and sub-humid to semi-arid and hyper-arid; rainfall is unpredictable; and there are many endemic diseases.

Industrialised markets are far away, infrastructure and transport are under-developed, there are no or few subsidies to help farmers compete on global markets, and human skills and capacity are extremely limited for global competitiveness. Cultures and ways of doing business are different in Africa compared to industrialised countries with potential markets. Market protection, often under the guise of health or environment, and other regulatory restrictions, create barriers to the industrialised markets that are difficult to overcome. At the same time, subsidised agricultural surpluses are dumped on Africa, undermining local markets. Africa is thus at a huge global disadvantage when it comes to farming. This is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

So why do politicians and technocrats continue to promote farming as the salvation to poverty? Two main reasons are usually cited: food security and em-
ployment. There are also a number of other supporting arguments. Subsistence farming provides a social safety net: there are local markets; and perhaps, with luck and perseverance, we could break into global markets more successfully in future. The real reason is rarely given – that there are no really viable alternatives - or none that come readily to the minds of politicians and traditionalist technocrats.

On a global scale, farming is the greatest cause of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation on the planet; through land transformation, water abstraction, herbicide and pesticide use, and carbon-based energy use. So, any form of land use that could out-compete farming in terms of job creation, food security, income generation and foreign-exchange earnings, and that at the same time protects biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes, would be of incalculable benefit to human development and sustainable life-support systems.

**Africa’s potential wildlife value**

Africa has an alternative land use - its wildlife, its indigenous biodiversity. This is Africa’s global comparative and competitive advantage. It would out-compete farming on 70% and more of the African continent. No other continent has anything approaching the potential wildlife value of Africa. Wildlife can be used to drive a tourism industry; to produce meat at higher levels of sustainable production than domestic stock; to support a trophy and sport-hunting industry; and to create a lucrative trade in live animals and animal products. With the right policy conditions this would have a positive impact on biodiversity and landscape conservation, and on ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services.

Why then is it not embraced widely across Africa? There are many reasons, the most important perhaps being that:
- Wildlife is still seen by many politicians and decision-makers in Africa as a holiday interest of people from Europe and North America, not as a serious national natural resource with huge production potential for economic development;
- The production systems around wildlife are different from traditional production systems that are well established in the farming sector, and most countries in Africa have simply not come to grips with these markets and mechanisms; and
- A set of preconditions is required for a wildlife industry to prosper.

The most important of these preconditions are security of tenure and devolving rights to the owners and custodians of the land on which the wildlife resides; an open market economy; a reasonably efficient and corruption-free governance system; and peace and national security.

Only three countries in Africa have these conditions partly right and are currently achieving any significant success with wildlife as a national economic asset for local land owners and custodians, namely Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, with the last having regressed because of the current difficulties facing that country.

**A win-win situation**

Namibia is right at the forefront, having achieved more than any other country in Africa on both its freehold and its communal lands. No country on any other continent can compete in this sector. However, Namibia has not yet even closely realised its wildlife potential. To achieve this, the country needs to adopt a more aggressive economic approach to its wildlife and see it as a major comparative and competitive global advantage.

To achieve its full potential, Namibia needs to devolve more rights on wildlife and other natural resources at local level, reduce bureaucracy in its administration and regulation of the sector, and address some of the international restrictions on global trade in sustainably managed wildlife products. These actions would all have a highly positive impact on conservation and the sustainable management of wildlife resources, achieving an economic and conservation win-win situation.

Another important step in optimising wildlife production in Namibia is to in-
crease the landscape scale of management. This involves creating a favourable environment for neighbouring landowners and custodians to work together at a strategic level to attain greater benefits for all, which cannot be achieved by everyone working in isolation. This approach is called ‘landscape co-management’.

Again, Namibia is at the forefront of this international movement. The excellent protected-area network of national and private parks; communal and freehold conservancies; and state and community forests creates the ideal platform for Namibia to spearhead a landscape co-management initiative.

Another vital factor is that, in semi-arid and arid areas, the most important adaptation of wildlife to aridity is mobility – the ability to move over large areas in response to patchy and unpredictable rainfall, grazing and other resources.

**Co-management approaches**

By fencing the countryside we are denying wildlife its most important evolutionary survival mechanism – space to move. By opening up landscapes and re-‘wilding’ parts of the country, particularly those areas where conventional farming is marginal, we are not only improving conditions for conservation, but also creating more income per hectare, more jobs and more foreign exchange.

Thus the main reasons for promoting co-management approaches across contiguous landscapes are:

- To promote more effective landscape and biodiversity conservation across a diversity of land ownership and custodianship by linking different habitats and vegetation types, and thereby enhancing sustainable land management;
- To promote economic development, improve livelihoods and combat rural poverty in sustainable ways. This requires integrated, diversified and holistic approaches, and by its nature is inclusive and partnership based;
- To help mitigate and prepare for the impacts of climate change. It is predicted that Namibia will be severely impacted, with farming being particularly harshly affected. The most effective forms of adaptation are to harness the economic potential of species already adapted to arid, unpredictable climatic conditions, such as wildlife, and to open up systems so that the wildlife and this form of production is as resilient as possible; and

There are vital principles of landscape co-management for the approach to be successful. The most important of these are:

- **Identifying the right strategic level of planning and co-management.** Co-management does not imply that people will be managing other people’s areas or enterprise. Rather, it involves agreed higher-level consensus on developing an overall vision, objectives and targets that will be to the greater good of all stakeholders, and working to achieve these by means of an agreed Action Plan. This action plan should focus on things that require collaboration and partnership for actions to be effective and desired objectives to be achieved. It asks the fundamental question: what are the things we can do better by working together rather than by working in isolation? This typically involves aspects such as marketing, developing comprehensive tourism activity packages, wildlife and rangeland monitoring and research, wildlife reintroductions, opening up landscapes, wildlife protection, and advocacy on behalf of the greater landscape and its stakeholders.

- **Identifying the right geographic focus and realistic boundaries for the landscape.** There must be enough contiguous landowners and custodians to bring sufficient land into the landscape to achieve the desired benefits, but it should not be too large an area, so as not too lose focus and become too general. The focus needs to be on a marketable component of the landscape, such as the Fish River Canyon, Sossusvlei, Waterberg and the surrounding stakeholders who feel that they can associate themselves with the respective feature. Thus it is not just the topographic feature, but also the holistic, integrated environmental and socio-economic landscape. In this context, its biophysical characteristics (topography, landscapes, ecosystems, habitats, biodiversity and cultures) and its marketability come together as the core theme. By extending the area of involvement too wide, the core theme is diluted and stakeholders are so far away from one another that institutional interactions become limited and ineffectual.

This is a very exciting new era as we break through yet another frontier in Africa-led conservation thinking and practice.

**Author:** Chris Brown, Namibia Institute for Sustainable Development  
**Photos:** Helge Denker & Paul van Schalkwyk
NAMIBIA’S ‘DR GREEN’

After nearly 30 years of outstanding service to conservation in Namibia, Dr Chris Brown has retired from the Namibia Nature Foundation.

Shortly after obtaining a PhD in zoology from the University of Natal, Chris took up the post of ornithologist in the then Directorate of Nature Conservation – and immediately made an impact!

Through his passion and extraordinary leadership, almost every keen birder in the country was contributing enthusiastically to the Namibian Bird Atlas project, as well as completing tens of thousands of kilometres of raptor road counts. After many ‘quiet’ years on the ornithological scene in Namibia, there was suddenly new energy and the country was back on the map!

By encouraging local and foreign researchers to undertake post-graduate work in the country, Chris rapidly built up a network of collaborating scientists and an impressive body of new literature on Namibian ornithology. Most serious naturalists in the country treasure their well-thumbed copy of the Namibian Bird Atlas, and for decades consultants and researchers have been using the easily accessible data that the Atlas has generated. These are indeed valuable resources.

Soon after Namibia’s independence, Chris was tasked by the late Minister Nico Bessinger to create the Directorate of Environmental Affairs (DEA), enabling the revamped Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) to participate in global initiatives to halt and reverse serious environmental degradation on the planet. He arranged for Namibia to sign, ratify and accede to a number of multinational environmental agreements, including those dealing with combating human-accelerated climate change and desertification, and biodiversity and wetland conservation.

Chris had a strong influence on the stances taken by Namibia and other developing countries during a decade of negotiations about the implementation of the conventions, and the design of subsequent related donor-funded programmes in the country and Southern African Region. Namibia’s efforts to improve biodiversity conservation and reverse desertification were regarded as exemplary on the international stage.

Chris can also claim credit for leading the efforts to mainstream the Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme in the Ministry, thus providing much-needed strategic support to donors, NGOs, fieldworkers and communities that have combined to make CBNRM one of Namibia’s flagship achievements since independence.

As head of the DEA, Chris built up a multi-disciplinary team of environmental lawyers and economists, social scientists, and ecologists, implementing 12 key national programmes that covered both ‘green’ and ‘brown’ environmental issues. He spearheaded initiatives to improve the generation and flow of environmental information to all levels of society, and championed the idea of public involvement in decision-making – one of the cornerstones of sustainable development.

Perhaps his most significant contribution was his key role in drafting the environmental clauses in Namibia’s Constitution and Vision 2030, unveiling Namibia’s Green Plan, and in the compilation of various National Development Plans. These efforts have transformed thinking at strategic, administrative, operational and local levels. Consideration of the ‘environment’ is now very much part of development planning in the country.

Chris ran the NNF for 13 years, a period which saw the organisation increase its staff complement of four to a regional institution with 30 core staff and some 15 associates and project staff, managing over 80 different projects and programmes.

Why is Chris Brown widely regarded as one of Namibia’s most influential conservationists and environmentalists? Because he has the unique combination of scientific rigour, remarkable leadership, oratory skills and big-picture outlook. Chris is the visionary that Namibia sorely needed when the country ‘came of age’. While he has retired from the NNF, no one doubts that he will continue to serve the nation with distinction in the years ahead.

We wish him an active non-retirement!

Author: Peter Tar, Executive Director: Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment
History was made in Namibia in 2011, thanks in no small part to the invaluable in-country support of the Namibia Nature Foundation. Sponsored and organised by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation, the world’s first-ever conference dedicated to the giraffe in the wild, took place from 4–7 July at the Etosha Safari Lodge just south of the Etosha National Park.

And the timing could not have been more auspicious. As delegates flew in to Namibia from across the world, they heard the bleak news that one of Botswana’s major giraffe populations had plummeted by a shocking 65% over the last 10 years. This exceeded continent-wide estimates of the other species and subspecies, which suggest at least a 40% reduction of giraffe numbers during this period. It was grim news indeed, and added an additional sense of urgency and purpose to this unique gathering of international giraffe experts and researchers who had flown in from as far afield as Japan, Australia, the USA, and Europe, as well, of course, from across Africa.

As delegates relaxed with their well-deserved sundowners after their long flights and the five-hour drive north, they enjoyed the magnificent views across the expanse that is Namibia, a country whose resident population of *Giraffa camelopardalis angolensis* is alone in bucking the continent-wide trend, with numbers actually increasing, although it is fair to note that the so-called Angolan giraffe, as it is commonly known among locals, may no longer occur across the border in Angola!

Formally opened with a scene-setter and warm Namibian welcome by Werner Kilian, Director of the Etosha Ecological Institute, Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Namibia, the
Conference agenda and its relevance was made abundantly clear. Three days of fascinating presentations and delivery of research papers followed, covering a breadth of topics, from the increase in poaching and lion predation and ecological, social and gender issues, to the very latest in computer-assisted identification software and methodology. The presentations led seamlessly into the interactive afternoon workshop sessions on taxonomy, genetics and research technology, with many of these discussions extending late into the evening around the open fire.

The forgotten megafauna

It was abundantly clear from the conclusions of many of the presentations, and certainly as a result of the forums, that there are still many worrying questions about giraffe research and conservation management that remain unanswered. It would seem that in many cases the questions have never been raised before; the giraffe has simply been ‘forgotten’!

For example, it still comes as a surprise to many that the expedition undertaken by the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) to Botswana was, and remains, the only dedicated giraffe research undertaken in this country to date.

Appropriately entitled Giraffe: The Forgotten Megafauna, it became clear that this Indaba, the first of its kind, was long overdue and could not have come at a more critical time. With numbers across the continent estimated below 80 000, down from some 140 000 at the turn of the century, there is a clear requirement to reverse, or at best halt, this alarming decline.

As a direct result of the work and campaigning by the GCF, since 2008 two of the recognised nine subspecies have been formally Red Listed by the IUCN as Endangered (the West African giraffe numbering less than 250 individuals, and Rothschild’s numbering 670 individuals). Regrettably, other giraffe may be in similar peril, including the reticulated giraffe in East Africa, which number less than 5 000 individuals; the Kordofan giraffe, which still survives in war-torn central Africa, but its numbers are unknown; the geographically isolated Thornicroft’s giraffe in Zambia’s Luangwa Valley, with a barely stable population of some 1 500 individuals; and, most concerning, the Nubian giraffe (the nominate subspecies), with numbers possibly less than a few hundred! And so it goes on.

A long overdue roadmap

It is of little surprise then that the highlight of the Indaba was the final day’s workshop run by the world’s foremost authority on giraffe, Dr Julian Fennessy, who is also the current Director of the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF).

The aim of this forum was to establish a long overdue roadmap, detailing short- to medium-term research goals focusing specifically on the long-term understanding of giraffe in the wild, and essentially developing a conservation management strategy framework. The resulting document will be published shortly.

The seminar proved to be the ideal conclusion to a thoroughly successful conference. Refreshing for many by virtue of its cooperative and inclusive nature, all of the delegates left inspired and motivated by the tone and outcome of the conference, assured that they would be working towards a common goal with a new group of friends, at the same time intensely aware that an enormous amount of hard work still needed to be done, and that it had started on that day!

Thus Namibia, with support from the NNF, moves forward in its endeavours to conserve giraffe, rhino, elephant, wild dog and a suite of other wildlife species in the country - as it has done for the past 25 years.

We look forward to continuing the reversal of negative impacts, and to build on the excellent public, private and communal conservation initiatives with partners local and international.

Author: Andy Tutchings, Trustee Giraffe Conservation Foundation
Photos: Helge Denker & Andy Tutchings
As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Namibia Nature Foundation, it is important to remember that not only is conservation about preservation and the efficient use of Namibia’s natural resources, but also about recognising and responding to the effects of a changing climate on the country.

Namibia’s arid environment, recurrent droughts, desertification and the recent unheralded flood events have contributed to making Namibia one of the world’s most vulnerable countries in terms of climate change, and the most impacted in sub-Saharan Africa. It is therefore crucial that we take steps to ‘adapt’ to climate change as a priority.

One of the adaptive measures we at the NNF (along with others in the public and private sectors) have taken, is the concept referred to as Conservation Agriculture (CA), also known as Conservation Farming. We have introduced CA across all the sites where we and our partners work under the Country Pilot Partnership (CPP) programme. In particular, there has been a focus on training and supporting local farmers to grow chilli in the Caprivi Region using CA methods. The aim is to diversify livelihoods, increase food security through the protection of crops, and help increase market opportunities for sales (locally and regionally).

CA is a concept for resource-saving agricultural crop production aimed at achieving acceptable profits and high, sustained production levels while conserving the environment at the same time.

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations)

Minimal soil disturbance

The first key CA principle is to practise minimal mechanical soil disturbance (or none at all, depending on the method), as this is essential to maintaining minerals within the soil, minimising erosion, and preventing water loss, all of which are key factors towards improving crop production in rural Namibia.

Chilli production through CA methods and specifically the preferred ‘basin method’ is well suited to this process and soil conditions in the Caprivi. The basin method entails the farmer digging basins (or holes), filling them with mulch and manure, and then planting the seedlings into them. The basins are more efficient at water utilisation and create a micro-environment perfect for growing. It has been well documented that yields from crops grown according to this method are far higher than those emanating from traditional production methods, which is important for increasing...
food security, reducing land under cultivation and leading to improved health through higher food quality.

In addition to this form of CA, the NNF is in the process of developing working partnerships with the Conservation Tillage (CONTILL) Project, coordinated by Namibia Resource Consultants in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture to introduce additional CA methods across the Kavango and Caprivi regions. CONTILL promotes, for the first year, the minimal use of technology to rip and furrow the soil for deep penetration, shattering compaction and furrowing for in-field water harvesting (increasing it by more than 150%). In the second and subsequent years, draught animal rippers can be used along the same lines to allow concentrated fertility and moisture to build up. This in turn reduces further compaction of soils, which increases soil erosion. Conservation tillage has been known to increase yields by as much as 600% when compared to traditional methods. This is one method we at the NNF will seek to encourage in the coming years.

**Access to markets**

An unintended, but positive consequence of the workshops was that the farmers decided, on their own initiative, to create a Farmer’s Association (called Swalisamo, which means ‘working together’ or ‘co-operation’ in the local Lozi language). The Association is a membership organisation of growers the NNF has been working with under the CPP and other programmes across Caprivi. A fundamental development of Swalisamo’s developmental work was to create access to markets through planned production and the establishment of marketing contracts with local retail outlets. There has already been a positive response from the Pick ‘n Pay, Megasave, Kalinki, Kamun and Shoprite supermarkets. While marketing contracts are yet to be signed pending further discussions – this is just one of many strategies to implement the Market-First approach.

Discussions are ongoing with the Elephant Pepper Development Trust in Zambia, aimed at establishing a contract to supply Namibian-grown chilli to the African Spice company. This would establish a technical and commercial relationship between the growers and buyers, and create a procedure for exporting chilli that can be applied to countries such as South Africa.

All in all this is a positive beginning, one that the NNF will continue to support in the future. Let us hope that for the next 25 years, the Market-First approach will be the norm for the majority of small- and medium-sized rural farms supported by the NNF and other organisations and individuals across Namibia.

**Address shortfalls, secure livelihoods**

The NNF is working with rural communities on agricultural projects to help local farmers address shortfalls in food security, and secure livelihoods through income generation. To this effect, we are promoting the so-called Market-First approach to ensure that farmers maximise incomes from their produce while still having produce for their own consumption.

Many development programmes are aimed at increasing crop production to ensure enough food availability for household consumption as food security due to the impact of climate change becomes an increasing concern. While these programmes and initiatives are successful in addressing household food security, they have largely failed to open up access to markets where farmers can sell produce beyond the subsistence level.

The Market-First approach is aimed at transforming subsistence production to a semi-commercial level, with increased income generation as the primary purpose.

**Author:** Paswell Chisanga, NNF volunteer

**Photos:** NNF

**VISION**

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Baboucar Sane
Country Chairman and Sales & Operations Manager
Shell Namibia Ltd
“Quiet! I think we’re getting close,” whispers the 16-year-old San boy to his companion. The two of them have been tracking an elephant herd since early in the morning. Now, when the sun is about to set, brightening the colours of the bushveld, they catch the first glimpse of a young elephant bull browsing at a mixed stand of Combretum and silver terminalia trees.

Most likely this bull is one of the outer ‘sentries’ protecting the cows and their calves from stalking predators and other threats. But here the animals have nothing to fear. The two young boys are merely practising their hunting skills, trying to get as close as possible by following their grandfathers’ advice to always approach against the wind.

We are in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy community-forest area east of Tsumkwe. This particular spot is part of the wildlife sanctuary, a core area with dense stands of trees and shrubs. Harmonised wildlife and forest-management plans include provisions to ensure that wild animals in this area are not hunted or disturbed by forest use. The wildlife sanctuary has also been earmarked as a focal area for fire protection and management so as to protect forests and woodlands as game habitats. This ‘protection’ ensures that wild animals find refuge to cater for their offspring, which helps to maintain healthy and diverse game populations as key tourist attractions to local and international visitors.

In other zones, however, selected animals and forests can be used for commercial purposes such as trophy hunting, devil’s-claw harvesting or firewood marketing, providing a substantial annual income in a remote area with low agricultural potential and low infrastructural development.

This is just one example of the integrated natural-resource management the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF)
is promoting across Namibia in coordination with partners such as the German Development Cooperation (GIZ). It illustrates the mutual benefits that can be derived from combining conservancies and community forests in the same area and highlights their contribution to the diversification and improvement of local livelihoods.

**Current achievements**

Although community forests have not yet gained the same widespread recognition and support as conservancies, they provide legal backing, offer additional income and employment opportunities, and help to secure traditional utilisation rights for local people. Furthermore, they strengthen the powers of communal management bodies to regulate and control not only the use of forests but also the management of natural vegetation on farms and rangelands.

Realising these opportunities, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry work in partnership with local NGOs such as the NNF, Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, World Wildlife Fund Namibia and the Nyae Nyae Development Foundation, assisted by international donors such as FAO, World Bank and the German Development Bank (KfW) to put integrated ecosystem management into practice.

This is not an easy task, however, given the different policies, legal frameworks and institutional setups that need to be harmonised. Yet promising progress has been made with the assistance of the NNF, which has facilitated integrative approaches since 2007 through assigned facilitators of the GIZ.

**Raising local awareness**

An important first step in this regard was to raise awareness concerning the benefits of integrated resource management and to ensure proper participation of local communities, traditional leaders and other stakeholders in the process. In this context, the NNF encouraged the establishment of local stakeholder working groups and organised regional workshops to discuss legal and technical issues.

In close cooperation with the Legal Assistance Centre in Windhoek, legal provisions for membership and benefit-sharing arrangements were clarified and guidelines for joint constitutions were developed to promote unified management structures. As a result, in many overlapping areas including Nyae Nyae, forest and wildlife resources are now managed by the same management committee. This reduces management costs, mitigates conflicts of interest and facilitates external support by NGOs and the private sector.

The NNF’s current support focus is on integrated management planning and joint forest and wildlife monitoring systems. In this regard, the first field tests of an extended ‘event book’ monitoring system targeting both wildlife and forest resources show promising results.

Once introduced on a larger scale, resource-monitoring systems implemented by communal forest and game guards will allow for the adaptation of management activities according to actual resource conditions. The observed impact of wild fires, for example, will then lead to adapted fire-management strategies or amended harvesting quotas.

**The way forward**

The effective management of conservancies and community forests requires an array of skills and mindsets: managers not only need a comprehensive understanding of ecological aspects, but have to be accountants, entrepreneurs and community developers all at the same time. This can be achieved only to a certain degree and many management committees have already become overburdened with the ever-growing demands of managing highly complex and dynamic environments in social, economic and ecological terms.

Long-term commitment to sustainable resource management can only be ensured when its benefits become tangible to a majority of community members and competitive towards alternative land-use options.

The Namibian Government will therefore continue to play a crucial role in harmonising and refining legal and institutional frameworks that promote integrative approaches and attract private entrepreneurs to enter into joint ventures with local communities.

NGOs such as the NNF and the private sector will play an equally crucial role in supporting local communities with business development, financial management and conflict resolution.

Last but not least, new innovative financing mechanisms that increase the benefits to be shared among community members, promote employment and help bridge the years for emerging conservancies and community forests to become self-sustained have to be developed.

**Photos:** Author: Rolf Sprung, German Development Cooperation

**Conservation 2012** 25
The Succulent Karoo is one of 25 biodiversity hotspots in the world, and sadly, one of three within Southern Africa. Why sadly? Because biodiversity hotspots are areas where threats to a large and diverse number of species are the greatest. As such they deserve integrated approaches and targeted sustainable management to maintain them as valuable resources.

Extending along the Atlantic coast from south-western South Africa into southern Namibia, the Succulent Karoo hotspot covers 102,691 km² of desert. Some pockets of this hotspot are scattered within the Cape Floristic Region Hotspot, which borders it to the south. In fact, the Succulent Karoo exhibits a particularly strong floristic affiliation with the Cape Floristic Region, to the point that some have argued convincingly for the inclusion of the region into a greater Cape Flora.

The semi-arid Succulent Karoo is unique because of its many spectacular natural gems that occur above as well as below the ground. The hotspot boasts the richest succulent flora on earth, as well as remarkable endemism in plants - approximately 70%. In addition, reptiles also show high levels of endemism in the region. It is also one of only two entirely arid ecosystems to earn hotspot status, and is home to the mysterious tree-like succulent, the halfmens (*Pachypodium namaquense*), as well as many unique species of lizard, tortoise and scorpion.

A dedicated programme to support the conservation and management of the Succulent Karoo was identified as a key priority. As a result, the Succulent Karoo Ecosystem Programme (SKEP) was initiated in January 2005, with the coordination unit for Namibia
hosted by the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF). The NNF, in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), coordinates the programme implementation in Namibia to achieve the following long-term goal: “Biodiversity in the Succulent Karoo ecosystem in Namibia must be effectively conserved and managed by the state and civil society through an integrated programme of conservation action and co-management of conservation areas for sustainable development of the region and for improvement of peoples’ livelihoods.”

SKEP Namibia’s current role is to consolidate the management processes of the biodiversity hotspot, and specifically the recently proclaimed Sperrgebiet National Park.

The proclamation of the Sperrgebiet National Park, an area of 2.6 million hectares of Succulent Karoo ecosystem, is the most notable success of the SKEP Namibia programme. This proclamation now ratifies the 10.5 million hectares or 1 600 kilometres of Namibia’s entire coastal conservation area, extending from the Orange River in the south to the Kunene River in the north.

This coastal protected area is contiguous with a newly proclaimed coastal and marine protected area in Namibian waters of approximately one million hectares, and links to the north with the Iona National Park in Angola, to the south with Richtersveld in South Africa, and along its western borders with a multitude of private, communal and state protected areas – another 15 million hectares, bringing together a total of over 25 million hectares of contiguous land under conservation. This opens up huge potential for initiating landscape-level co-management public-private approaches within Namibia, and transboundary conservation initiatives between Namibia and its neighbouring countries.

The SKEP project also works closely with neighbouring communities to help them understand their environment and its biodiversity values better. A key component of this has been the identification and implementation of local-level projects through a grants mechanism to manage the landscape better while deriving sustainable benefits. More targeted support has enabled the development of a Biodiversity Overview and Plan, Park Management and Development Plan (which subsequently became the model approach for all the coastal parks in Namibia), and a Tourism Development Plan and Business Plan.

Guided by the overarching plans developed, a target of SKEP has been to support the focused research and monitoring of key plant communities (endemic and range-restricted) and flagship mammals; develop a park monitoring system and guide; and develop a good-practice Restoration Guide with special focus on the rehabilitation of former mining areas.

In terms of infrastructure (physical and human resources), the design of an Information Centre for the Sperrgebiet National Park and surrounding areas is underway. The objective is to build a strong base and network for ongoing support to conservation and people’s livelihoods in the Succulent Karoo ecosystem and the broader Karas Region of Namibia where the hotspot lies.

In moving the programme forward, SKEP is seeking to consolidate activities following the proclamation of the Sperrgebiet National Park, both within and immediately around it to support the implementation of plans, to strengthen key committees, and to implement a range of outreach activities.

Key areas of activity

Specifically, SKEP is to work closely with the MET staff of the Sperrgebiet National Park to address the following key areas:

- Finalising the park regulations and producing them in an accessible user-friendly format;
- Finalising the planning and preparation for a Sperrgebiet Information, Interpretation and Education Centre;
- Establishing and putting scientific research and monitoring systems into operation to generate appropriate information for informed management and stakeholder information;
- Supporting the development of a detailed staffing and infrastructure plan for the park;
- Promoting and supporting the establishment of relevant committees for the co-management of the park;
- Supporting the implementation of the Tourism Development Plan for the Sperrgebiet National Park;
- Building on the Strategic Action Plan of the MET, the Concessions in Parks Policy and the recently formulated national Namibia Tourism Policy; and
- Supporting a process to debate the Sperrgebiet National Park Business Plan.

Cross-cutting themes

Building on the above, SKEP seeks further to implement the following cross-cutting themes:

- Environmental education, with particular emphasis on running exposure trips for decision-makers, community leaders, stakeholders, students and schoolchildren into the Sperrgebiet and via the Environmental Education Centre near Lüderitz;
- Stakeholder participation in the management and development of the Sperrgebiet National Park, including setting up a Friends of the Sperrgebiet National Park for funding contributions (such as from local mining, fishing and tourism sectors), and for practical support (for transport, monitoring, maintenance and so on); and
- Fostering links to the Ai-Ais/Richtersveld Transfrontier Park process.

The Succulent Karoo is an amazing and diverse environment that is at the ‘beginning’ of its new conservation and management focus. With the efforts of the NNF, MET and partners, we hope that, built on these small and humble steps taken to preserve it, this rich hotspot will remain intact for generations to come.

Author: Jonas Nghishidi, NNF project coordinator
Photo: Trygve Cooper
The increasing involvement of corporates in environmental and sustainable development programmes highlights that Namibia is going somewhere in terms of sustainable environmental management. Nedbank Namibia is a good example of an institution that has hoisted its name high since initiating the Go Green Fund in 2001 with the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF).

Since 2011 the Go Green Fund has been granted over N$3.5 million to more than 35 environmental projects in almost all parts of the country, and played a pivotal role in supporting Namibian projects. The NNF embraced the opportunity to manage the Go Green Fund and its associated project activities with Nedbank Namibia. Since the NNF is one of the key NGOs in Namibia with more than 60 projects under its technical and financial management, it was recognised by Nedbank Namibia as the best organisation to coordinate all aspects of the grants. The partnership has developed since 2001, and now, more than ten years later, is confident that it will continue to do so for many more.

The Go Green Fund has supported projects ranging from the conservation of rare and endangered species (both on land and in water), to environmental education and climate change. The Fund is non-selective, insofar as it is aimed at supporting individuals and organisations that share the goal of working towards a more sustainable future. Since the Namibian Government cannot carry the banner of conservation alone, support from private sectors and institutions is imperative, with Nedbank Namibia’s Go Green Fund playing a key role over the last decade.

The Go Green Fund is linked to specific Nedbank Namibia corporate products. The selection of projects is done by a neutral board and is administered by
lies to protect crops was promoted in areas where elephants and humans come into contact. The use of chilli products, which are made from elephant dung mixed with dried chilli and shaped into bricks, is a method developed in the Namib Desert by researchers Dr Conrad Brain and Dr Peter Strydom. The 'chilli bombs' are ignited, releasing a noxious smoke that deters elephants. An additional benefit is that the local economy is boosted, since income is generated from the growth and sale of the chillies by the local communities. Cooperation with other NGOs involved in the region helps disseminate further information on the project and enables local inhabitants to share in the benefits that the 'chilli bombs' offer.

**The chilli bomb and other projects**

Environmental education is a national and international priority. The Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET), managed by Viktoria Keding, is a non-profit Namibian trust established in 2003. Using chilli products to modify animal behaviour is not new. Chilli products have been applied in different ways for centuries to deter elephants from destroying crops, homesteads and other areas where elephants and humans come into contact. The use of chillies to protect crops was promoted in Namibia when the Go Green Fund supported the Namushasha Elephant Deterrent project based in the Mashai and Torra Conservancies. Coordinated by Dr Conrad Brain, a method was developed to produce 'chilli bombs' made up of elephant dung mixed with dried chilli and shaped into bricks. When ignited, the ‘chilli bombs’ produce a noxious smoke that deters elephants. It is a remarkable method insofar as the elephants’ own dung is one of the ingredients used to protect crops and humans from the raiding elephants.

An additional benefit is that the local economy is boosted, since income is generated from the growth and sale of the chillies by the local communities. Cooperation with other NGOs involved in the region helps disseminate further information on the project and enables local inhabitants to share in the benefits that the 'chilli bombs' offer. This project is an example of the excellent work done by the Go Green Fund.

More recently support has been provided to the development of an online and freely accessible electronic database management system for Namibian biodiversity, as well as a targeted plant resource system. These initiatives highlight that the Go Green Fund is not only about conserving trees or lions or whales, but is also involved in managing flora and fauna species data through easy, open and free-access databases to benefit current and future researchers in Namibia and abroad.

Future initiatives of the Go Green Fund will go a long way to support sustainable development, climate change adaptation, habitat conservation and tomorrow’s conservation leadership throughout Namibia. A key area identified to date is awareness enhancement for Namibia’s future leaders through the national youth climate-change forum. In 2011 the forum was facilitated by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism’s Africa Adaptation Programme on Climate Change. This initiative and involvement in environmental public talks will help increase awareness around key conservation and sustainable development issues such as climate change and loss of biodiversity. Climate change is an international concern that calls for increased local participation through innovative ideas to combat the devastating effects facing Namibia (and beyond). The Go Green Fund is ready to accelerate its involvement in this area.

In NNF’s endeavours to support conservation and sustainable development throughout Namibia, an important tool that the Go Green Fund seeks to advance is its marketing and public reach towards making it a household name. The Go Green Fund should be well known nationally and regionally as a Nedbank Namibia programme partnering with the NNF. The Go Green Fund lives up to the principles that environmental conservation and sustainable development are no longer a option but a responsibility to be taken seriously by all Namibians.

Author: Faith Chambara Manyebru, NNF project coordinator
Photos: Helge Denker & NNF

The Go Green Fund supports the conservation, protection and wise management of important habitats and indigenous plant and animal species. Pictured here is a Herero Chat, Namibornis herero
CONSERVING THE AFRICAN WILD DOG FOR THE FUTURE

African wild dogs, Lycaon pictus, once roamed the entire Namibian landscape, even venturing into the far western desert areas following migratory prey during periods of good rainfall. Since the development and expansion of agriculture, the species has experienced a population decline of about 98% and range decrease of about 90%, broadly comparable with the decline of the species throughout Africa.

By the time the explorer Captain Shortridge made the first comprehensive assessment of the mammal fauna of South West Africa in 1934, the African wild dog was already under immense pressure from human-induced persecution, and was largely extinct from the southern half of Namibia.

A state-sponsored ‘vermin control’ programme followed, further increasing pressure on the species. By the late 1960s African wild dogs had been largely eradicated from the central and western areas of Namibia, and by 1973 they were functionally extinct in the Etosha National Park, Namibia’s premier wildlife refuge. Then in 1975 came the Nature Conservation Ordinance, reclassifying the ‘vermin control’ policy to one of ‘problem animal management’. Terminology and policy change had little effect, with widespread unsustainable persecution of wild dogs continuing, irrespective of the increasingly endangered status of the species.

Three pioneering attempts at reintroduction of African wild dog into the Etosha National Park within the following decade all failed for reasons we now understand clearly.

A research-based approach

Early field research in the late 1990s and early 2000s, supported by the NNF, culminated in the Carnivore At-
las monitoring programme, providing the first science-based population estimates and providing a tool for tracking changes in range, population size and other key baseline data. After four years of research through this work, the best estimate of African wild dog numbers was between 355 and 601 individuals, suggesting a population decline approaching 10% per annum. Interestingly, 95% of the population occurred outside formally protected areas, across a mosaic of rangelands characterised by increasing human population density, intensifying livestock farming activities and infrastructure development— all considered negative influences on African wild dog conservation.

**African wild dog conservation begins**

With the acclaimed Namibian Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Programme expanding into the eastern communal lands, the NNF was instrumental in assisting the development of the Namibian Wild Dog Project— to date the longest-running and most comprehensive research and conservation initiative for the species in Namibia.

From 2003 to 2005 applied research and conservation on human-wild dog conflict and population dynamics and land use were undertaken, as well as environmental education outreach projects through the media in the local OtjiHerero language across four emerging communal conservancies in the Okakarara District. This was a great step in this area, both scientifically and geographically, and built a solid base from which to develop.

From 2005 to 2009, the Namibian Wild Dog Project operated from a ‘rustic’ camp deep in the bush, approximately 20 kilometres south of the Khaudum National Park in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, researching the conservation status of the species in what was termed its ‘core’ range in Namibia. Environmental education was again a key component of the project. Informing the local community of the importance of the species and its conservation status was important to build trust and understanding. As part of this work, an African wild dog cultural/environmental tourism package was piloted to emphasise the direct financial value of the species to the local community and the tourism sector.

Based on research to date, the free-ranging African wild dog population in Namibia is estimated at 160 to 259 individuals— a significant decrease from the figure reported not more than five years earlier. An extensive mapping process of known threats to the species backed up these negative population trends in African wild dogs. Trans-boundary movements to Botswana and Angola were confirmed, and important data was collected on, inter alia, feeding and ranging ecology, kleptoparasitism, human-wildlife conflict and mortality causes. Research findings indicate that few breeding packs in Namibia are fully protected from negative human influences throughout their life cycle. Annual human depredation rates, excluding natural mortalities, are likely to exceed breeding recruitment and reduce population viability.

Source-sink dynamics play an important role in the maintenance of this species in Namibia, as it does elsewhere, and as such, the viability of Namibia’s African wild dog population is tied intrinsically to wider trans-boundary conservation efforts. The NNF and partners are exploring opportunities to support efforts in understanding trans-boundary movements and shared populations of African wild dogs (and other high-value wildlife species) and welcome open collaboration and ideas. One such effort is in Zambia, specifically in the Kafue National Park where the NNF is providing institutional support to the work on African wild dog and other large carnivores there, as these have linkages with populations in Namibia and further across the Kavango-Zambezi (KaZa) Transfrontier Conservation Area.

**A move from research to management**

From the field-based research came solid baseline data enabling researchers to work closely with regional and international experts to assist in the development of an IUCN/SSC region-wide Conservation Planning Strategy for the species. Following the successful strategy development, the best hope for developing and implementing a National Management Plan for the African wild dog in Namibia would come on the back of this to support country efforts to help conserve one of the world’s most critically endangered species.

The project published and disseminated a Namibian-targeted booklet to key stakeholders across the country (and free online) under the title *African wild dog: Background Information and Species Management Guidelines* (www.nnf.org.na/NNF_docs/Wild_Dog_Booklet_low_res.pdf).

A reintroduction plan for restoration of the African wild dog in the Etosha National Park and north-western Namibia was also formulated to help provide options for the Government, should these re-introductions be deemed appropriate, and an analysis was undertaken on the role of captive facilities in the conservation of African wild dogs in Namibia to support the development of a national study book for the species.

As we move forward to conserve Namibia’s African wild dog population, we hope that public, private and communal support can be harnessed, because when it comes to these critically endangered species, the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. We have few choices and need to act now, lest this iconic species become Namibia’s first extinction of a key mammal species in living memory!

**Acknowledgements**

The Namibian Wild Dog project would like to acknowledge the support of Drs Chris Brown and Julian Fennessy and their staff at the NNF, who have stood firmly behind this challenging conservation project.

**Author:** Robin Lines, NNF researcher

**Photo:** Robin Lines
BEST PRACTICE FOR MANAGING TRANSBOUNDARY WATERS

I can’t hold back my excitement on the subject of how well the Namibia Nature Foundation has facilitated horizontal links of information-sharing and awareness, expediting dialogues between communities and governments, both within Namibia and on a transboundary basis. In just over a decade the NNF and partners have helped facilitate vertical links of information, interaction and accountability across the broader Namibian community, from village to traditional authority to regional/district authority to national government and the basin-wide commission established to this end.

The permanent Okavango River Basin Commission (OKACOM) was established in 1994 by the governments of Angola, Botswana and Namibia - the three basin countries - to develop an integrated basin-wide management plan to guide the future development and management of the basin. The Okavango River Basin is one of the most important transboundary natural resources in the region, let alone the world!

To promote the sustainable management of natural resources in the Okavango River Basin, the NNF was nominated as the key Namibian implementing organisation on the Every River has its People (ERP) project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The project, which ran from 2000–2009, benefited the Okavango River Basin residents and those of the three countries involved, through promoting and facilitating effective participation of basin stakeholders in decision-making and management of resources, in particular water-related resources.

The ERP project enhanced community participation in the management planning process for the basin through: increasing the capacity of communities and other local stakeholders to participate effectively in decision-making about natural resource management of the Okavango River Basin; and developing mechanisms to promote and facilitate the participation of communities and other local stakeholders in natural resource management and decision-making, particularly those related to water resources, at local, national and regional levels. In the Kavango Region particularly, the NNF and the ERP project played a major role in engaging people at grassroots level as the custodians of the basin resources.

Key initiatives

As a key component of the ERP project, targeted community initiatives were developed, and many are still ongoing. These initiatives range from local household level to broader community engagement. They include:

- the gazetting of conservancies/community forests;
- the development of emerging conservancies/community forests;
- the establishment of conservation agriculture (or farming);
- the establishment of community forests;
the marketing and sustainable harvesting of indigenous natural products;
- The development of community campsites; and
- The development of cottage industries such as jams making, beekeeping and bird guiding.

Importantly, and linked to every aspect of the ERP project, good governance systems were developed and supported at all levels, which ensured the equitable inclusion in decision-making of multiple stakeholders, particularly local resource users. According to many across the region, the ERP project has been one of the top best-practice models for transboundary integrated water-resource management.

**Implementation across three countries**

The ERP project was implemented in Angola by ACADIR and partners; in Botswana by the Kalahari Conservation Society in collaboration with IUCN-Botswana and other partners; and in Namibia by the NNF working closely with the IRDNC, DFRN and Rösing Foundation. Following the success of the ERP project, a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) for the Okavango River Basin was completed in 2010. The TDA was a careful scientific and technical assessment of the Okavango – looking at water quantity and quality, the characteristics of ecosystems all along the river, and the needs and nature of the communities, politics and institutions the river connects.

The TDA is the basis for the elaboration of a Strategic Action Plan for the Okavango River Basin, which will hopefully improve the living standards of people in all three countries through coordinated development while maintaining its environmental integrity. Specifically, the effects of development along the river are now clearly articulated by water managers, ecologists, engineers and economists, which will enable decision-makers to better understand, for example, how a dam might supply water for irrigation and generate electric power, while altering seasonal flows and harming breeding of important animal species in a downstream wetland. Through the involvement of the NNF and its partner in SAREP, ongoing development and contribution to Namibia’s Vision 2030 will be supported as we move to strengthen management across our borders.

An important legacy of the ERP project was the establishment of the Okavango River Basin Management (OkBMC) in 2008, which continues to build basin stakeholder capacity, and provide valuable support and contribution towards the planning and implementation in the Namibian part of the Okavango basin. These processes are required to facilitate the development of shared agendas and objectives across the basin, as well as provide a platform for undertaking joint planning, joint identification of priorities, and developing joint strategies. In this way, unilateral actions by individual sectors and countries can be avoided. To support this, the OkBMC will be playing a linking role between all Namibian partners.

Most recently, the NNF, in collaboration with the Namibian Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry, has embraced the Southern African Regional Environmental Programme (SAREP), which was formalised in late 2010 to support the initiatives of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to integrate improved water and sanitation services with strategies that address threats to ecosystem services and biodiversity within priority-shared river basins. Supported by USAID, SAREP seeks to strengthen cooperation and regional capacity to adapt and respond to the effects of climate change, and in particular to support the efforts of OKACOM, and more locally, OkBMC.

The SAREP initiative will continue to improve transboundary natural resource management in SADC with a focus on the Okavango River Basin and expanding across into the Caprivi section of the Kwando and Zambezi river basins in Namibia. Through the involvement of the NNF and its partner in SAREP, ongoing development and contribution to Namibia’s Vision 2030 will be supported as we move to strengthen management across our borders.

The environment in which we operate is our primary concern. Telecom believes excellence in environmental management is important for our long-term success. Telecom Namibia strives for the best – in technology, operations efficiency and its relationships with communities. We strive to put processes in place to reduce risk and minimise our impact on the environment.

Telecom Namibia also strives to harness the environmental benefits of our products and services. Our video-conferencing service is a good example of how we attempt to minimise pollution from unnecessary travel while allowing companies to save time in order to achieve greater productivity.

As a company, we strive to achieve full compliance with all relevant environmental legal requirements, especially when we extend our networks through ecologically fragile areas of the country. Our procurement processes take account of environmental considerations. Special attention is paid to energy consumption, waste management, process and product requirements, and the use of hazardous materials.

**Frans Ndoroma**
Managing Director

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**Frans Ndoroma**
Managing Director
In recent decades, increased human populations and uncontrolled increases in the fishing effort has damaged river and lake fisheries throughout eastern-central Africa. Fortunately the Caprivi floodplain fishery has remained healthy because of the relatively small human population and poor communication links with major urban centres.

Improved roads and rapidly rising populations in the last two decades, however, have resulted in a greatly increased fishing effort. This was exacerbated by unusually low annual Zambezi River annual floods over many years, which restricted fish migrations and breeding on the floodplains and made the fish vulnerable to capture in the river channels. Monitoring of catch rates confirmed the fishermen's complaints that catches of large fish were declining. Floodplain dwellers complained about the influx of outsiders who were exploiting the fish stocks using damaging (and illegal) fishing gear. Neither the Namibian nor the Zambian Government had a strong enough presence in the region to control the fishing effort.

In 2007 the Namibian Nature Foundation (NNF), with support from the WWF, initiated a trans-boundary fisheries management project. The project base was established in Namibia, where the major part of the floodplains are and which is thus the main fishery area. The aim with the project is 'to manage the shared Zambezi/Chobe River fisheries resources sustainably by promoting trans-boundary coordination and collaboration on the introduction of fully integrated fishery management systems'. This entails setting up fully integrated management systems in targeted pilot communities for livelihood and sport fisheries, providing optimal benefits to all stakeholders reliant on this valuable resource.

The first phase of the management project followed up the findings of the initial studies and set out to guide fishing communities in setting up fisheries committees to work with fisheries development officers recruited and trained through the project. Radio programmes covering all aspects of the fisheries, from the biology of the fishes to possible measures for their management, were broadcast on the NBC to inform the communities.

Mikolo (dug-out canoes) at the thriving Samahuka fish-landing area on Lake Liambezi
One idea that was adopted enthusiastically by the communities was setting aside areas of the river and floodplains as protected areas where no netting was allowed so that the fish in those areas would be able to grow and breed and thereby repopulate the surrounding fished areas. The communities saw added benefits in the promotion of angling tourism around the protected areas, and information provided through the project has helped inform decision-makers and the communities alike.

Several tourist lodges operate in the project area, offering angling as a major attraction. These lodges provide the only source of paid employment on the floodplains and also supply other services to the communities. Angling is therefore an extremely valuable use of the fish resources, and the needs of anglers and food fishermen are identical, namely having a healthy stock of the larger, more valuable fish species.

The natural resources of the Caprivi Region are increasingly resorting under the control of conservancies, which provide an excellent opportunity to empower the communities to manage their resources themselves. This was recognised by the project managers, who work closely with the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC), the key NGO that provides support to conservancies in the Caprivi.

An excellent day’s catch from Lake Liambezi

Following the progress made in the first phase of the project in laying the groundwork, Phase 2 began in 2010, with the following objectives:

- Managing the fisheries resources through cross-border collaboration;
- Devising a management plan with the neighbouring countries to benefit the communities;
- Establishing fish reserves in targeted pilot communities that would be fully functional;
- Operating with tourist angling lodges in agreement with local fishing/conservancy committees; and
- Capacity building in research and monitoring of fish resources.

Great success has been achieved in attaining these objectives. The project managers are already looking towards further involvement and expanding to other fisheries areas, based on the lessons learned.

A meeting of the fisheries sub-committee of the Namibia/Zambia Joint Permanent Commission was held early in 2011 to develop cross-border collaboration further, with the sub-committee now assisting in harmonising fisheries regulations in the two countries. The next step is to assist the Zambian Department of Fisheries to empower the communities to become more involved in managing their resources themselves through the involvement of appropriate traditional and provincial authorities.

In Namibia, two pilot Fish Protection Areas (FPAs) in the Impalila and Sikunga Conservancies have been approved by Traditional and Regional Authorities. Guided by the project managers, the conservancies have been developed and are implementing management plans for the FPAs. More FPAs are proposed and will be established in due course. In Zambia, the African Water Facility (AWF) has followed up on Namibia’s example for FPAs by proposing similar reserves. Via the project, discussions are facilitated between the conservancies, angling clubs, and tourism lodges in the conservancies over the development of the FPAs, which provide an opportunity for conservancies to earn money from anglers paying fees to fish on a non-consumptive basis (that is catch-and-release angling) in FPAs. There is still, however, a lot of work to be done in assisting the conservancies to publicise and manage the FPAs themselves to prevent illegal netting.

Key areas were identified for research to enhance the knowledge base and educate communities about appropriate management for the various fishery areas. Through collaboration with the Ministry of Fishing and Marine Resources, the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity in Grahamstown and the University of Namibia, three coordinated research projects are now underway. These include age and growth studies on the important fish species in the catches, and a multi-disciplinary study on ecosystem functioning with particular emphasis on Lake Liambezi. This lake is an excellent example of community involvement in fishery management, and serves as a model for other fishing communities to follow.

The lake was virtually dry for many years but filled up in 2009. Rapid increase in fish stocks led to a rapid and initially uncontrolled influx of fishers from elsewhere. Alarmed by this, the local community set up a fishery committee and in 2010 established a register for fishermen who would be allowed on the lake, all of whom had to comply strictly with regulations. Regulations were drawn up on allowable fishing methods that are, in fact, more restrictive, but were much more relevant to the fishery than the Namibian Government regulations.

The Lake Liambezi example shows that community management can work and that the lessons learned there can be applied to the other fisheries, not only in the project area but also elsewhere in the region. The project managers and the NNF will continue to support initiatives to ensure that the fisheries are optimally managed for the benefit of all stakeholders dependent on these extremely valuable resources.

Author: Denis Tweddle, Project Executant, NNF/ MFMR/ WWF, Integrated Co-Management of the Zambezi/ Chobe Fisheries Resources Project

Photos: Denis Tweddle
Looking in retrospect at the Community Based Natural Resource Management programme in Namibia and the involvement of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and key service partners to implement this ground-breaking and highly successful initiative, it cannot be summed up better than in the words of the current Honourable Minister of Environment and Tourism: “This is the best rural development programme in the country!”

Established in 1992 with support from USAID and the WWF-US, and since becoming the WWF in Namibia, CBNRM in Namibia worked closely with Namibian field-based NGOs such as the NNF (Namibia Nature Foundation) and the IRDNC (Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation) in the early years to build what is now recognised internationally as one of Africa’s success stories - although many of us in Namibia would recognise that the ball is now rolling and it is our task to keep steering it in the right direction!

Since its beginnings and up until 2008 (16 years), the CBNRM programme was strategically supported by a number of key partners. A key project was the Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) programme (phases 1, 2 & Plus), with funding totalling approximately N$40 million. The LIFE programme was designed to increase benefits received by historically disadvantaged Namibians from sustainable local management of natural resources in communal areas. With the initial focus on a national level and in the selected target areas of the Caprivi and Otjozondjupa regions, this was subsequently expanded to include the southern Kunene and Erongo regions, and the Uukwaluudhi area in the Omusati Region.

To suggest that the success of the CBNRM programme, with support from the LIFE programme, has been significant, is an understatement, considering the plethora of outputs...
that have contributed significantly to sustainable development in Namibia. These include:

- Contributing towards the achievement of major policy/legislative reform, most notably the 1995 Policy on Wildlife Management, Utilisation and Tourism in Communal Areas, and the 1996 Nature Conservation Amendment Act, which provided the framework for conservancy formation;
- Community mobilisation and raising awareness of CBNRM development opportunities;
- Attaining tangible financial benefits from wildlife and tourism-based enterprises – today the total income value is greater than NS42 million per annum;
- Building the institutional capacity of Namibian support institutions;
- Establishing financially viable and well-managed conservancies that lead to the improved management of their natural resources; and
- Enhancing the livelihood of conservancy members through expanded sustainable natural resource use and other livelihood opportunities.

The CBNRM programme has expanded to include 64 registered conservancies across 11 regions in Namibia, involving more than 230,000 Namibians (over 12% of the total population). The registered conservancies encompass approximately 14.4 million hectares (over 17% of the total landmass of the entire country!).

When combined with the 14.1% of land managed as nature reserves and national parks, the CBNRM programme has effectively doubled the total of Namibian land under conservation management – a remarkable African success story.

The involvement of the NNF in CBNRM, and in particular the LIFE programme, has ranged from policy support to field support directly with conservancies, and from financial management of the umbrella body NACSO to the management of grants. As we continue to move forward with CBNRM in Namibia, one of the key roles the NNF has played and hopes to continue playing is the coordination of the annual State of Conservancy Report (http://www.nacso.org.na/SOC_2009/Index.php), which captures the success of the programme.

The NNF and other partners involved in the programme are proud to have been there from the beginning.

Author: Rachel Malone, NNF project coordinator
Photos: Helge Denker

When combined with the 14.1% of land managed as nature reserves and national parks, the CBNRM programme has effectively doubled the total of Namibian land under conservation management – a remarkable African success story.
The Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF)/Avis Environmental Education Fund has been a remarkable private-civil society partnership spanning over one and a half decades. Established back in 1996, an Environmental Education (EE) Fund was created in collaboration with Avis Rent-a-Car, generating funds through a unique relationship whereby the NNF, in lieu of monthly car rental payments to Avis Rent-a-Car, makes contributions to the EE Fund. To date, more than N$270 000 has been raised for direct EE support across Namibia.

Over the past 15 years, the NNF/Avis Environmental Education Fund has provided invaluable support to schools and academic institutions for Environmental Education awareness tours across Namibia. Through this partnership, the NNF has implemented well over 100 projects and programmes, reaching students, teachers and trainee student teachers across the length and breadth of the country.

Key objectives outlining the focus and associated support of the partnership are:

• To expose children (and decision-makers/communities) to different parts of the country, cultures and environmental issues;
To assist children in linking their school curriculum to the world around them;

To sensitise children to the environment and particularly to environmental degradation;

To instil a sense of pride in children towards their country, its culture and its natural resources;

To stimulate debate and discussion on environmental issues and encourage children to become involved in management of the environment;

To help explain the term ‘environment’ and show that conservation is not only about protecting it, but also about the people who live in it;

To empower children to make informed decisions about the environment and their own lives in a way that will enhance sustainability and, in turn, improve their standard of living; and

To enhance environmental awareness.

As well as supporting programmes through the NNF/Avis Environmental Education Fund, the partnership between Avis Rent-a-Car and the NNF has contributed significantly to the NNF, furthering key conservation and sustainable development initiatives across the country through the use of the vehicle.

The NNF has specifically been involved in:

- The development of Park Management and Development Plans for the Namib-Naukluft and Sperrgebiet National parks;
- The development of the co-managed landscape approach in biodiversity conservation - an approach that Namibia is spearheading. This work has been focused on the Ai-Ais/Fish River Canyon area, involving the national park and private-sector partners; the Namib-escarpment area involving the national park and freehold partners working under the theme A Fence-free Namib; and the Waterberg area, involving the national park, a freehold conservancy and four communal conservancies;
- The first comprehensive survey of hippo and crocodile in Namibia, leading to the change in status of crocodiles under the CITES Convention as a result of the demonstrated healthy recovery of crocodiles in Namibia;
- Community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) in Namibia via the communal conservancy programme - there are now 59 registered conservancies in Namibia, with communities earning over N$40 million a year in 2009 and this amount steadily increasing;
- Wildlife monitoring in communal conservancies and testing wildlife monitoring systems. Some six million hectares of communal conservancy land is surveyed by means of fixed-route road counts each year in north-western Namibia. Desert-adapted elephant and rhino populations have more than doubled, while other species have increased greatly, for example springbok from fewer than 10 000 to 150 000 animals, and gemsbok from about 5 000 to over 40 000;
- Development and implementation of a new approach to fisheries management in the Zambezi-Chobe system. For the first time a viable management system has been developed for the sustainable management of fish in large tropical river and wetland systems in Africa;
- Implementation of trans-boundary river-basin management in the Okavango and Orange rivers; and most recently
- The hosting of the first-ever giraffe conference in Africa, which was presented next to the Etosha National Park and was attended by experts from across the globe to discuss the dwindling numbers across Africa.

This unique partnership has brought increased awareness and environmental education opportunities to Namibian scholars for over 15 years. Moreover, the support provided through the use of the vehicle has enabled the NNF to support a range of critical conservation and sustainable development programmes across the country.

We look forward to providing support to the next coastal, desert or savannah field trip for Namibia’s students and hope the partnership will continue even beyond the next 15 years!

Author: Sally Wood, NNF Personnel and Office Manager
Photos: Peace Corps Namibia & NNF

Dr Julian Fennessy, NNF Director, and Ms Janette Fourie, General Manager Avis Rent-a-Car
As well as developing, initiating, supporting and implementing conservation and sustainable development projects across Namibia, the Namibia Nature Foundation also administers and manages funds and grants for partners, donors, communities, the private sector and the Namibian Government.

One of the key objectives when establishing the NNF 25 years ago was for it to act as an independent financial conduit and manager of conservation funds. Since then its finance team has always played a critical role in the NNF and its partners’ many and diverse projects and programmes.

The role of the NNF finance team has been targeted yet broad. It has involved not only the day-to-day administering of funds, but also assisted with strengthening natural-resource institutions across the country (local to national), and helping to build financial capacity in the fields of renewable natural resources and sustainable development. All of these require a healthy finance team and strong finance leadership, which the NNF has endeavoured to provide both internally and externally.

**Finance manual**

The NNF developed a comprehensive and substantial *Finance Manual* many years ago as the financial policy basis for all NNF services. This manual forms the bedrock of the Foundation’s approach to financial management for those partners whose funds it manages. Its content, however, is not set in stone, but is amended and augmented to adapt to the ever-changing environment in which it works. Its scope includes everything from accounting structures, banking, financial reporting, procurement and investing, to managing fixed assets, insurance and cash.

The NNF has collaborated with most ministries in Namibia. Over the years it has worked with more than 30 local and international NGOs, and over 30 community-based organisations across the country. In addition, the NNF supports other community organisations through partner NGOs.

In facilitating financial management and support to the various partners, the NNF has a wide range of donors, including multi-lateral institutions, bilateral government donors, international NGOs and local business sector partners in Namibia. From each of these donors, be they international agencies such as USAID, EU, FAO, UNDP and GIZ, or local ones such as Nedbank Namibia and NamPower, varying degrees of financial management and reporting are required (some extremely complicated) in terms of processes and regulations.

However, the NNF is proud that in its 25-year history it has never had a qualified audit. The financial records and all project funds are audited every
year by an independent auditing firm, currently Swart Grant Angula, and to date the quality of the finance team has encouraged partners old and new to continue working collaboratively with the NNF in managing and administering their finances.

**LIFE programme**

The NNF finance programme is comprised of qualified and experienced staff, currently managed by Mrs Maria Shaetonhodi (previously Pimenta). One of the exceptional benefits of the NNF administering project finances for the 60+ active projects is the quick turnaround period on payments. In most cases payments are made by electronic transfer within 36 hours of receipt of payment requests, far quicker than the standard 30-day turnaround period in other institutions offering similar services.

Over and above financial administration and management, institutional support and capacity building in the area of finances have been a significant component of the NNF’s focus, particularly at community and conservancy level. As a prime example, through Namibia’s CBNRM USAID-funded LIFE programme – Living in a Finite Environment – the NNF has been a key implementer, and has played a major role in the CBNRM programme for 17 years. One of its objectives has been to grow empowerment, capacity and skills at local levels, particularly financial management capacity for conservancies.

To provide some perspective of the scale of the development of the CBNRM programme, incomes from the overall CBNRM programme grew from zero in 1994 to about N$42.48 million in 2009. Income to conservancies generates a need to manage these benefits and their distribution. Collaboratively, the NNF’s CBNRM unit and finance department developed tools and guidelines to train conservancy committees and staff with the necessary skills to manage conservancy finances, and played an active role in training delivery.

The NNF continues to provide significant financial support to the CBNRM sector, specifically the umbrella body NACSO (the Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) Support Organisations), for whom it is the financial administrator and treasurer. Other key partners the NNF currently supports include the NANGOF (Namibia Non-Governmental Organisations’ Forum) Trust, which runs a large EU Civil Society Capacity Building Programme to strengthen and support effective and sustainable civil society participation and contributions towards national development.

**Management of grants**

Lastly, but definitely not least, one of the NNF’s most important functions lies in the management of grants, which has resulted in many people across Namibia assuming that the NNF is, in fact, a donor. However, over the past decade the financial management and administering of grants has been something upon which the NNF has built a strong reputation, working collaboratively with the UNDP Small Grants Programme, UNAIDS, Nedbank Namibia’s Go Green Fund, WWF-Namibia’s Conservancy Small Grants, FAO’s National Forestry Programme and others. The NNF’s strong financial management capacity, combined with its technical ability in conservation and sustainable development, has enabled it to manage grants worth millions of dollars successfully for projects and initiatives across the country.

So... when next you see the NNF logo, read a story about us in the media or pass one of our vehicles on the road, remember that the role we play for conservation and sustainable development extends far beyond that of ‘saving trees and wildlife’. The Foundation is also a key financial management institution and administrative partner with the public and private sectors, critically to those who need it most – communities in rural areas.

If you are interested in learning more about our capacity and what we can offer, feel free to visit us or give us a call, as our aspiration to work across various sectors with respect to financial management is boundless.

**Author:** Maria Pimenta, NNF Finance Manager  
**Photos:** Helge Denker
A CONSERVATION LEGEND RETIRES

When Ben Beytell closed his office door on 31 May 2011, the loss was felt not only in official conservation circles, but also across the tourism, mining, hunting and game-meat sectors. He had worked for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism and its predecessors for 35 years, for the last decade as Director of Parks and Wildlife Management.

His story begins in 1976 when, inspired by PJ Schumann’s tales of adventure and armed with a conservation diploma, Beytell signed up with the then South West African authorities with instructions to ‘start a game park’ in remote eastern Bushmanland. In those days, Tsumkwe was about two days’ drive from Windhoek and he travelled to town four times a year to attend compulsory management meetings and to restock his grocery cupboard.

The name of the conservation authority changed over the years, but Ben’s unending commitment to the environment endured. Living briefly in Grootfontein and then in Rundu, Ben came to know and love the remote, neglected, wilderness of north-eastern Namibia.

Communication was difficult and few visitors dared travel there. But he saw great potential for protecting and developing the biodiversity of the north-east for conservation, tourism and rural development.

To achieve this, the proclamation of several parks was required. Although the proposed park around Tsumkwe never materialised, Ben helped lay the foundations for some of Namibia’s most notable and species-rich conservation areas. These are the Mahango – later to be incorporated into the Bwabwata National Park – Khudum, Mambili and Mudumu national parks.

Today, these areas offer new approaches to conservation, serving as national and international models for partnerships and housing a treasure trove of biodiversity that attracts tourists, opens new tourism routes and destinations, and contributes to rural livelihoods and poverty reduction.

“Several conservancies and community forests in the north-east add to conservation while providing jobs, benefits and empowerment to communities,” he recently told the MET’s Sandpaper magazine.

Ben moved to Windhoek in 1992 when he was appointed Deputy-Chief Conservation. His responsibilities included trophy hunting and the establishment of trophy-hunting concessions to generate funds for the Game Products Trust Fund. In 1999 he was promoted to Deputy-Director (Chief). He helped mobilise the Game Products Trust Fund (GPTF) and looked after the interests of the MET’s diploma students. During this period many of the country’s shining conservation stars were mentored by Ben.

Since taking up the post of Director, the Sperrgebiet, Bwabwata, Mangetti and Dorob national parks were gazetted. The entire Namibian coastline is now protected - this is internationally significant and the world recognises Namibia for its far-reaching commitment to conservation.

And importantly, Namibia’s protected-area network has expanded, with 64 communal-area conservancies registered; the Human Wildlife Conflict Policy and Guidelines have been approved and implemented; and wildlife populations across the country are flourishing. Ben highlights support from projects, partners and donors as one of the major factors contributing to Namibia’s conservation success over the years.

As Director, Ben consistently practised an open-door policy. He was known to the media as one of the most accessible and helpful civil servants in Government. He says he remembers the lasting friendships that were established with trophy-hunting operators, game and livestock farmers, game dealers, conservancies and commercial Wildlife Management Units (in fact, too many organisations and people involved in the conservation sector to mention) with fondness, and that he will forever be grateful for the fulfilment this has brought to his life.

While presented with an armchair as one of many retirement gifts from the MET and partners, it is unlikely that he will spend much time in it, as yet another door has opened for Ben. Insofar as he is stepping into a wider world of conservation and tourism, which bodes well for Namibia.

Author: Linda Baker, environmental journalist
LOSS FOR CONSERVATION IN NAMIBIA

He met his wife Conny in Pretoria and followed her to Namibia, her home country, where they married in 1969. The couple had two sons, Mark and Paul. The Environment and Tourism authorities of the time appointed Hu as ornithologist and chief biologist in the Etosha National Park. Here, conducting studies on birds, herbivores and carnivores, he soon rose to become control warden. In this period he did detailed studies on flamingos, pelicans and coromorants, obtaining an MSc degree with distinction on ‘The Ecology and Physiology of the Cape Cormorant’. He witnessed historic events such as the mass accumulation of over a million greater and lesser flamingos on the Etosha Pan, which was followed by a mass breeding of white pelicans. For his work on wildebeest on the vast plains surrounding the Etosha Pan, he earned his PhD.

Possibly the most memorable project of his career was the post-doctoral research he carried out on the ecology, behaviour and population dynamics of Etosha’s lions. An offshoot of this work was when he and his friend, the gynaecologist Jock Orford, implanted hormonal contraceptives in a number of lionesses to control population growth as an alternative method of controlling lion populations rather than culling them. Dubbed by the media as ‘Lionesses on the Pill’, this work garnered him and his team worldwide recognition as pioneers of this innovative approach to wildlife management. He subsequently presented his findings at international symposiums on wildlife.

After leaving Etosha, he did further service as chief biologist of the Namib-Naukluft Park. Following his ‘retirement’ after 33 years at the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), he practised as a freelance specialist tour-guide in the Namib Desert and Etosha National Park, based in Swakopmund, having trained tour guides at the Namibian Academy of Tourism and Hospitality, and himself qualified as a Badge III (Specialist Guide) on the Namib, Etosha, ornithology, fauna and ecology.

In 2006 Hu was nominated by Wanderlust Publications in the United Kingdom for the prestigious Paul Morrison Award, which is aimed at naming the world’s best guides.

Said his sons, Mark and Paul Berry, “Hu was a deeply caring father and husband. When our mother Conny fell ill, it affected him severely. Conny’s passing earlier this year signalled an end for him too, and his health started to deteriorate. His earthly life came to an end as he would have wanted it: in the peace of the African bush at sunset with a group of friends. In the words of John Muir: ‘I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in.’”

Said Peter Tarr, a personal friend and professional colleague, “With the death of Hu Berry, Namibia has lost intellectual leadership in the field of conservation and tourism. In many ways it signifies the end of an era. People of that calibre are hard to replace.” Peter said that one of Hu’s earliest contributions was made during his work with wildebeest. “He realised that a major management challenge in African parks was that animals such as wildebeest needed more space in which to migrate and move.” Peter described Hu as a key figure in enlightening the public about the beauty and great value of the Namib Desert. “He reminded us that where people tend to think of desert as a useless wasteland, the Namib is a resource we should not sell cheaply and allow to be degraded. It is one of our most valuable assets.”

Commented Yanna Erasmus, a friend and admirer of the biologist, “Dr Hu Berry was the most special of scientists because at his heart was peace and kindness to animals. He did not see them as a means to a scientific end. His loss is a loss to all, not only in Namibia.”

Steve Brain, a well-known ornithologist who occasionally worked with Berry, described him as ‘an upright ambassador’ and a ‘staunch conservationist’ for Namibia’s wilderness and animals, even after he left the MET.

Compiled: Amy Schoeman, Venture Publications
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GERMANY
Schillerstrasse 42 – 44, D – 60313
Frankfurt am Main,
Tel.: +49 69 3331 360
Fax.: +49 69 3331 3615
Email: info@namibia-tourism.com
www.namibia-tourism.com

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Cape Town
Ground floor, The Pinnacle
Burg Street, P.O. Box 709
Tel.: +27 21 4323 298
Fax: +27 21 4323 298
Email: namibia@capetourism.com
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