

Mamili National Park



Mamili was officially proclaimed on 1 March 1990, just days before Namibia gained Independence. The name of the park refers to the seven chiefs of that name who, since 1864, have ruled over the Mafwe people living in this eastern section of the Caprivi Region. Some refer to the area as Nkasa Lupala Park, in reference to the two dominant islands in the park.

This is the largest wetland area with conservation status in Namibia, and is a haven for wetland species. When the flood waters from the Kwando River are high, Mamili becomes like a mini Okavango Delta.

There are close to 1 000 buffalo in Mamili, the largest concentration in the country. It is also an important corridor for elephants moving from Botswana to Angola and Zambia and is considered a core breeding area for wildlife that can disperse into neighbouring conservancies.

FACT FILE

Park size: 320 km²

Year proclaimed: 1990

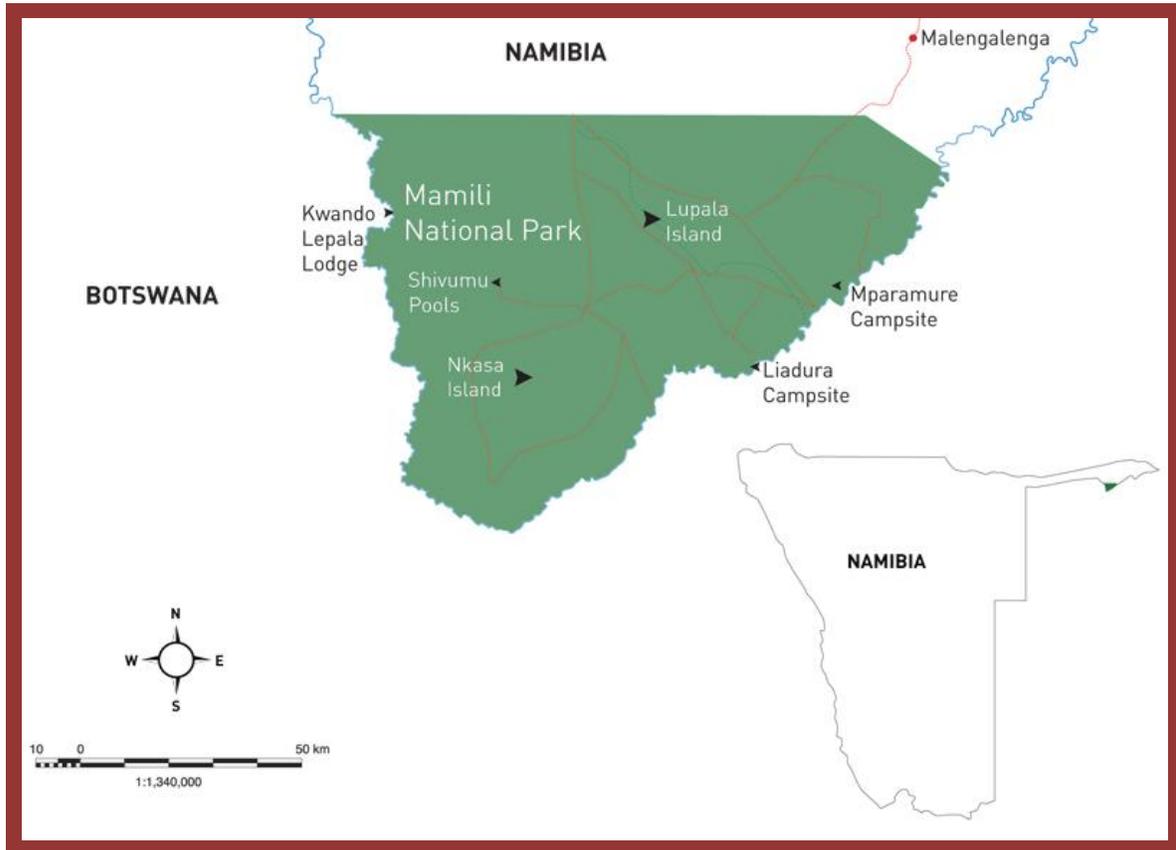
Natural features: Most of the park consists of channels of reed beds, lagoons and termitaria islands. The Kwando River forms the western boundary and the Linyanti River its south-eastern border.

Vegetation: Tree and Shrub Savannah Biome. Caprivi Floodplain. Reeds, sedges, and papyrus, wild date palms (*Phoenix reclinata*). Tall trees such as jackal-berry (*Diospyros mespiliformis*) and mangosteen (*Garcinia livingstonei*) along the water edges and on the termitaria.

Wildlife: Hippo, crocodile, elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard, hyaena, African wild dog, roan antelope, common impala, red lechwe, reedbuck, sitatunga, kudu, warthog, spotted-necked otter, rock and water monitor lizard. The 430 species of birds recorded, include breeding pairs of rare wattled cranes; slaty egret, Stanley's bustard, rosy-throated longclaw, Dickinson's kestrel, Allen's gallinule, lesser jacana, black-winged and red-winged pratincoles, long-toed lapwing, luapula cisticola, coppery-tailed coucal and black coucal.

Tourism: Mamili provides the ultimate wilderness experience. A 4x4 vehicle equipped with recovery equipment is required. No facilities, so visitors must be self-sufficient. Park fees must be either pre-paid at MET offices in Katima Mulilo or Windhoek or upon arrival. Two designated camping areas – Mparamura (known also as Nzalu), and Lyadura on the banks of the Kwando River. A recently constructed bridge has improved access to this park.

Map



Conservation successes

The Mamili National Park protects the flora and fauna living within a complex channel of reed beds, lakes and islands that make up the Linyanti swamps. Home to Namibia's largest herds of buffalo and the last remnant stronghold of puku antelope, these creatures are among the highlights of any game-viewing experience.

During the rainy season, as much as 80% of the park can become flooded, yet throughout the years, the watercourses of the park have been sanctuary to a profusion of birdlife. Wattled cranes breed, and slaty egrets and greater swamp warblers find shelter in the papyrus swamps. With more than 430 other bird species recorded, Mamili is a bird-watcher's paradise.

Community involvement in conservation also applies to the. The Caprivi and Kavango regions are the geographical heart of the Kavango River–Zambezi River (KaZa) Transfrontier Conservation Area. This five-country initiative, involving Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Angola, which is aimed at broadening the protected areas network, thus increasing biodiversity, expanding historical game migration routes and drawing more tourists into the area. In a place where local people often bear the costs of living with wildlife, KaZa will help make the protection of wildlife and wild places more economically viable for rural communities.

The KaZa conservation area is home to the largest concentration of elephants in Africa. The Mamili National Park are part of a web of 22 protected areas which cover 280 000 square kilometres that have the potential to be transformed into a transfrontier conservation area.

Key management issues

MET staff carry out game monitoring, game counting and anti-poaching patrols within the park. These are hampered by the terrain – during years of flooding, up to 80 per cent of the park is inaccessible by vehicle. Research is needed to ascertain why numbers of red lechwe have dropped. Possibilities include attacks by baboons or predators.

Disturbance of floodplain and grassland species by human activities, particularly those that breed here and disturbance of species using the islands as refuges during flood periods are red flags in management plans. Poaching sometimes occurs, although co-operation with neighbouring conservancies, conservancy game guards and local NGOs helps reduce illegal activities.

Future plans

In accordance with the Strategic Management Plan for Namibia's North-East Parks, Mamili is categorised as a Very Important habitat zone. Tourism activities and developments need to be carefully assessed and planned to retain the natural balance of this wetland eco-region.

A tourism concession will be developed in the park in partnership with neighbouring conservancies in order to boost local support for the park and assist local livelihoods.

A proposal has been put forward for a new, second MET office near Malengalenga that will allow personnel to monitor the east of the park more easily.