THE Namibia Animal Rehabilitation, Research and Educational Centre (NARREC) is Namibia’s only wild animal rehabilitation centre. From humble beginnings in 1988, NARREC has developed into an active and nationally used centre for the treatment, care and rehabilitation of wildlife, with special emphasis on environmental education.

As a rehabilitation centre NARREC works closely with the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the State Veterinary Services, the SPCA, private veterinarians and the general public. With 27 outdoor aviaries and newly completed hospital and clinic facilities, NARREC is well-equipped to deal with a variety of wildlife in need of care. More than 1,000 animals, comprising some 100 species, have been admitted to the centre since 1988.

The yearly toll of poisoned, injured and orphaned animals, especially birds of prey, appears to be increasing. Nearly half of the animals brought to NARREC are injured by vehicles, glass or power-lines. A third of the animals are poisoned by a host of different toxic chemicals and sprays, while the remainder are orphans and deliberately trapped (and injured) animals.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AT NARREC

School children visiting NARREC participate in cross-curricular environmental education programmes, adapted to local conditions. The programme provides a series of simple ideas for the use of resources in natural and man-made environments, aimed at teaching basic ecological and environmental principles. It is designed to assist in the development of four fundamental skills:- exploration, interpretation, evaluation and communication. By working in groups through a range of activities, children can obtain basic information, learn certain ecological and environmental concepts and understand the threats to the environment and the need to protect it.

A list of key activities has been developed in collaboration with teachers and university lecturers. These cross-curricular activities are designed to complement formal school syllabi in a broad range of school subjects and non-formal environmental youth-club programmes. Close “hands-on” contact, and consequent familiarity, illustrates the plight of fauna and flora resulting from direct or indirect influence of man on his environment. NARREC’s location and facilities provide environmental material which can be experienced under suitable guidance.

Facilities for the admission, care and maintenance of a variety of injured animals are developed on a continuous basis. The indoor and outdoor educational facilities will include a network of nature trails and two overnight camping sites. A “touch and smell” centre with a herb garden, farm animals and some habituated wildlife, and a guided nature trail for the physically handicapped is also being planned. Research programmes, with emphasis on conservation biology, sustainable environmental resource use and biodiversity protection, will also be undertaken. The latter will be focused on appropriate technology for renewable energy resource utilisation.

FUNDING NARREC

NARREC received funding from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), the mining corporations Rössing Uranium and CDM, and other organisations. By becoming a personal or corporate donor, companies and individuals can support NARREC in general or a rehabilitation or educational development project of their choice. Donations are payable to NARREC, PO Box 11232, Tel. (061) 264409, Windhoek, Namibia. Alternatively, donors can arrange with NARREC’s project leader, Liz Komen, to support NARREC with donations of materials or equipment. NARREC is open to the public by prior arrangement.