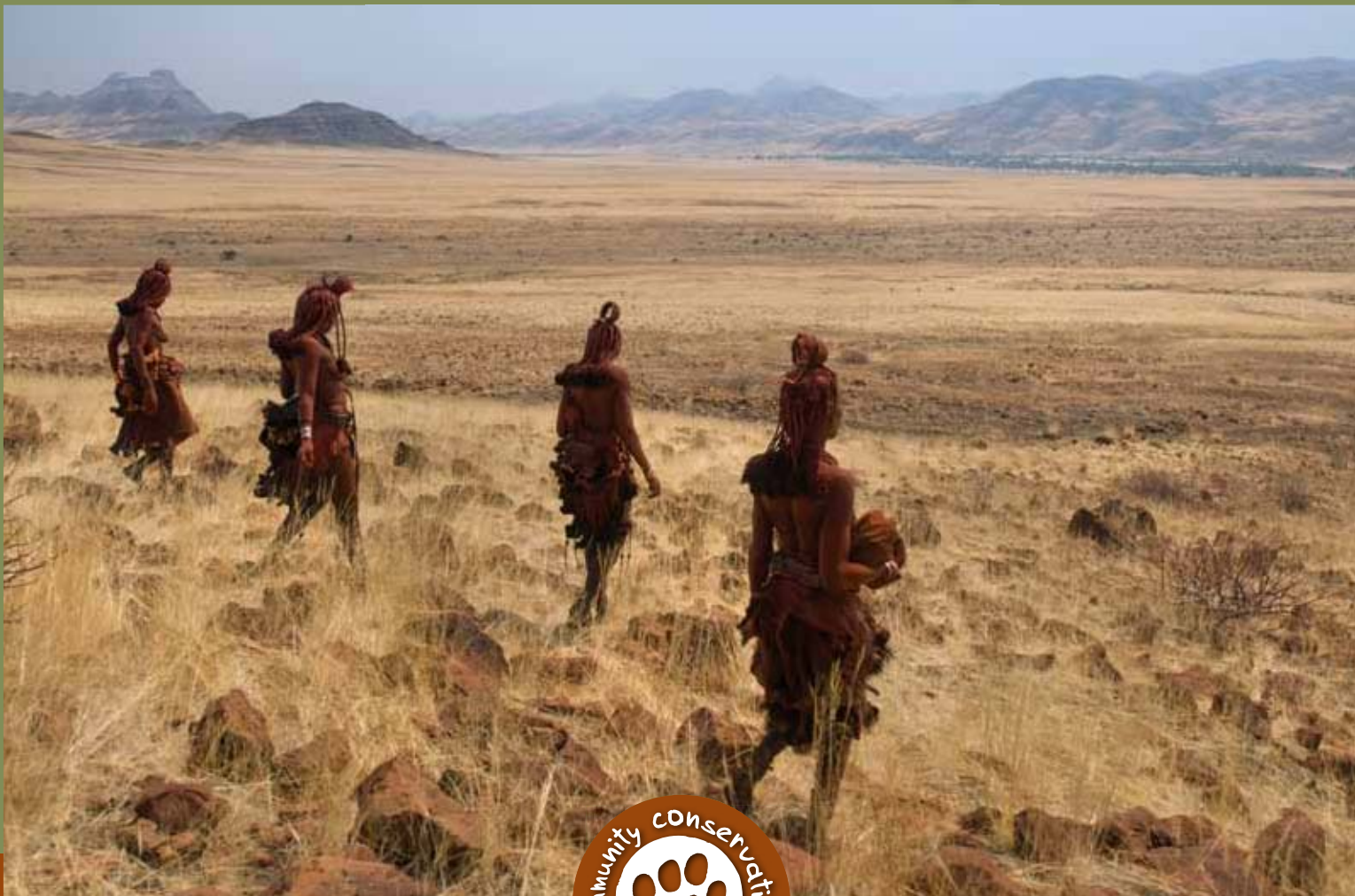


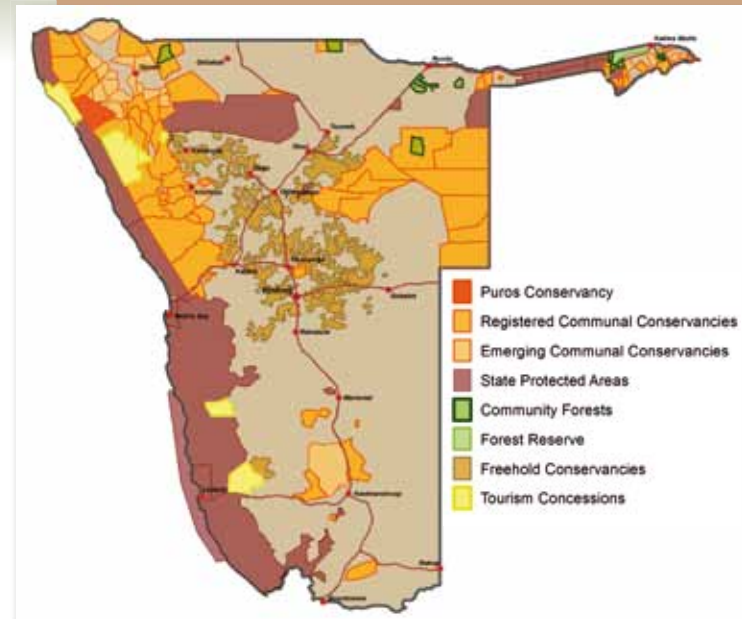
Living with wildlife –
the story of **Puros Conservancy**



Puros – from 'omburo', Otjiherero for 'fountain'



Living with wildlife – the story of PUROS CONSERVANCY



A CONSERVANCY IS...

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

Conservancies

enable development and conservation over large areas...

MILESTONES AND SUCCESSES

- 1996** – policy changes allow communal area residents to benefit from wildlife and tourism by forming conservancies
- 1998** – Sesfontein and Puros communities begin the process to register as one conservancy
- 2000** – Puros Conservancy is registered in May, while three years later Sesfontein Conservancy is registered
- 2000** – Puros Conservancy becomes part of the annual North-West Game Count
- 2002** – implementation of the Event Book monitoring system in Puros Conservancy
- 2003** – Puros Campsite, developed before the registration of the conservancy, becomes a fully conservancy-owned enterprise
- 2006** – harvesting of *Commiphora* resin for export to the international cosmetic industry begins in Puros and three other conservancies
- 2009** – Puros Bush Lodge is developed as a fully conservancy-owned enterprise
- 2010** – implementation of a lion monitoring and management project is started, in which revenue from lion related tourism pays for losses caused by the lions, thereby facilitating conservation of the predators
- 2010** – black rhino are translocated from the Palmwag Tourism Concession to Puros and neighbouring Orupembe Conservancies
- 2010** – registration as a community forest is initiated

QUICK FACTS

Region: Kunene

Size: 3,562 square kilometres

Approximate population: 300

Main language: Otjihimba/Otjiherero

Date of registration: May 2000

PUROS offers an enchanting mix of

PEOPLE



interesting cultures and dynamic communities committed to sustainability – people living in Puros share a common vision for managing their area and its resources

PLACES



vast, diverse and spectacular landscapes – mountains and desert plains, the Hoarusib River... a healthy environment diversifies economic opportunities and drives economic growth

& WILDLIFE



charismatic, free-roaming wildlife – lion and elephant, rhino and giraffe, endemic birds... wildlife generates a variety of benefits for local people

people are living with wildlife, are managing natural resources wisely and are reaping the benefits...

A LITTLE HISTORY

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

The **Puros Conservancy** covers a large area of over 3,500 square kilometres, but embraces only a small population of around 300 people,

most of whom speak Otjihimba. The Himba, who are part of the larger Herero language group, first settled in what is today the Kunene Region around five hundred years ago, arriving from the north. While the main Herero community moved on to settle in central Namibia in the 1750s, some groups stayed in northern Kunene and over time became known as the Himba. In this remote and mostly arid area, the Himba retained a strong sense of cultural identity still evident today. Because of its arid environment, the Puros area has always been marginal for settlement, but has supported small groups of semi-nomadic Himba pastoralists for generations. The permanent settlement at Puros only began to develop around forty years ago.

After the conservancy legislation was passed in 1996, the neighbouring Puros and Sesfontein communities initially intended to form one conservancy, but logistical challenges and communication difficulties in the vast area proved to be great, and the communities registered two conservancies, who still work together on natural resource management issues.

RESOURCES AND ATTRACTIONS

Conservancies are living landscapes...

The traditional **culture** of the Himba is iconic. Proud pastoralists herd their cattle across the spectacular landscapes of the north-west, as women in traditional dress, anointed with a mixture of butter fat and red ochre, tend to village chores. While the settlement of Puros has gradually lost many traditional Himba attributes, the nearby Puros Traditional Village allows visitors wonderful insights into the cultural heritage of the Himba, showing practical aspects of daily life and explaining important elements such as the holy fire, and the system of dual descent that governs Himba society. The traditional village also keeps alive a sense of pride in the cultural heritage of the community.

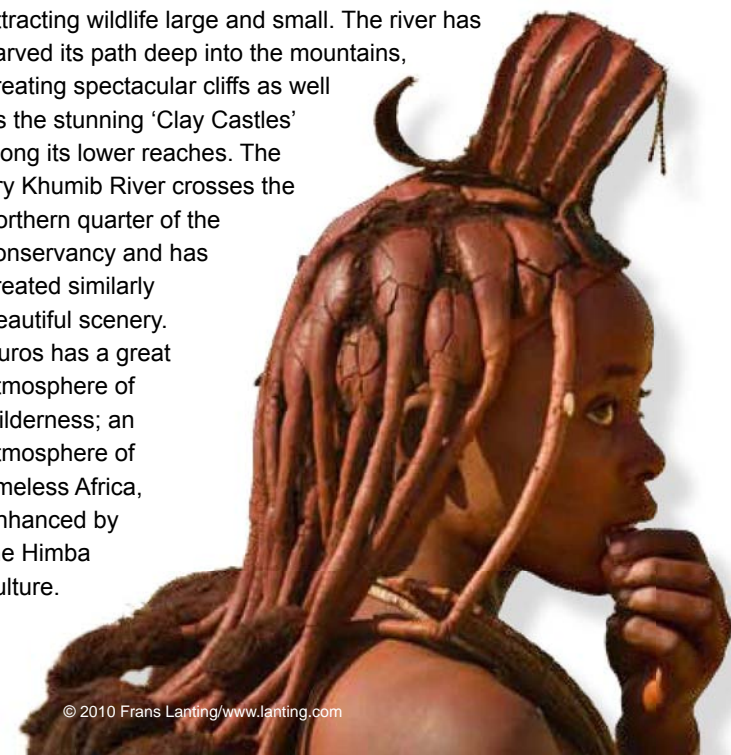


a large village enclosed by a mopane palisade, with the holy fire smouldering near the central stock enclosure; at the entrance of her hut, a Himba woman grinds red ochre on a well-worn stone to prepare her celebrated body rub... Puros Traditional Village allows wonderful cultural insights and interaction

The Namib is said to be the oldest desert in the world. It stretches along the entire Namibian coastline, reaching only slightly into south-western Angola and north-western South Africa. The settlement of Puros is situated less than 60 kilometres from the coast, and the **environment** of the conservancy is shaped by the desert climate. Average annual rainfall is extremely low at between 50 and 150 millimetres, and is also highly variable, with much higher than average rain in some years and basically none in others. The cold Benguela Current of the Atlantic generates frequent fog, which is pushed inland to Puros and beyond on 20 or more days each year, providing important moisture for plants and animals, and soothing the dry land. The western plains of the conservancy lie at less than 500 metres above sea level, but the rocky hills turn to rugged peaks in the north and east, rising to around 1,300 metres.

Winding its way through the heartland of the conservancy, the ephemeral Hoarusib River is a vital linear oasis in the arid environment. Permanent springs produce gentle flow for stretches of several kilometres, and the river is lined by dense vegetation in many places,

attracting wildlife large and small. The river has carved its path deep into the mountains, creating spectacular cliffs as well as the stunning 'Clay Castles' along its lower reaches. The dry Khumib River crosses the northern quarter of the conservancy and has created similarly beautiful scenery. Puros has a great atmosphere of wilderness; an atmosphere of timeless Africa, enhanced by the Himba culture.



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just seeing the large paw prints of the legendary desert lion in the sand lets a traveller's heart beat faster with tingling expectation; downriver, a herd of elephant cows and calves moves in and out of dense vegetation, feeding below a backdrop of sheer cliffs... the Hoarusib River is a haven for desert-adapted wildlife

Since the establishment of conservancies, **wildlife** numbers in communal areas have rebounded from historic lows prior to independence. The elephants and lions of Puros are emblematic, having provided countless visitors with thrilling encounters. Giraffe are common, and black rhino roam the remote hinterland. Kudu, gemsbok, springbok, Hartmann's mountain zebra, duiker, steenbok and klipspringer all occur, and are stalked by an assortment of predators that also includes leopard and cheetah,

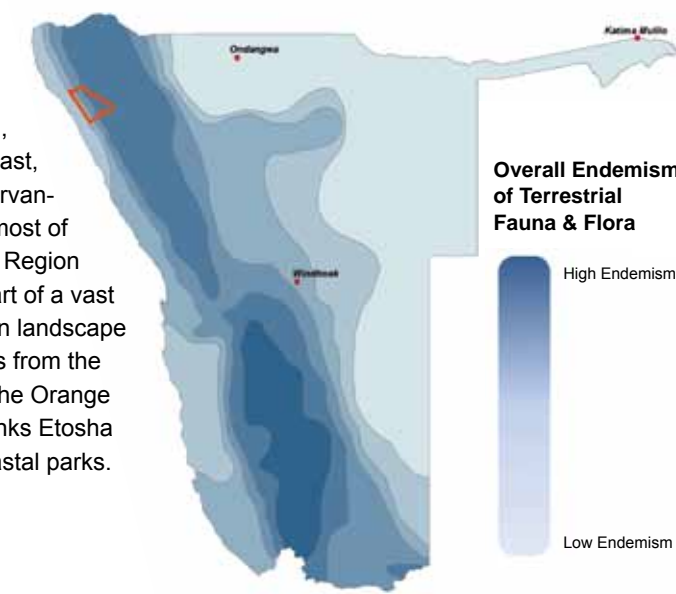


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spotted and brown hyaena, and jackal. The unique environment of north-western Namibia has produced a high degree of endemism, and many of the country's near-endemic birds are found in the conservancy, including Benguela long-billed lark, Gray's lark, Carp's tit, rosy-faced lovebird, Rüppell's parrot, Rüppell's korhaan, Monteiro's hornbill, Damara hornbill, violet wood-hoopoe, white-tailed shrike, Herero chat and rockrunner.

While much of the conservancy supports only a sparse vegetation cover, the ephemeral rivers are lined with huge ana and camel thorn trees, tamarisk and salvadora thickets, makalani palms and mopane trees. Mopane is the dominant tree throughout much of the eastern parts of Puros, giving way in the west to open desert plains. *Commiphora* species are common on rocky slopes and are an important resource for people, who also harvest many other plants for a variety of uses.

Around Puros... Puros lies at the heart of the western tourism route through Kaoko. The conservancy hugs the fringes of the Namib Desert to the west, and borders onto the Skeleton Coast Park, a renowned wilderness travel destination. To the north, south and east, more conservancies cover most of the Kunene Region and form part of a vast conservation landscape that reaches from the Kunene to the Orange River and links Etosha with the coastal parks.



LIVELIHOODS AND DEVELOPMENT

Conservancies
empower rural people...

The Himba living in Kaoko make up less than one percent of Namibia's national population and the residents of Puros live in a geographically remote and arid part of the Kunene Region. Himba culture has always been centred around herds of livestock, and the semi-nomadic pastoralists moved over large areas to follow the sparse grazing and ephemeral water sources along the edge of the Namib. In the early 1980s, an extremely harsh drought caused terrible livestock losses throughout the region. Deprived of their main livelihood, the Himba in the Puros area needed to rely on external food aid for some time. This induced a more sedentary lifestyle, leading to the permanent settlement at Puros. In the mid 1980s,



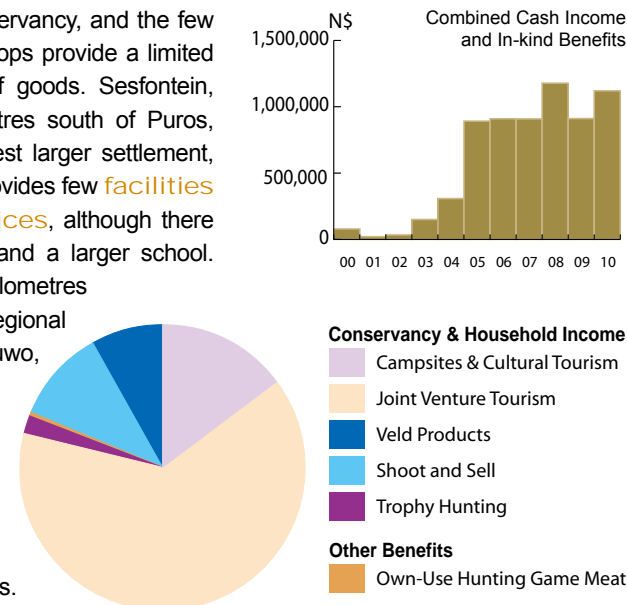
Puros facilitates access to diverse training and capacity building, empowers individuals, especially women, to actively take part in decision-making, as well as instilling a renewed sense of pride in cultural heritage

community conservation pioneer Garth Owen-Smith began paying the Puros community an agreed levy for each guest he brought into the area to view wildlife. The system was soon also taken up by Louw Schoeman, founder of Skeleton Coast Safaris. The ability to generate income by protecting wildlife changed people's perceptions towards elephants and other potentially dangerous game, and the collaboration with tourism operators also renewed a sense of cultural pride. The project became a role model for ways in which tourism could contribute to both rural economies and conservation, by 'turning poachers into partners'.

Development in communal areas was sorely neglected during colonial rule, and the liberation war further isolated the north-west prior to independence, when the South African military presence had profound effects on the local environment and culture. Few infrastructure developments have taken place in Puros and only a single road passes through the conservancy. Natural springs along the Hoarusib River served as the main source of water for Puros for many years, but a water point has now been developed at the settlement. The small primary school at Puros was built with support from Wilderness Safaris. There are no health facilities

in the conservancy, and the few informal shops provide a limited selection of goods. Sesfontein, 110 kilometres south of Puros, is the closest larger settlement, but also provides few facilities and services, although there is a clinic and a larger school. Over 200 kilometres

away, the regional capital, Opuwo, provides access to a hospital, schools, and other facilities and services.

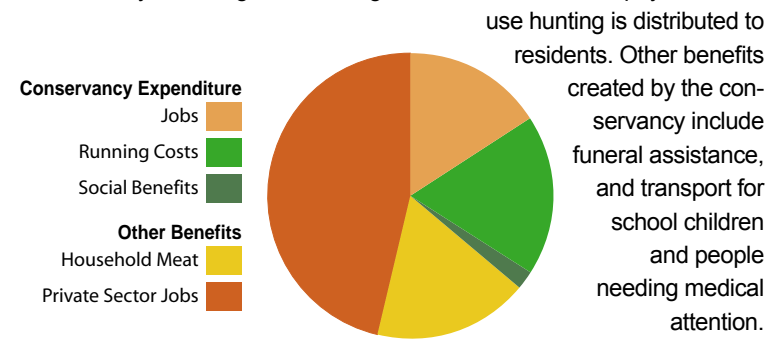


Benefits to the conservancy and its members come from a variety of sources. Sources and amounts vary from year to year, depending on factors such as agreements with private sector partners, and market fluctuations. The pie chart shows the main benefit sources in 2010.



the conservancy has created a range of new livelihood options for its residents, including tourism income, guiding, craft production and indigenous plant harvesting, enabling the Himba to utilise much of their traditional knowledge and skills

While the livelihoods of many residents are still based on cattle, goats and sheep, the conservancy has considerably diversified livelihood options by building on the initiatives started prior to independence. A variety of benefits are now being generated from natural resource management. Many new jobs have been created, both in tourism and by the conservancy itself. Controlled hunting in the form of trophy hunting and shoot and sell hunting generates direct income to cover some of the conservancy's running costs. The game meat from both trophy and own-use hunting is distributed to residents. Other benefits created by the conservancy include funeral assistance, and transport for school children and people needing medical attention.



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

The conservancy has developed a borehole to provide the traditional village with water, as well as creating water points for livestock. Harvesting *Commiphora* resin for the perfume industry is generating important income for Himba women. The resin is naturally exuded by the *Commiphora* bushes and has been collected by Himba women to make scent for generations. Field-based NGO Integrated Rural Development & Nature Conservation (IRDNC) now buys the harvest and processes it into an essential oil at its natural product facility in Opuwo. The oil is exported to France, where it is used as a perfume ingredient. To be able to maximise benefits from indigenous plants, the conservancy has initiated registration as a community forest with the Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry. Crafts have also become an important source of income and a variety of crafts, including jewellery



MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

Conservancies
facilitate sustainability...

The **management structure** of Puros Conservancy consists of a management committee of 13 members. Conservancy employees include five game guards, three lion officers, two community activators, a water management officer, seven traditional village staff, five campsite staff, nine bush lodge staff and a cook employed at the school. The conservancy has its own office at Puros and owns a four-wheel drive vehicle to carry out its activities. A range of technical support is provided to the conservancy by IRDNC.

Activities... The conservancy has been zoned to reduce conflicts between farming and wildlife in the areas where the highest

the Puros Conservancy provides vital structures for managing the communal natural resources of the area in a way that enhances development and ensures sustainability

game densities occur, but Puros is completely unfenced and wildlife can move freely across the conservancy and beyond its borders. Black rhino were translocated from the Palmwag Tourism Concession to Puros and neighbouring Orupembe Conservancies to boost the existing population. Conservancy game guards undertake active natural resource monitoring throughout the conservancy, including monthly fixed route patrols done on foot across the rugged and largely waterless terrain. Information is entered into the Event Book monitoring system, recording a variety of data such as game sightings, human wildlife conflict, poaching incidents, game utilisation and any other data deemed important by the conservancy. The data is aggregated into monthly and annual reporting charts that facilitate adaptive management. The conservancy is part of the annual North-West Game Count, carried out by the Ministry of Environment & Tourism (MET) in collaboration with the conservancies and with the support of NGOs. The census is the largest annual road-based game count in the world. The MET works with the conservancy and other stakeholders to set annual quotas for using wildlife, based on information from the game

counts and the Event Book. This allows the conservancy to carry out own-use hunting to supply residents with meat, as well as entering into trophy hunting concession agreements with hunting operators.

Puros was the first conservancy to actively strive towards finding a balance between a resident lion population and livestock herding. Working with the well-known lion researcher Dr Philip Stander and his Desert Lion Conservation Project, Puros implemented a lion monitoring and management programme to be able to live with lions, and at the same time generate benefits through tourism, which can offset losses caused by the beguiling predators. Three lion officers were trained by Dr Stander to monitor the lion population and collect information on their behaviour, allowing the conservancy to reduce conflicts. Puros has faced strong scepticism expressed by comments such as 'You people are crazy to look after the lions', and the project continues to experience disheartening setbacks — three resident lionesses were poisoned in 2011. The Hoarusib River is now being re-colonised by other lions and the conservancy hopes to learn from the setbacks and continues to make progress to protect the legendary 'desert lions'.

the conservancy uses a mix of modern technologies and traditional knowledge and skills to enable healthy wildlife populations, a productive environment, and the effective management of natural resources



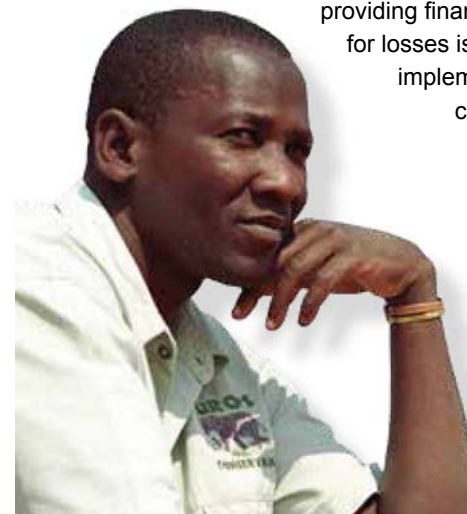
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responsible for paying offsets to residents. Claims must be accompanied by a report from game guards investigating the incident, and all claims are reviewed by a panel before any payments can be made.

Puros strives to mitigate all human wildlife conflict, and is training staff to monitor other species such as elephant and black rhino. Puros has paid offsets to residents for losses caused by wildlife for a number of years through the Human Animal Conservancy Self Insurance Scheme (HACCSIS). Through the National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict

Management, a new system of providing financial offsets for losses is now being implemented. The conservancy receives a fixed lump sum from the MET and is



CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES...

Conservancies
are full of opportunities...

The wonderful mixture of environmental and cultural resources in the Puros Conservancy provides untapped potential.

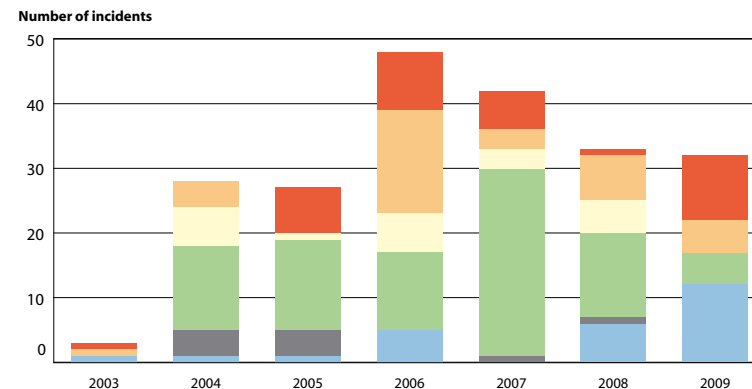
Challenges... Human wildlife conflict is a challenge where ever people coexist with wild animals, especially if these include lions. Puros is facing this challenge in an innovative way, by choosing to actively look after and live with the lions that have made the conservancy a part of their home range. A general change in attitude towards predators throughout the north-west is reflected by the fact that the free-roaming lions in the Kunene Region have recovered



Puros harbours great potential to overcome some of the development challenges that the area faces – and the conservancy is the ideal structure to coordinate many of the developments

from a population low of only 25 individuals in the mid nineties, to well over a hundred today. The lions range as far south as the Ugab River, north to the Marienfluss and west to the misty beaches of the Skeleton Coast. Conflicts with the lions are a huge challenge for local farmers, and many lions continue to be shot and poisoned. While other predators such as spotted hyaena, leopard and cheetah actually cause more incidents each year, lions feature most prominently in the consciousness of people, as they also present a direct threat to human life. Yet all predators, as well as elephants and other wildlife, are extremely valuable, both to the ecosystem and to tourism, and in the long run benefits gained from them need to outweigh the costs of living with them – if people are to continue to tolerate them. The work done in Puros will hopefully bear fruit and will begin to convince more conservancies to work actively with lions and other potential conflict species.

■ Lion
■ Leopard
■ Jackal
■ Hyaena
■ Elephant
■ Cheetah



Human wildlife conflicts are monitored using the Event Book and clearly indicate the main conflict species.

... AND THE FUTURE

benefits from resources to which communities had been denied access, a system of 'friendly neighbours' is created through an alliance that benefits both the park and the neighbouring community. Puros has applied for a concession in the adjacent Skeleton Coast Park, which, if awarded, could open exciting new tourism options and generate important benefits for the conservancy.

The conservancy strives to continuously improve its management capacities, and is funding tertiary education for local learners, who can return to the conservancy well-trained after the completion of their studies, to take up management positions. Puros also hopes to share its experiences in working with lions with other conservancies to expand the positive impacts of lion conservation.



strategic development, sensitive to cultural dynamics as well as the environment, can ensure that the residents of the conservancy benefit from their communal resources without compromising their heritage

generate additional community benefits and lead to a fair sharing of the income from mobile tourism.

Puros has a variety of **plans** to expand tourism, as well as to improve conservancy management. The concessions policy of the Ministry of Environment & Tourism creates opportunities for park neighbours to benefit from adjacent protected areas. By sharing

Puros served as an excellent example for contributing to rural livelihoods while conserving wildlife through tourism in the 1980s. Today, Puros has developed into one of the most successful conservancies in Namibia, generating community benefits from a suite of natural resource management activities. The pilot project for living with lions can lay the foundations for similar approaches

to the conservation of large predators in other areas. And the small community in this remote and harshly beautiful tract of land can continue to find innovative ways to live with wildlife and generate benefits from conservation, ensuring a bright future for the conservancy and its residents.



Come to Puros –
be part of the future...





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Norad

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