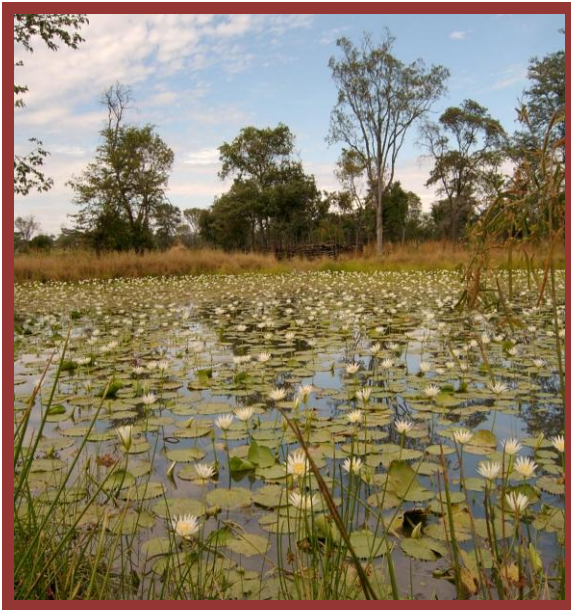


Bwabwata National Park



The Park was first proclaimed as the Caprivi Game Reserve in 1966 and upgraded to the Caprivi Game Park in 1968. It was gazetted as the Bwabwata National Park in 2007 and incorporated the former Mahango Game Reserve. The Park has had a chequered history as it was declared a military area by the South African Defence Force during Namibia's war of liberation. It was not until after Independence in 1990 that the Park could be properly run as a conservation area.

A survey was conducted in the park at Independence to investigate the status of the fauna and flora after the military occupation and to assess the circumstances of the 5 000 people living in it. This survey laid the foundation for the current management approach in the park which incorporates the needs of the people living there. The survey also laid the foundation for the zoning of the park, which has a core conservation area in the

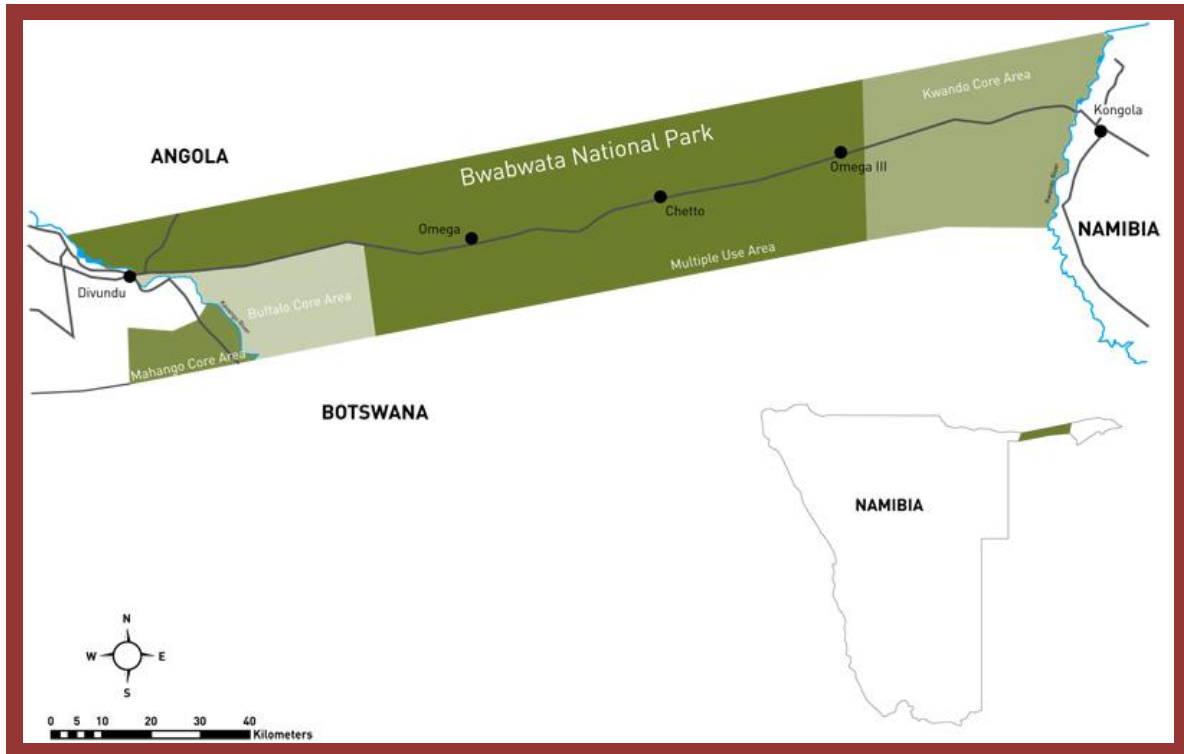
west along the Okavango River, a multiple use area in the central part of the park and a core conservation area in the east along the Kwando River.

Development of infrastructure, provision of equipment and park planning is being supported by the German Development Bank (KfW) through the Bwabwata, Mudumu, and Mamili (BMM) Parks Project and by Global Environment Fund through the Strengthening the Protected Area Network (SPAN) Project.

FACT FILE

Park size:	6 100 km ²
Date Proclaimed:	Bwabwata National Park in 2007
Natural features:	Low vegetated sand dunes with old drainage lines (<i>omurambas</i>) in between. Okavango River in the west and the Kwando River in the East.
Vegetation:	Broad leafed Kalahari woodland with trees such as the Zambezi teak and false mopane on the sandy areas, camelthorn and the leadwood in the omurambas. Reeds and papyrus on the floodplains which are lined with trees such as the jackal berry, mangosteen, knob thorn and fan palm.
Wildlife:	Large concentrations of elephant and buffalo, also sable and roan antelope. Main predators such as lion, leopard, cheetah and hyena. One of the last refuges of the wild dog in Namibia. Common reedbuck, red lechwe, sitatunga and hippo along the rivers. Birds include wattled crane, African skimmer western-banded snake eagle, wood owl, Pel's fishing owl, narina trogon, Cape parrot, and both red-billed and yellow-billed oxpeckers.
Tourism:	Most tourism facilities are outside the park, run by private operators that offer day trips into the park. Two conservancy operated camp sites on the Kwando River: Nambwa (Mayuni Conservancy) and Bum Hill (Kwando Conservancy). The Kyaramacan Association runs N/goabaca Campsite at Popa Falls on the east bank of the Okavango River. Namibia Wildlife Resorts operates the Popa Falls Rest Camp on the west bank of the river. Most tourists are self-drive campers from overseas or within the region or mid-market tourists that stay in lodges outside the park.

Map



Conservation successes

One of the Bwabwata National Park's major accomplishment is that human and wildlife residents are now living in a status quo that offers tremendous benefits to both conservation and rural community development. Described by Namibian president Hifikipunye Pohamba as "one of a new generation of parks," the Bwabwata National Park is pioneering 'a live and let live' conservation ethic.

The Bwabwata National Park is zoned into three "Core Conservancy" areas; the Mahango, Buffalo and Kwando. The bird species count in Mahango exceeds 450, representing the highest bird diversity in any protected area in Namibia. Over 850 buffalo disease-free occur between Mahango and the Buffalo Core area.

In Bwabwata National Park co-management between the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, local communities and conservancies is key to long-term conservation initiatives and the quality of life for local people. It is a win-win situation. The local people have new opportunities in eco-tourism and conservation while wildlife benefits from protection and an increase in numbers. With conservation ethics growing in the region, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism has been relocating and restocking rare species such as situtunga and red lechwe in the area.

African wild dogs, or 'Painted Dogs', are the most endangered large carnivore in Africa with continental populations estimated to be only 3,000 to 4,000 down from an original population of half a million due to persecution by farmers and other competitors, and yet wild dog numbers are increasing in the Bwabwata National Park.

Key management issues

One of the main aspects of park management is dealing with the presence of about 4 000 people living in the main village of Omega in the central part of the park and in a number of smaller settlements. Several other ministries operate in these settlement areas, providing services to the residents. The MET is committed to working with the residents in terms of joint wildlife management and benefit sharing. A Technical Committee has been formed consisting of all the main stakeholders in order to advise MET on management issues. Park residents have formed their own representative body, the Kyaramacan Association. Apart from the N//goabaca campsite, the Association has a concession to build a small lodge and shares the income from a trophy hunting contract with the Ministry. The Association's own community game guards work with MET staff to prevent poaching. Park staff work closely with conservancies, community forests, NGOs and other Government departments to jointly manage a larger area of land known as the Mudumu North Complex, which includes the Bwabwata and the Mudumu national parks and the communal land in between.

The park is partially fenced and these fences have to be maintained, particularly because of veterinary controls on the southern boundary which forms the border with Botswana. Tourism needs to be controlled, particularly as there are few tracks, which mostly follow the rivers and which can become congested if there are large numbers of visitors. Poaching is low in the park due to the joint efforts of MET and the community game guards although there are sometimes incursions from neighbouring countries. The park is part of the Kavango/Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area and cooperation in transboundary conservation management is being promoted, particularly as the park forms a corridor for elephant movement from Botswana into Angola and Zambia. The large concentrations of elephants are opening up the riverine vegetation and destroying habitat for species such as the Chobe bushbuck, the number of which are declining.

Future plans

Further tourism planning and development supported by the BMM Project will lead to better tourism facilities in the park and better tourism management.