

sandpaper

smoothing the way forward for protected area management in Namibia

Issue 3
June 2006

park profile
Mahango Game Park

How well are the
parks managed?

etosha centenary
logo competition

warden profile
Jan Tsumib

**Beyond
Boundaries
Expedition**



The newsletter of the
Strengthening the Protected Area Network (SPAN) Project
Project of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism



Sponsored by:



Sandpaper

Editor
Midori Paxton

Contributors
Ben Beytell
Ulrich Boois
Helmuth Tjikurunda
Michael Sibalatani
John Paterson
Leeverty Muyoba
Dries Alberts
Stacey Main
Neil Digby-Clarke
Hugh Paxton
Linda Baker
Jonathan Smith
Raili Hasheela
Lazarus Nafidi

Design and Layout
Plastiprint Dezine

Printing
Solitaire Press

Reproduction
Nex Digital

Publisher
Strengthening the Protected
Area Network (SPAN) Project,
Directorate of Parks and
Wildlife Management (DPWM)
Ministry of Environment and
Tourism
Private Bag 13306, Windhoek
Tel: +264-61-2842569
Fax: +264-61-245160
sandpaper@span.org.na

Cover photo: Tony Heald

The opinions of Sandpaper's
contributing authors are not
necessarily the views of the
Ministry of Environment and
Tourism or Sandpaper. The
Ministry of Environment and
Tourism, the authors and
Sandpaper accept no liability
for views expressed herein.

None of the contributors
receive any form of
remuneration for their
contributions.

No part of the magazine may
be reproduced without written
permission from the publisher.

From the Editor's Desk

A warm welcome to the latest edition of the Sandpaper. As the editor I'm never quite sure what to expect in the way of contributions but one thing I can be sure of - they are always unexpected! And they are usually a reminder that people can see the same thing very differently.

Take this front cover for example. When I first saw the photo I assumed the zebras were a mother and baby engaged in harmless horse-play. But no. The experienced MET staff quickly corrected me. The striking and beautifully captured image actually shows a zebra stallion killing a calf. Something that often happens apparently.

The same issue of interpretation offers the MET a key challenge. How do very different people see the same

thing in this case the National Parks and Protected Area (PA) system?

Are the parks seen as an economic powerhouse that underpins the nature tourism industry which is the major part of Namibia's tourism industry? As destinations of wonder that offer the holiday of a lifetime? As a cornerstone of biodiversity conservation in Namibia, ensuring availability of natural resources including landscape and its aesthetic value for future generations to come?

Or as a waste of living space and a breeding ground for problem animals that leave park borders to raid fields and kill livestock?

It is up to the MET to prove the important nature and potential of this country's exceptional PA system to everybody

from the local residents who live against park borders to the movers and shakers in government and the private sector.

People might not all see things in the same way, but with the right and clear information available, they should realise what they are looking at. And, like me and the zebras photo, with the right information people would learn something startling. I hope that Sandpaper will be able to promote better understanding about PAs among our wide range of readers.

If you have opinions about PAs; their roles and potential, let us know!

Midori Paxton
Project Coordinator

Contents

Features

The Namett	7
Beyond Boundaries Expedition	16

Regulars

From Ben's Briefcase	1
Warden Profile	2
So Easy	3
SPAN Update	4
Etosha Centenary Logo Competition	5
Spirits of the North	6
MET staff in Action	10
Park Profile: The Mahango Game Park	12
Quiz	15
Safety in the Park	15
Park News	18
Letter to the Editor	20
Your Shot!	21





By Ben Beytell
Director: DPWM

From Ben's Briefcase



*"Afar in the Desert I love to ride,
With the silent Bush-boy by my side:
Away away from the dwellings of men,
By the Antelope's haunt and the Buffalo's glen:
By valleys remote, where the Ourebi plays;
Where the Gnoo, the Sassybe, and Hartebeest graze;
And the Eland and Gemsbok unhunted recline:
By the skirts of grey forests o'erhung with wild vine,
Where the Elephant browses at peace in his wood
And the River-horse gambols unscared in the flood;
And the mighty Rhinoceros wallows at will,
In the pool where the Wild Ass is drinking his fill."*

Pringle.

I have just returned from a memorable trip in the desert, and have experienced much of what is described above, and even more: I traveled through Etosha and to the West up to the fringes of the Namib, and of course did not see "ourebi", "sassybe" or any "river-horses".

Neither was I privileged enough to observe the mighty rhinoceros, although I saw much of his sign, and spoke to people who have made it their mission in life to protect this mythical animal from the harm that Man can induce upon him. The "Bush-boy" was my son, whose first words were in any case, the Zu-wha dialect of the !khung language, and not his mother tongue, Afrikaans.

What are most obvious in the veldt after the copious rains that we were blessed with this year, are the almost exuberant signs of life found everywhere: Insects were everywhere, the same as the creatures that prey on them: Several times, the slow-motion movement of a chameleon painstakingly crossing the road caught my attention just in time, as well as snakes in the road, like the gargantuan example of the size

that can be attained by an Egyptian cobra near Okawau.

The old elephant bull that we encountered right next to the road looked down on us with rheumy eyes, casually chomping on some tidbit. He was enveloped in mud from his hairless tail to the tip of his trunk, and the look of contentment on his face was unmistakable.

We slept over in Kaross in the Etosha National Park, and on our way to the campsite we encountered many pairs of double-banded sand grouse on the two-tracked road, taking flight at the last moment, and almost helplessly looking for a bare patch of ground for the landing. That evening, we decided that it might be a better option to switch off the camp light when nasty creatures like a red scorpion, a baboon spider, a few large, hairy solfugids and several centipedes entered the circle and started scurrying around in search of prey attracted by the light. All of a sudden, it also did not seem such a good idea to put out our bedrolls there next to the fire and we decided to take refuge in the hut only to discover that a large number of mosquitoes had already inhabited our sanctuary, and were eagerly awaiting us.

On the way to Palmwag through the #Khoadi-Hoas Conservancy, there was nothing to compare with what the area looked like during my previous visit: There was grass everywhere, and the normally dry riverbeds have turned into rippling crystal-clear streamlets filled with darting tadpoles. Cattle were lying down in the thick grass, and one could easily confuse the area with some meadow in a far-away place if it was not for the stunted Mopanies that typifies the landscape. We drove down the Klipriver to a fountain where two rhinos were released a while ago, but there was no sign of them, except for some old dung in the road. With water abundant in the river, there was no restriction to their

movement, and they could roam far and wide.

At Palmwag, we found the camp almost deserted: All the trackers were out in search of rhinos which were not easy to locate due to the availability of water throughout the area. The next morning early, we drove out into the Palmwag Concession area. We first stopped off at an old landmark called "Van Zyl se Gat" in the Uniab river where I promised myself that I will have a swim on the way back, just as when I visited it the last time, twenty nine years ago.

We proceeded further to Rhino camp to have a look at the new airstrip and to consult with the Rhino trackers who reported the firing of shots close to the Vet. fence a week ago. Along the way we stopped over at the camp of Theuns and his team of five workers who are contracted by Wilderness Safaris to maintain the roads by hand with no other tools than pick and shovel. Guys, let this be an example! Further on we were again treated with unbelievable sights: herds of springbok of more than a hundred strong, dozens of oryx scattered throughout the grassy plains, mountain zebra dotting the skyline and scamperring uphill when suddenly surprised by the vehicle around a bend in the road, and Ruppels korhaan refusing to take flight, or landing repeatedly in the road again, until we had to stop the vehicle in order to allow them to sort themselves out.

We stopped at Van Zyl se Gat on the way back, and had our swim. Back at Palmwag, the trackers have returned. We found Simson of the Save the Rhino Trust (SRT) speaking on the phone with his colleague Rudy: They found five of the seven rhinos they were looking for, and listening to him, he might as well have discussed the well-being of mutual friends with Rudy, because they have names for all the rhinos: Goliath, Speedy, Stompie, Nonny and Mathilda were the topics of discussion of the day.

Continued on page 19

Ben Beytell,

Few have as much experience and knowledge of Namibia's parks as MET Director of Parks and Wildlife Management, Ben Beytell. This regular column provides an opportunity to learn from someone who is at the very heart of parks in Namibia.

warden profile

By Hugh Paxton

Jan Tsumib

Ex-Ranger: Etosha National Park

Jan Tsumib is 60. He has just retired after 30 years experience working in Etosha. He is a member of the Hai //om (a group of the San people), and he was born beside !iobeb waterhole near Namutoni. His family was moved out of the national park when the authorities decided to relocate Etosha's human residents. Jan returned as an MET labourer in the mid-1970s.

after an elephant attacked. He escaped being trampled flat only by hurling himself into thick thorn bushes. On another occasion Jan was part of a team called out to put down an elephant suffering from gunshot wounds. Jan was on the ground following the

behind him in the hope that the lions would follow the scent trail away from the guns of the farmers and back to the sanctuary of the park.

The work was Wild West (Africa) cowboy stuff but the pay he says was good. Forty rand a month. And with a cool drink only costing ten cents, forty rand went a long way in those days.

"He wanted to work in the bush with his beloved animals."

There were two reasons for his return. He wanted to work in his ancestors' place, close to the graves of his parents. And he also wanted to work in the bush with his beloved animals.

spoor of the enraged and suffering animal. Jan found it. The marksman in the team missed it. The elephant charged straight at him and Jan ran thinking "I am finished this time."

Jan only rose to a ranger position about three years before his retirement. He doesn't have the academic paper qualifications to meet government requirements for further professional advancement.

Jan's luck held. Sort of. He accidentally fell down a hole. The elephant, fortunately, didn't join him. Nor could it work out how he had disappeared. Just one of Jan's many, almost miraculous, escapes.

But for years he has been Namutoni's bush professor. His colleagues treat him with great respect and tell me how much he has taught them. The veld is Jan's book, the animal spoor the writing. He can look at spoor, says the ranger Moses Areseb, and tell what the animal is thinking. He can know its mood and predict what it will do next with pinpoint accuracy.

Standard advice in many African countries on how to avoid being gored by an angry black rhino is to climb a tree. In Etosha this isn't often an option. This place isn't a forest!

Moses worked with Jan for 16 years and will miss him deeply. Moses earned Jan's trust during the learning process and the pair of them have tracked extremely dangerous "problem" animals on many occasions. "I am a rich person because of Jan," Moses says with all sincerity.

Jan's advice is to stand as "still as a stick." I'm not sure if I could manage this if two tons of muscle horn and bad temper were coming at me at 40 km per hour.

Jan handled it. The rhino came to a halt a meter away. Jan held his nerve. He stood like a stick. The rhino looked threatening, then confused, then decided not to bother.*

Jan is still full of advice. Like every great teacher it is based on wisdom and is at times rather stern.

Relocating lions back then involved roping a small antelope carcass and dragging it past the big cats then galloping off dragging it

Some young people want to work in parks because they just want the pay, he says. They have academic qualifications on paper but they don't know the bush and they



© Midori Paxton

It was Jan's job to remove them. Mounted on a horse he had to chase elephants back into the park. And if the elephants didn't want to be chased he chased them anyway. "It was not really an easy task," he recalls. This is an understatement!

On one occasion his partner was thrown from the horse



© Tony Head



Midori Paxton

have no passion for the bush. They know the tar roads and gravel roads of Etosha but they drive through at high speeds. They just know the roads or the offices. Full stop. If you want to be a real ranger or a warden you must move slowly and leave the roads. Having a paper qualification is not a bad thing, but it is not enough.

"If you have experience in the bush and love it and you have grown up in it and have a qualification then you will be a great conservationist. We need young people with knowledge and wisdom."

Jan also has words to say on Etosha parks staff numbers. In the old days he says "we didn't have enough staff but the staff worked twice as hard." It worked, he says. "Now we

have too many staff and some work half as hard. The quality of work is no good. It is a sad thing to say but everybody knows it is the truth."

Etosha was once his "motherland." His birth-right. Then the State "adopted" it. Jan has mixed feelings about this. He is sad that it is no longer his own but he is very happy that the animals are no longer afraid. "They can come so close to tourists that tourists can take pictures. The animals don't run away because they are at ease. This is wonderful."

When I ask Jan about his hopes for the future he says that he hopes Etosha will always remain in good hands and stay that way forever.

He thinks it *is* in good hands.

His concern is that it might not stay that way.

Jan's retirement and personal future is uncertain. He currently runs a few goats outside of Etosha, is looking for a place to settle, but what he'd like to do is teach young people the skills that he was taught when he was young. And the skills he has accumulated in 30 years in Etosha.

"Reading the spoor of big animals is not so difficult but you must learn to read the spoor (and the minds) of the little ones duiker, springhare, Damara dik-dik. This is much more difficult and is equally important."

"When I die those things will die with me if I can't pass them on. I don't want that." 1

Jan Tsumib with his "students" - Warden Immanuel Kapofi and Ranger Moses Areseb.

*NOTE: The Sandpaper makes no guarantees. If you are charged by a black rhino it's your call! The most important thing is to avoid the situation of having to face a rhino on foot.

So Easy!

Greener please!

By Guy Broucke, Tebogo Mabote, Jessica Birks

I have recently travelled around Namibia with friends from Botswana and overseas. We were very impressed with the standards at many venues. We saw your publication and thought we might write.

As many tourists going to PAs in Namibia, we consider ourselves "eco-tourists", and the following observations may be of value to you.

We would prefer going to venues that clearly look for "zero-impact" tourism, even if that means a bit less comfort for the same price; although it may not even mean less comfort. What we specifically noticed is that

none of the venues we visited collects rainwater or reuses shower water; and yet many have greedy lawns and pools. It shows eco-tourists that water as a scarce resource for the Namibian people is not properly valued by Tourism Operators.

In a similar vein, we have not seen many waterless toilets or systems using solar power neither water pumping systems nor solar power supply systems; nor other water- or energy-efficiency measures such as CFL lights, efficient shower-heads or efficient flush systems. Indeed, in some places we have had to endure generators

for mere light supply and saw leaking taps that were unattended to during our stay.

We would have been excited to find a PA where all shower water is reused to water a sustainable type of endemic garden; and where other efforts are made to make the tourist feel that s/he has "zero negative impact". I think such destinations can be marketed, just like the general response of tourists in Southern Africa has been positive towards hotels who now give guests the option of not washing towels every day. People are excited about making a contribution!

In brief...

Greener Namibia

- Re-use shower water
- Install waterless /composting toilets
- Don't wash towels every day
- Use solar energy
- Fix leaking taps
- Recycle

Do you think it is *So Easy* to improve some simple aspect of park management? Send your ideas to improve park experiences to: : sandpaper@span.org.na

SPAN update



© Francois Poolman

Top: Project Document signing ceremony
Left to right: Dr. Malan Lindeque, Permanent Secretary, MET;
Mr. Mocks Shivute, Permanent Secretary, NPC;
Mr. Simon R. Nhongo, Resident Representative, UNDP

Strengthening the Protected Area Network (SPAN) Project is a project of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, aiming to increase management effectiveness of the national protected area network in Namibia for biodiversity conservation. It is supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

SPAN Contact details
Project Coordinator
Phone:
+264 (0)61 284 2505
Fax:
+264 (0)61 245160
Email:
coordinator@span.org.na
Website:
www.span.org.na

MET/SPAN's preparatory phase came to an end in January 2006, with the successful mobilization of US\$ 8.2 million funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Project Document, which outlines the full phase of the project from 2006-2010, has formally been signed between the National Planning Commission (NPC), UNDP and the MET on March 24, 2006.

Here is a summary of SPAN's latest activities:

New Staff!

The UNDP facilitated the recruitment process of the new staff of the Project Management Unit (PMU) for the full phase. Interviews for the Project Coordinator position took place in December 2005. Midori Paxton was selected to serve as the Project Coordinator for the full phase. Interviews for the Field Coordinators, Administrator, Accountant, Communication and Partnership Development Officer, and Young Namibian Professional Intern took place in February 2006. The following successful candidates started to assume duty from the beginning of April, 2005.

Field Coordinator (South): Mr Samson Mulonga
Administrator: Mr Nick de Voss
Accountant: Ms Peneloa Hauwanga
Intern: Mr Urioukwao Matundu

Contract negotiation is still on-going between the UNDP and the successful candidates for the remaining two Field Coordinator positions (Etosha-Skeleton Coast and BMM), and the Communication and Partnership Development Officer positions. Hopefully we can

introduce the whole team in the next issue.

Former UNV Project Development Assistant Jonathan Smith was selected for the Special Assistant position at the Permanent Secretary's office through the United Nations Volunteer recruitment process and commenced his duty in February.

Project Assistant Lazarus Nafidi was given a one-year contract extension. The MET seconded Deputy Project Coordinator Railii Hasheela will be re-absorbed within the DSS once hand over to new staff is complete, although she will continue to work closely with the SPAN as a DSS Conservation Scientist. The DPWM Chief Warden, Leeverty Muyoba, has been nominated to act as the Deputy for the full phase.

Development of the SPAN 2006 Workplan

The MET initiated a series of meetings in January and February to formulate the 2006 workplan for its 6 programme areas.

Programme 1: Protected area management
Programme 2: Protection and management of key species and natural resources
Programme 3: Community-based natural resource management and tourism
Programme 4: Regulation of environmental protection and sustainable resource management
Programme 5: Tourism Development
Programme 6: Improving economic value of natural resources and protected areas in MET jurisdiction

The PMU participated actively in the exercise, along with

chief control wardens and the senior management of the MET, in particular for Programmes 1, 2 and 6. Based on the MET plans, the SPAN 2006 activity plan was also compiled. In fact almost all the activities in the SPAN 2006 plan are reflected in the MET workplan!

Key support areas of the SPAN Project this year will be as follows:

- Finalisation of the Parks and Wildlife Management Bill
- Development of the Human Wildlife Conflict Management Policy
- Finalisation of the Concession Policy and Park Neighbour Policy
- Support for Park Management Planning
- Development of a Knowledge Management System for Parks
- Support for the MET Strategic Planning Process
- Development of Incentive Mechanisms
- Development of Training Plan and Its Implementation
- Park concession development support
- Strengthening park economics capacity
- Preparation for proclamation of new parks (Sperrgebiet, Bwabwata and Kunene)

And many many more!!

The SPAN 2006 workplan is available at:

www.span.org.na

Training for Park staff

During the above mentioned MET work planning meeting in January, the DPWM Training



What does
100 years
of Etosha
mean to you?

Task Force presented a draft training plan, which was compiled based on the past training needs and capacity assessments and input from individual staff members. The Task Force is composed of CCW Harry Tjihukununa, CCW George Masilo, CW Leeverly Muyoba, Irona Indombo from the MET training section and SPAN PMU staff members acting as the Secretariat. To date the Task Force has liaised with a number of educational and training institutions with regards to training in the broad areas of project management, infrastructure management, protected area management, nature interpretation and collaborative management. The SPAN project will be providing the funds for the short training courses and will also seek outside help in soliciting funds for long-term diploma and degree courses.

HWCM Policy workshop

A workshop on the Human-Wildlife Conflict Management (HWCM) policy was held on the 15th of March 2006. This meeting was supported by SPAN in collaboration with the Ministry's Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management (ICEMA) Project. The purpose of the meeting was to review the results of recent HWC studies, and to discuss the draft HWCM policy that was produced and developed after the HWCM workshop that took place in May 2005. At the workshop, presentations on the three situation studies commissioned by the MET last year were also made: 1) Situation analysis of HWC in Namibia; 2) Results and recommendations from the survey on HWC characteristics on the Northern Etosha Boundary and 3) Results and recommendations from the survey on the HWC realities in Ehirovipuka and Omatendeka Conservancies. The fourth presentation was on the draft HWCM policy, followed by a working group session with the following four

groups:

1) Protected area/devolution of authority/CBNRM; 2) Self-reliance, capacity building, self-insurance; 3) Mitigation measures and 4) HWC monitoring and evaluation. The three reports and the workshop proceedings are available on the SPAN website. For hardcopy, please contact Lazarus Nafidi on tel: 264 61 2842556 or lazarus@span.org.na.

Concessions Policy workshop

On 13 March 2006, SPAN supported the MET in organizing a Minister's Consultation Workshop to review the draft Policy on Tourism and Wildlife Concessions on State Land. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the draft Policy that was developed in 2005. The suggestions put forward by the participants are being incorporated or considered as necessary, and a final draft is expected early in the next quarter.

Etosha Centenary

The Minister has approved a plan to celebrate 100 years of the Etosha National Park as the Etosha Centenary (EC) Celebration. The celebration is scheduled to kick off on March 22, 2007 and a series of events will be organized during the Centenary Year. The MET has established an internal EC Working Group, and this will focus on MET's approach to the EC. In addition, a Steering Committee will soon be formed, that will involve wider stakeholders; that will pave the way forward for the celebration of the EC. Some initial ideas for celebration include gate renovation and indigenous gardens at entrance gates, new signage, roving and permanent exhibitions on the history and nature of Etosha and its future roles, a centenary countdown clock and publications. A public talk and EC logo design competition are also planned. (See page 5 and page 20)

Mangetti Tourism potential study

The MET/SPAN project had contracted a consultant to conduct a tourism potential feasibility study in the area of Mangetti Game Camp. On 12 April 2006, the MET organized a meeting between the MET, representatives from the Kavango Regional Council and the Rukwangali Traditional Authority, centred on presenting the findings of the tourism development feasibility study. The consultant's report states that Mangetti has some of the key ingredients needed to become attractive for tourism. However, it also has some serious weaknesses that must be addressed for it to become a successful tourist destination. Critical interventions needed include: 1) area needs legal conservation status, 2) institutional arrangement must be established, 3) the area's core attraction needs developing (Big 5 viewing?), and 4) game viewing must be improved (more concentration and species diversity, etc.) The immediate way forward following this study is to set up a solid institutional framework with development of an MoU between the MET and the traditional authority and to proclaim Mangetti as a contractual park.

Drafting of new park regulations

A GTZ supported consultant developed draft regulations for parks and specific regulations for the Sperrgebiet. An internal workshop took place on February 16, 2006, to review the drafts. A draft management plan developed by park field staff in collaboration with the NNF was also presented. Comments for the draft regulations were incorporated. The way forward is to integrate the drafts into the process to finalise the Parks and Wildlife Management Bill in order to ensure harmonisation of the two documents.

The MET is pleased to announce a public competition to design a logo for the centenary celebrations of the Etosha National Park.

The Etosha National Park, proclaimed on 22 March 1907, is one of Namibia's first protected areas, covering an area of 22,270km². Being one of the world's oldest and most famous protected areas, the MET would like to celebrate its 100 years existence nationally and internationally to create awareness about Namibia, its considerable achievements and future vision and roles of national parks.

The winning logo will be used in communication for the promotion of the Etosha Centenary. The celebrations will commence on 22 March 2007 and will continue throughout the year. Professional and non-professional artists, students and everybody else are welcome to enter the competition. MET staff members (except for the Centenary Working Group members) are not allowed to enter.

Submission Deadline:
12:00pm on 4 July 2006
Prize: N\$ 6000-00

For more details, please check the current issue of the MET's official newsletter *Earthbound*, or obtain the Terms of Reference from Ms Louisa Nakanuku, Head: Environmental Education and Information Service Unit, DEA, MET LN@dea.met.gov.na tel: 2842725 or from the SPAN office.

Post any innovations and ideas with regards to the Etosha Centenary to Centenary@span.org.na



© Jonathan Smith

Spirits of the North

Keeper of the Stars

By Dries Alberts
Warden: Khaudum Game Reserve
With Stacey Main

It was January, 1999. As a Nature Conservation officer in the Nyae Nyae and Khaudum National Park areas in north-eastern Namibia, I had been called out to Boebi post where wild dogs had killed three cattle. !Xashe was a bushman belonging to the Ju'hoansi tribe, and it was he who had suffered the loss.

!Xashe had seen many moons, his skin was rumped with the years gone by. As we sat down together he explained to me what had happened.

Fourteen Cape wild dogs had killed three of !Xashe's milking cows. Taking notes for my report, I explained to him that unfortunately there was no compensation for damages incurred by wildlife and that there was very little that we could do for him. His voice was soft and gentle as he told me that he understood.

As I was turning to leave, !Xashe called me back, knowing well I had to return to my station. I marveled at his existence - this simple way of life with so few things to call his own. I told him that he was a very tough old man to grow so old in such a harsh environment. He smiled and said to me, *"I've got many secrets."*

As we shared a simple lunch, !Xashe told me it made him proud to see the Namibian people working. He touched the scar on my face and asked what had happened. I explained how a leopard had crossed my path whilst I was hunting as a boy on my father's farm.

As he rested his shaking hand on my shoulder I saw the expression in his eyes change. *"A leopard?"* he asked. *"Yes."* I replied. He questioned me about my work and asked if I

had found my peace yet.

"I am a keeper of the game, they talk to me," I jokingly answered. *"And they listen to you?"* he asked. *"Sometimes."*

"We both are Africa's children, and as you are the Keeper of the Game, I am the Keeper of the Stars." !Xashe said, referring to the many myths and stories of the bushmen.

A week later I was called back to !Xashe's village. His last milking cow had also been killed by wild dogs. I expressed my condolences for yet another great loss. We sat around the fire as his wife made us a cup of coffee.

We talked about many things that day; about the rain and the way of life. I realized that he was a Holy man as he told me that his life would end soon, that his ancestors were calling for him.

!Xashe looked up into the sky and pretended to touch the clouds as he told me this story.

"I am telling you this, because you are one of Africa's children. You admire and love her just as I do. Her secrets should always be kept. There are many people that don't have the time to sit and stare at the beauty that is Africa."

When he was a young man, he one day went out hunting with his bow and arrow. He walked past ten large trees and the soil changed from red to white. That night he woke to hyenas walking right past him. No longer able to sleep, he made a fire under the full moon. His heart was racing, though he knew not why. He sensed magic in the air, and as

he had been taught by his father, and by his father's father, he started dancing around the flames, paying homage to the mighty elephant. Soon he fell into a trance. He felt dazed and confused, but still he kept dancing until the logs had burned out. Exhausted and sweating he fell to the ground, staring up at the moon.

"What is it that you want from me?" he asked the moon. *"What do you want to tell me?"*

!Xashe rose to his feet and in the distance he saw a bright, luminous glow. It looked like a fire, but as he stumbled closer, he could see that the light was different. He walked over fields of thorns and crawled underneath thorn bush, but his body was not harmed. As he reached this place of light, he looked down onto a pan, filled with stars. Picking up one of the shiny rocks, he felt a strange power crawl into his veins. He then knew he had been called to protect the holy place, to be the *Keeper of the Stars*.

I was speechless, could not believe my ears.

When I asked !Xashe if he could find this place again, he smiled at me and said that only he could go there and return unharmed, others would be cursed. Visions of wealth disappeared from my thoughts.

"The secret should be kept for Africa. I tell you only because I will leave this earth soon, and someone should know. How I wish I could see the stars again."

Returning to !Xashe's village one month later with a horse and saddle, I was told that

Continued on page 8

Dries Alberts, the Warden of the remote Khaudum Game Reserve, is rapidly building a reputation for being one of Namibia's most lyrical and passionate nature writers. In this column, he shares his thoughts and experiences.

Stacey Main, An American from St Louis, Missouri residing in Tsumkwe.

This story has also been published in *Air Namibia's Flamingo* magazine.

the NAMETT will let us know!

Introduction

MET undertook a study of all the protected areas it manages, to assess how well managed they are. The output was a set of scores and numerical assessments, which form an essential part of project monitoring. However, the textual information collected also went a long way to influencing the design of the project. As these assessments are repeated at regular intervals, it is hoped that data of this kind might become an integral part of the information MET uses to make management decisions.

What is it?

The NAMETT is a tool used to measure management effectiveness of protected areas. It measures performance in 30 key areas, to provide a way of assessing trend over time. Originally based on a WWF/World Bank global tool, it has been adjusted to be more useful to Namibia.

Why write an article about it?

Development of the SPAN project required the use of quantitative (numerical) ways to measure performance in key areas. As part of MET, SPAN is concerned with improving the effectiveness of park management: this is the ability to constructively turn inputs into outputs. These inputs are budget, personnel, regulatory framework, and so on. The outputs are either related to conservation (biodiversity) or economics (tourism) or social (access to resources).

What did we learn?

The tool was used by a project within MET. It's useful to look at the benefits or output of the tool from both the point of view of MET as a whole (in particular the Directorate of Parks and Wildlife Manage-

ment), as well as that of SPAN project development.

(The modified tool has also been adopted by two other Namibian GEF projects: ICEMA and NACOMA.)

MET

General information

In general, much of the textual information collected was strongly in support of other studies, particularly an assessment of MET's capacity, also undertaken as part of SPAN's development. This was useful to ensure that the project was developed based on strong, corroborated evidence, rather than the assumptions of a few headquarters staff. However, the extra value the NAMETT brought was in setting a baseline for how well managed the parks are. This means it's possible to repeat the same assessment in a year or so, and to begin to gauge what changes are taking place within individual parks.

NOTE! Although the tool produces a 'score' for each park, the tool is not intended to simply compare between sites, to pick out the best and worst. Each park in Namibia operates under unique conditions: not only with regard to the animals, plants and landscape, but including the social conditions and relations with neighbours, as well as the financial, personnel and management factors resulting from MET's limited resources. Senior managers within MET were very interested by the potential of the information collected by the tool; not so much to inform them of the current situation, but as a way of tracking changes in management.

Specific information for each park

This was useful (potentially) as a tool for park management. Immediately following each assessment, a report was sent back to the Chief Control Warden, summarising the findings. The information is also available at headquarters. However, so far, no



adequate system exists for sharing the information throughout MET. This is a serious issue and a common story within MET in particular, but relevant to very many large organisations. (This is dealt with in detail below.)

SPAN

General information

With Namibia being such a large and dispersed country, the process of carrying out the assessments proved very useful in building support and awareness for the project. It was also extremely useful for the project staff to understand the actual situation on the ground. Members of the project team were able to visit staff in all protected areas, and discuss what MET is aiming to achieve through the SPAN

NAMETT interviews usually takes place *in situ*. Jonathan Smith, SPAN Special Assistant with Ranger Victor Katanga.



Above: Lazarus Nafidi, SPAN Project Assistant and Raili Hasheela, Conservation Scientist of DSS interview Warden Penda Shimali for NAMETT in the Daan Viljoen Game Park.

initiative.

Specific information for each park

This was especially useful in developing the demonstration sites. These are four areas of critical ecological importance, where MET will trial new approaches to conservation:

- Ai-Ais: enhance functioning of a TFCA,
 - Bwabwata NP: development of collaborative management,
 - Etosha-SCP link: restoration of traditional migratory routes,
 - Sperrgebiet: development of a multi-sectoral management structure for a new NP.
- Review of the NAMETT data helped to give ideas of the priorities, as well as potential, at each park in Namibia, which were consequently narrowed down to the selection above.

Overall strengths of the tool
Fast, useful, builds support for project, inclusive.

What are problems?

Data collection is about the balance between complete coverage, and time: finding a balance where enough data is collected, so that useful information can be generated in a short time, without overwhelming or overloading at the analysis or interpretation stages. The NAMETT is a small questionnaire. It is designed for rapid use by people who are not trained statisticians. It is not complicated, and can be easily adapted. There are three main drawbacks with the system, which are all in the process of being addressed.

1. The subjective element

It is extremely difficult in an assessment of this type to remove the impact that each individual assessor has on the quality of the data. During this first round of assessments, two members of the project team worked closely together, to ensure some kind of consistency. A manual has been prepared, which gives direction over the areas to be covered under each question, the level of detail appropriate, and so on. It will also be important, at each subsequent re-assessment, for the previous record to be examined, so that the questions can focus on changes.

2. Doesn't adequately assess biodiversity impacts

The NAMETT questionnaire does not adequately measure the status of biodiversity. Conserving biodiversity is one of the highest level aims of MET. Without measuring whether or not the parks are having any impact on this, makes it very hard to assess the overall performance. Fortunately, MET routinely collects a wide range of biodiversity-related data, which can be used to correlate the NAMETT results with biodiversity status. It will be important for the next round of assessments, to improve the tool to better capture this aspect.

3. Lack of adequate system for sharing information

Carrying out the assessments required significant resources. But information collected is completely useless unless analysed, dispersed and

discussed. Some analysis took place, for the specific purpose of developing indicators for the SPAN project, but there is significant value to be had in looking at how these scores compare to other data MET collects on a routine basis. MET is carrying out on-going development work on its "Conservation Information" (CONINFO) system. This might well prove to be a good mechanism for sharing information amongst conservation officials. Under the SPAN project, significant funding is available to develop information and knowledge management systems for MET. This will improve information sharing in all directions: between field, regional and head-quarters offices, between different units within MET, and between different line ministries and other actors in conservation in Namibia. [Management of information is a topic which will be dealt with in future editions of SandPaper.]

Conclusion

The NAMETT was, from one point of view, a required element in the development of the SPAN project. However, the way MET handled this, coupled with its other ongoing data collection and analysis projects, means that carrying out NAMETT assessments can be much more than simply fulfilling a 'requirement'. As the SPAN project starts its implementation, there exists a real opportunity to develop the tool into an accessible source of information to support management decisions for Namibia's key environmental assets.

Continued from page 6

!Xashe's wife had passed away. He walked slow, with eyes heavy and dull. He saw the horse, smiled and said, "You understood. Leave the horse and I will make the journey soon!"

I asked !Xashe if he could bring me a star so that I could admire it. Immediately I felt ashamed at my greedy request as just days earlier, he had buried his wife.

"I know your intentions are good. But Africa holds many secrets that should be kept. Things that no man may see, no one can hear about. I only pray that you understand."

A week later I was told of !Xashe's death. I went to Boebi Post to collect my horse and I could see that it had been ridden by the saddle's imprint on the horse's back.

Since !Xashe's death, many have attempted to find this place where the stars lie on the ground. None whom have sought this wealth have returned alive. As you read these words, there still lies a pan somewhere in Bushmanland, covered with diamonds!

- And !Xashe is the Keeper of the Stars.

Questions asked in NAMETT assessment.

1. Legal status	Does the protected area have legal status?	Context
2. Protected area regulations	Are inappropriate land uses and activities (e.g. poaching) controlled?	Context
3. Law enforcement	Can staff enforce protected area rules well enough?	Context
4. Protected area objectives	Is PA managed with the aim of meeting the stated objectives?	Planning
5. Protected area design	Does the protected area need enlarging, corridors etc to meet its objectives?	Planning
6. Protected area boundary demarcation	Is the boundary known and demarcated?	Context
7. Management plan	Is there a management plan and is it being implemented?	Planning
8. Regular work plan	Is there an annual work plan?	Planning/Outputs
9. Resource inventory	Do you have good information which you use to manage the area?	Context
10. Research	Is there a programme of management-orientated monitoring and research work?	Inputs
11. Resource management	Is the protected area being managed consistent to its objectives (e.g. for fire, invasive species, poaching)?	Process
12. Staff numbers	Are there enough people employed to manage the protected area?	Inputs
13. Personnel management	Are the staff managed well enough?	Process
14. Staff training	Is there enough training for staff?	Inputs/Process
15. Current budget	Is the current budget sufficient?	Inputs
16. Security of budget	Is the budget secure?	Inputs
17. Management of budget	Is the budget managed to meet critical management needs?	Process
18. Equipment	Is equipment adequately maintained?	Process
19. Maintenance of equipment	Is equipment adequately maintained?	Process
20. Education and awareness programme	Is there a planned education programme?	Process
21. State and commercial neighbours	Is there co-operation with adjacent land users?	Process
22. Residents	Do people resident in or regularly using the PA have input to management decisions?	Process
23 A. Traditional authorities	Do traditional authorities near the protected area have input to management decisions?	Process
23 B. Local communities	Do local communities near the protected area have input to management decisions?	Process
24. Visitor facilities	Are visitor facilities (for tourists, pilgrims etc) good enough?	Outputs
25. Commercial tourism	Do commercial tour operators contribute to protected area management?	Process
26. Fees	If fees (tourism, fines) are applied, do they help protected area management?	Outputs
27. Condition assessment	Is the protected area being managed 'well'?	Outcomes
28. Access assessment	Are the available management mechanisms working to control access or use?	Outcomes
29. Economic benefit assessment	Is the protected area providing economic benefits to local communities?	Outcomes
30. Monitoring and evaluation	Is there a routine monitoring and evaluation system?	Planning/Process



Right: Workhand Samuel of Okaukuejo welding anchor posts to a straining post of the Etosha northern boundary fence. Photo by Michael Sibalatani



Above left: Samuel James (Principal Ranger at Ugab), Hilarius Shifeta (workhand at Ugab) at seasonal count at Kunene River mouth in the Skeleton Coast Park. Photo by John Paterson

Right: Scout Efraim, Ranger Hao-Dom, Workhand Hosega, Ranger Manjara and Workhand Reinhold fixing an elephant break on the Etosha northern boundary fence (being upgraded). Photo by Michael Sibalatani



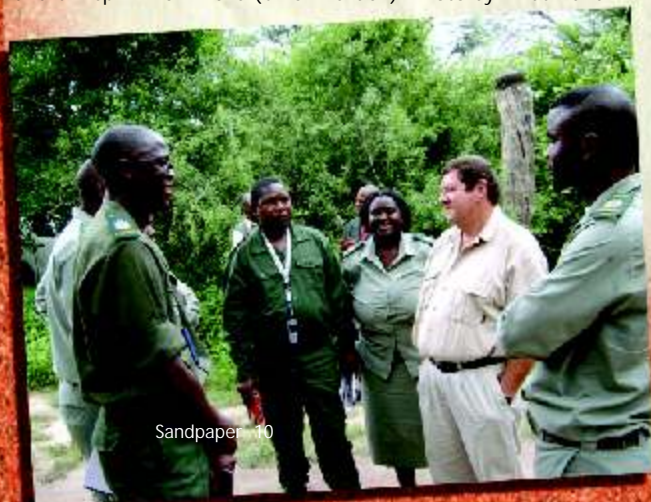
Right: Scout Manuel-Ndjou of Okaukuejo cutting rail poles to be used as anchor posts for the Etosha northern boundary fence. Photo by Michael Sibalatani



Left: Scout Djene setting up a bush camp north of Etosha National Park during the routine patrol. Photo by Michael Sibalatani

Above: A new kind of romance? Warden Immanuel Kapofi pays farewell to his friend "Immanuel" (named after him.) This lion has been looked after by Kapofi in a 1/2 ha predator camp at Namutoni since it was brought to the MET, 18 months ago, from one of the farms as a cub after the mother and the rest of the brothers were killed for causing stock losses in 2004. It was decided to relocate the lion to a nearby private ranch. Photo by Michael Sibalatani

Below: After the official launch of the 4 conservancies and a community campsite in Kavango, the MET field staff members have a nice chat with the Director. From the left: Keneth Tapiso (Principal Ranger: Kavango West), Mathias Kavetho (Principal Ranger: Mangetti Game Camp), Tsukhoe //Garoes (Chief Control Warden: CSD), Ben Beyteli (Director) and Chrispin Nkonkwena (Chief Warden). Photo by Linda Baker



Above: Hon. Minsiter Willem Konjore hands out certificates of registration to four newly registered conservancies in the Kavango Region (Joseph Mbambangandu, George Mukoya, Muduva Nyangana and Shamungwa) at the official launch on February 23, 2006. Chief Control Warden Colagar Sikopo and Hon. Councilor David Hamutenya assist Hon. Minister. Photo by Linda Baker



Above: The three signatories at the SPAN Project Document signing ceremony on 24 March 2006 (See SPAN Update page 6)
Photo by Francois Poolman

Right: Chief Warden Rehabeam Erkie of Etosha East updating participants on the progress of the Northern Boundary fence during the Etosha Northern Boundary Problem Animal Forum. Among those looking are Hon. Kayone, Governor of Omusati Region and Chairman of the Forum (sixth from right); Hon. Hamutenya, Councilor of Uuvudhiya Constituency and Honourable Kornelius, Councilor of Ruacana (fourth and third from right respectively).
Photo by Michael Sibatani



Above: Ulrich Boois, Deputy Director of Parks (left) photographed with Namutoni staff after the meeting that was held at the Namutoni Environmental Education Center on March 30, 2006. Photo by Michael Sibatani



Right: Vilho Ashipala and a female elephant seal at Angra Fria in the Skeleton Coast Park.
Photo by John Paterson



Left: Dr Douw Groblaar, a Vet from South Africa, checking the temperature of the immobilized lion at Namutoni Predator Camp while Staff from Namutoni take advantage of being close to a live lion.
Photo by Michael Sibatani



Above: Immanuel Hamuseb (Ugab), Vilho Ashipala Metusulag (Whitey), Gawuseb (Ugab) looking for a way to cross the Hoarusib River in the Skeleton Coast Park. Photo by John Paterson.

MET staff In Action

We need your photos!

This page relies on your contributions from MET staff. Please send photos of you and your colleagues with captions to: sandpaper@span.org.na. Prints and positives can also be sent to the SPAN office at DPWM.



© Helmuth Tjikurunda



© Helmuth Tjikurunda



© Helmuth Tjikurunda



© Helmuth Tjikurunda



© Helmuth Tjikurunda

Park Profile

Mahango Game Park

In North-eastern Namibia along the panhandle section of the start of the Okavango Delta lies an area characterized by riparian vegetation and floodplains. It is one of Namibia's most diverse and interesting conservation areas. Today known as Mahango Game Park, it was proclaimed in 1989 to give protection to the river systems and to sustain its vitality for maintaining a number of key ecosystem services.

Vegetation along waterways protects water quality by filtering runoff water moving across the soil surface, as well as lateral sub-surface water moving through the soil to the river.

The secondary objective of proclaiming the park was that the area had a suitable habitat for breeding rare game species, with the aim of restocking other areas where such species previously occurred.

Located 220km east of Rundu and 950km from Windhoek, it borders Botswana to the south and the Bwatwata NP to the east, leaving the other borders shared by surrounding communal land. This secluded

225 km² park has some 20 kilometres of the Kavango River running through it into Botswana, where the panhandle section of the Okavango Delta begins.

1. Biodiversity

The park harbours rare game species such as buffalo, sable and roan antelope, sitatunga, reedbuck, Chobe bushbuck, red lechwe and tsessebe. Throughout the park there is a remarkable diversity of other game species, notably elephant, giraffe, blue wildebeest, kudu, common impala, plains zebra and warthog. More than 200 hippopotamus and a large population of crocodiles of huge proportions frequent the river system. Lions and leopards are resident in the park, while wild dogs sometimes pass through the park. Both savanna baboons and vervet monkeys are found. There are also reptile species such as water monitors, African rock python, tortoise, terrapins, black mamba and other poisonous snakes.

More than 400 bird species have been recorded in the park. Bird species include the sought-after sharp-tailed starling, racket tailed roller,

rufous-bellied tit, black-faced babbler, western banded snake-eagle, white-backed night heron, Pel's fishing owl and wattled crane all of which have been recorded in the park's relatively small area. A few ostriches and their nesting sites are also observed in the park.

In addition, the section of the protected river in the park offers sanctuary to an increasing number of African skimmers (*Rynchops flavirostris*) which, over the past 12 years, have come to utilize this area as one of the few suitable breeding sites on the Kavango River.

The park has a variety of vegetation types, ranging from riverine forest with large, established trees on the riverbanks to extensive floodplains with *phragmites* reeds, grass and papyrus islands interspersed with lily-covered pans. Away from the river system the vegetation becomes more monotypic *Burkea-Baikia* woodland, broken by some dry riverbeds (Omuramba).

2. Physical features

Most of the area is covered in

Fact File

Proclamation Date: 1989
Size: 225km²
Rainfall: 450 - 550mm/annum
Altitude: 930 - 1100 m above sea level
Vegetation type: North-eastern Kalahari woodlands, riverine woodlands and islands, Okavango Valley



© Helmuth Tjikurunda



© Helmuth Tjikurunda

thick deposits of Kalahari sands. The extensive sands and rivers with their associated floodplains, channels and river deposits are the major features shaping the landscape.

3. Tourism and recreational activities

Visitors are well catered for, with an intricate road network providing ample opportunities for excellent game-viewing and birdwatching. The park is open to local and international tourists throughout the year and there are no restrictions on entry and exit times, as long as park entrance fees are paid.

There are two routes turning off from the district road running through the park which connects the Muhembo border post at the Namibia/Botswana border with the Trans-Caprivi highway at Bagani. The one turns to the left at about one kilometer from the park entrance, on the Popa Falls side. It is negotiable by 2 x 4 vehicles, but can be slippery during the rainy season and some parts of the road get flooded during the flood season. It follows the Mahango Omuramba (floodplain) for a

short distance before continuing along the edge of the Kavango river flood plains.

Along this route there are several good vantage points designated as places where one may alight from the vehicle to get a closer look of the flood plains. Caution must be exercised. At the giant baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) there is a picnic spot and further at Kweche is a place where one may braai. The picnic site overlooks a papyrus-fringed channel of the Kavango River and is an excellent spot for birdwatching.

Directly opposite the 2 x 4 route to the right is a circular route only negotiable with four-wheel drive vehicles. It follows the Thinderevu Omuramba for a few kilometers and just before the track crosses the forested dunes into the Mahango Omuramba, there is a waterhole called Thingwerengwere with a hide. Elephants and other game are often seen here.

There is no accommodation and no campsites are available in Mahango Game Park, but there are several lodges and campsites outside as close as 2km from the park. Popa

Falls Resorts run by Namibia Wildlife Resorts is 15km away from Mahango Game Park. No fishing and collection of firewood is allowed in the park.

4. Key Environmental Issues

A research study is needed to look into and determine the elephant impact on the riverine vegetation in the park. A research study to find out what affects the population of the Chobe bushbuck which seems to be in decline needs to be conducted in the park. A research study is needed to find out the factors that hamper the growth of the Mahango ostrich population.

5. Recent and Future Developments

Following a Cabinet decision during September 1999 to rename the former West Caprivi Game Reserve as Bwabwata National Park, Mahango Game Park was incorporated to be part of the Bwabwata National Park. The 27km park boundary fence on the north-west of Mahango main entrance was upgraded into a game proof fence up to the international border between Namibia and Botswana.

A. Mahango Game Park



Plans are underway to introduce waterbuck and more tsessebe in Mahango Game Park from neighbouring Botswana in the near future.

6. Attractions

The Park attracts a high number of tourists who mainly come for game drives along and on the river itself. Some of

the main attractions are:

The Thingwerengwere waterhole This waterhole provides wonderful scenery for photography and a great strategic point from which one can view different game as they come to drink water during the day.

Giant Baobab This giant baobab provides a fine view of buffalo herds and lechwe on the flood plains, and occasionally crocodiles and hippos.

Keweche The best spot for birdwatching and definitely an opportunity to view crocodiles sunbathing on the banks of the Kavango River backwaters.

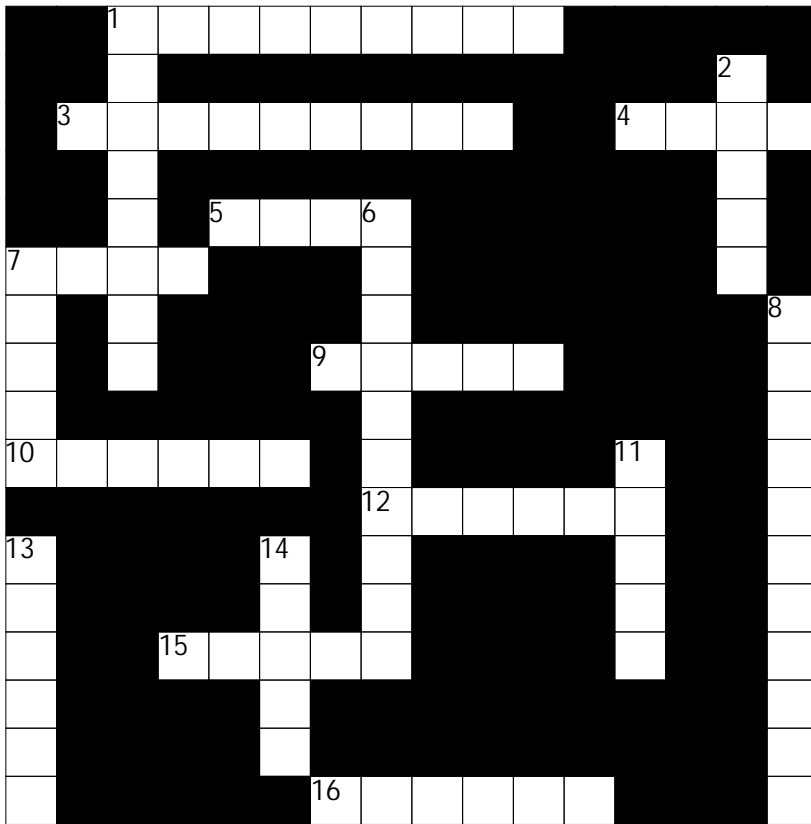


The Warden's voice

Helmuth Tjikurunda:

I used to visit Mahango from Caprivi where I first worked as a Park Warden for Mudumu/Mamili National Parks. So I fell in love with this magnificently beautiful place. I could not wait to push my transfer to come here. Being a relatively small park of about 22 437ha or so, wild animals are very much concentrated. This makes Mahango a must visit for tourists. Everyday is an experience enhancer as you won't go without seeing any of the unique species such as roan antelope, sable antelope, buffalo or even the giant of the jungle, the elephant. That's what I like about this park. It actually puts that feeling of "we practise what we preach" in me. Sometimes you don't have to drive around to see animals, they come right up to the office.

How much do you know about Animal group names!



Across

1. A group of Cheetahs
3. A group of Vultures
4. A group of Buffalo
5. A group of Leopards
7. A group of Seals
9. A group of Birds
10. A group of Elephants
12. A group of Crows
15. A group of Crocodiles
16. A group of Bats

Down

1. A group of Zebra
2. A group of rhinoceros
6. A group of owls
7. A group of Baboons
8. A group of Flamingoes
11. A group of lions
13. A group of Hyenas
14. A group of Hippopotami

- Answers
- Across
1. Coalition
 3. Committee
 4. Herd
 7. Trip
 9. Flock
 10. Parade
 12. Murder
 15. Float
 16. Colony
- Down
1. Crossing
 2. Crash
 6. Parliament
 7. Troop
 8. Flamboyance
 11. Pride
 13. Cackle
 14. Bloat

Safety in the Park

With Ulrich Boois
Deputy Director: Parks

Camping in National Parks

Camping is one of the most adventurous things to do when visiting Parks in Namibia. There is however a fine technique to finding the right place to set up camp. During the winter months of the year 2002, a visiting family of Italian tourists decided to camp in southern Kaokoland. They however set up their camp under an Acacia erioloba tree. Now the thing is; Elephants like the acacia pods; it's like caviar to them in some instances they even shake the tree to cause the pods to fall. Around midnight the family was awoken by the sounds of an elephant nearby. The animal trumpeted and the Italian family quickly discovered that the animal was

quite near, so they rushed out of their tents and ran into the vehicle about 10 metres away. From there they observed as the hungry jumbo approached the tree and started feeding on the pods on the ground; instinctively pushing aside the two little tents as it did so. The animal fed until the break of day and the family had to sleep in the car.

To avoid mishap:

1. Follow the regulations and only camp at designated camping sites.
2. Before erecting your tent, make sure that you are not sharing or intruding in someone else's habitat. Snakes and termites may be hiding under leafy surfaces. So

termite mounds, ant hills are not a wise place to set up camp.

3. And as our Italian friends found out, it is unwise to camp directly under trees that animals normally feed from - avoid Acacia and Mopane trees; and you will automatically avoid nocturnal visitors like elephants and rhino.

4. It is unwise to camp in or beside ephemeral river beds. There is always a possibility of a flash flood. In some areas, elephant and rhinoceros move along the river courses when they feed and drink. Waterholes are also potentially dangerous places. 1



Safety!

One can learn so much in the parks in terms of vegetation, animals and animal behaviour. It is therefore important to not only appreciate the value, but also to understand the nature of, the wild and take safety precautions for you and your loved ones when inside a park. These Safety tips are from Sandpaper's contributing authors and are based on their experiences with wildlife. Enjoy the lions, don't get eaten by them!



© Neil Digby-Clarke
© Neil Digby-Clarke



© Neil Digby-Clarke



© Neil Digby-Clarke

Beyond Boundaries

*From January 21 to February 18, 2006, a group of 11 disabled people (contributors) from the United Kingdom accompanied by the production crew of the BBC landmark documentary series *Beyond Boundaries* (a Diverse Bristol Production Ltd) and by MET staff, took part in a highly daunting expedition across the breadth of Namibia. The aim of the expedition was to “challenge the preconceptions about what disabled people can and can’t do.” The expedition started in Livingstone, Zambia and after traveling across the Caprivi flood plains, it arrived in Etosha. The party walked across Etosha and made its way towards Sesfontein. From there, they crossed the Skeleton Coast National Park to their final destination at the Uniab River mouth. Eight out of the 11 participants made it through to the final destination. The expedition will be made into 4 1-hour documentaries to be shown on the BBC in October. Here are some excerpts from a story written by the only journalist to accompany the expedition.*

Etosha

At the halfway point of this mammoth trans-Namibia

expedition, the disabled team themselves, the production crew and the logistics guys all enjoyed a rest day in the Namutoni area of Etosha. An opportunity to charge batteries both physically and metaphorically, to clean bodies, clothes and equipment and to rest in preparation for first this pioneering, history making visit to Etosha and then for the arduous days that lay ahead in the mountains, river beds, plains and dunes of the Namib Desert and the Skeleton Coast.

The team did unfortunately suffer a further casualty just two days ago, when Richie Bell-Bates was forced to quit the expedition and return home. Richie was born with no arms and had risen to the challenge brilliantly. In his own words “my feet have become my hands and I need to constantly both protect and look after them.” They are essential to his future. And the relentless pounding of the daily treks and also the wet sand and mud encountered on the Chobe flood plains had begun to generate possible hygiene and longer term hazards to his feet and consequently to his well-being for years to come.

For the remaining nine disabled contributors, their visit to

Etosha has represented a landmark step. It seems that never before has a group of foreign visitors been allowed to walk inside the national park; but this team of disabled volunteers has now trekked for two consecutive days in the eastern part of the park, at times close to the famous salt pans.

The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) staff based at Etosha should certainly take huge credit for coordinating this pioneering and innovative event, which is most unlikely to be repeated. As Wolfgang Knoepfler, Line Producer for the *Beyond Boundaries* series, explains: “I feel that the exceptional content of the documentary and its goal of both increasing awareness of disabled people and raising their profile in the public domain dovetailed perfectly with the recent Namibian cabinet directive to focus attention on the disabled sector in 2006.”

And so history was made. Immanuel Kapofi, the Namutoni area warden accompanied the team on both days together with five armed rangers and, of course the expedition leader, Ken Hames and the film crew. Etosha, like nearly all the country, has profited from the

Top right: Trekking past oryx at a remote Etosha waterhole.

Top left: The team as temperatures rise in the Kaokoveld.

Above: Taking a wide scenic shot in the Kaokoveld.

Above: The Participants in the Caprivi.



© Neil Digby-Clarke
© Neil Digby-Clarke



Expedition through National Parks

By Neil Digby-Clarke

recent good rains, and has the appearance of a veritably verdant pasture. With virtually every depression in the ground becoming a waterhole, too, the wildlife viewed from the public roads in the park is presently less prolific than in the dry season, but the disabled walkers, by way of their route which at times followed private park tracks only used by game rangers, happily encountered some wonderful game on their walk. Besides springbok, wildebeest, zebra, kudu, ostrich, the expedition team walked alongside a huge herd of oryx near the off limits Mushara waterhole and then later came within a safe distance of some magnificent elephants.

Heidi Thomas, a paraplegic who has needed to make use of a wheelchair since breaking her back in an accident three years ago, perhaps sums it up best: "I felt privileged in the first place to be chosen for this expedition from a total of over 4000 applicants, but now to be able to become one of the first people ever to walk through this incredible park makes me feel even more honoured and fortunate. I have been so, so impressed by the whole of this awesome land, Namibia, that I cannot wait to return here

again."

Skeleton Coast Park

So eight of the original eleven contributors have indeed gone Beyond Boundaries. They proudly stand this afternoon on the very Skeleton Coast itself, where the ephemeral Uniab River runs into the Atlantic Ocean. This team of people with a disability have in the last few days crossed the considerable sea of sand dunes that rises majestically from the gravel plains of this awe-inspiring tract of land long since proclaimed as the Skelton Coast Park.

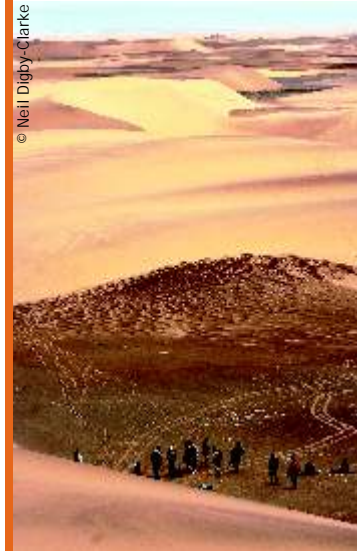
These very dunefields that arise from the gravel plains consist of captivating crescents of barchan dunes formed by the prevailing south westerly winds. These dunes move visibly, anything between two metres up to as much as 15 metres a year, this shift being caused by the wind picking up grains of sand from the dune's backslope and depositing them on the front face. The dunes invariably travel north east, the direction in which their formation always points. Words of praise are definitely due for John Paterson, Warden of the Park, who has accompanied the expedition since it crossed the

Park boundary. His vast knowledge and experience have been invaluable whilst traversing this harsh paradise.

Of the contributors who remained as the team entered the proclaimed area, Heidi Thomas, one of two paraplegics making use of a wheelchair on the expedition, was sadly evacuated after just twenty four hours inside the Park boundary, suffering from a potentially very serious and rapidly deteriorating pressure sore. She thus became the third member of this extraordinarily determined team to be forced to accept expert medical advice and realise that their future long term health and well-being could be perhaps severely compromised by continuing this most extreme of all journeys.

Tim Sampolinski, an arm amputee, has since guided his seven remaining colleagues through the sand sea, mapping a route across some of these mighty dunes in the direction of the coastline. At one stage he even exhorted his colleagues, all near exhaustion, with some simple but proud motivation: "Come on guys, we can do it, we're hard now!" On the bigger slip faces, 50 metres and higher, the team have used a

Continued on page 20



© Neil Digby-Clarke

Top left: Climbing another formidable slipface!

Top: We made it! The team reaches the sea!

Above: The mighty dunes of the Skeleton Coast Park await.



Park News

© Tony Head



© Michael Sibalatani

Main Picture: Dramatic rainbows!

Above: The roads became a rivers in Etosha National Park.

Etosha National Park

Issues of the Fence

The Game Products Trust Fund (GPTF) has recently released an amount of N\$ 1.6 million to the MET to upgrade the northern boundary of the Park and make it game proof. This is a measure to curb stock losses to predators like lions; which was increasing alarmingly on the northern border of Etosha. The project comprises two phases, namely the acquisition of materials and the actual fencing. The acquisition of materials included the purchasing and transportation of rails from Luderitz to the park. The process of transportation of rails had proven to be time consuming as it comprised demolishing the rails, transportation on the train from Luderitz to Otjiwarongo where the material was transported on flat beds to Etosha. Despite the expected delays, all the rails have been transported to the park. The project is now in the second stage that comprises drilling and setting in poles and the actual fencing. To date a distance of 40 km has been

covered. A distance of 30 km has been fitted with wire strands of which 10 km is fixed with droppers. The progress on the upgrading of the fence is being hampered by various factors. These include heavy rains falling in areas that make the use of the drilling machine and tractors difficult; lack of camping facilities for staff, continuous breakage of the fence by elephants; inadequate tools and limited days allocated to staff.

Etosha Northern Boundary Problem Animal Forum

On 23/03/2006 the Etosha Northern Boundary Problem Animal Forum held its second meeting at Namutoni EEC since its inception a year ago. The Forum is intended to bring farmers from northern and western ENP with MET officials from the park and North central regional services. The forum is chaired by Honourable Sackey Kayone, the Governor of Omusati Region. During the meeting feedback was given by the Chief Control Warden of Etosha National Park and Skeleton Coast Park, Michael Sibalatani on the recent HWC workshop that was held in

WHK that included the UNAM report, interim measures on HWC and the proposed policy on HWC related funeral costs. Feedback was also given on the progress of the northern boundary fence.

All Etosha National Park news contributions by: Michael Sibalatani; Chief Control Warden (Etosha National Park/Skeleton Coast Park)

Skeleton Coast Park

Completed Bird count

In February, a late, but successful CWAC (Co-ordinated Wetland Count) was done at the Kunene with park staff and some volunteers. Several exciting birds were seen, such as Crowned Cormorant, previously only recorded as far north as Möwe Bay. Some other birds that were seen were new records for the park and all are considered as rare in Namibia 2 great sand-plovers, 2 lesser black-backed gulls, a redshank and a Loande swift (dark rumped form of Horus Swift).

Braving the Skeleton Coast Park



In February, the Beyond Boundaries film crew with a group of disabled people (contributors) traversed the park by following the Samanab River to the Uniab River then across 10 km of dunes to the beach. It was an amazing experience to watch this group of 8 people with major disabilities climb 150 foot slip faces with 2 wheel chairs without any help. One would certainly question the term disabled! However concerns were raised regarding allowing this type of activity in the parks in future; as it is always possible to create a human/wildlife conflict situation that should not have happened.

More flood stories

The Ugab River has been causing havoc as it has been flooding regularly and preventing tourists from accessing the park. The Huab, Koigab, Uniab, Hoarusib and Khumib Rivers have all flooded into the sea while the Hoanib River has only flowed into the floodplain east of the dunes. Staff at the Park still hold out hope that the river will make it through the dunes and into the sea. These floods were the result of exceptional rain inland and even some rain along the coast. With Möwe Bay having a season total of 12.1 mm, while Ugabmund has

21.5 and Springbokwater 41.5 this is definitely a good rainy season!!

New gate office now fully functional

The new gate office at Springbokwater has been finished and is now officially in use. Construction on this gate was started last year 2005, and was completed in January this year. It is a brick and cement building with a visitors office, 2 staff offices and a big meeting area. There are 2 store rooms, one with a strengthened metal grill door to keep gate revenue safe. Taking the climate into consideration air conditioners were installed as well as a wall kettle to enable staff to make hot drinks in the chilly office. This building is a vast improvement on the old office that is busy falling down.

Staff meetings and fun

The staff at Skeleton Coast Park recently held their first staff meeting of the year at Moewe Bay. After the meeting, the staff held a braai and discovered just how far one could stretch a 450g packet of boerewors - 14 people fed on it!! While sitting around the fire the guys reminisced about incidents during their work. Vilho Ashipala took first prize for his story and had everyone in stitches as he enacted how he was almost eaten by lions in the Hoanib River. A great evening and an activity that will follow future staff meetings.

All Skeleton Coast Park news contributions by: John Paterson; Warden (Skeleton Coast Park) 1



© Michael Sibalatani



© Michael Sibalatani

Top & Above: Unprecedented rainfalls in Etosha.

Continued from page 1

The next day on my way back to Windhoek I traveled along the Uis road in spite of advice that I should rather use the Kamanjab route. I did not mind the slow progress and the muddy road yes, it rained again during the night, and the Huab river was flowing. The normal barren landscape of Sorris Sorris had also undergone a transformation since my previous visit. Of the normal stony plains edged by dune-shaped, sandy hills on the left, and rocky outcrops on

the right expanding gradually into true mountains in the distance, there were little evidence. The plains were covered with lush grass undulating in the breeze, reflecting as a silvery haze and invading the hills where the colours changed into a hue of green, grey and ochre where the rocks managed to maintain a presence. Even the far-off mountains edging the Skeleton Coast Park were tinted with streaks of creamy-white along the slopes

where the grass managed to grasp a foot-hold.

The gravel road between Omaruru and Wilhelmstal was not as good as the attendant at the garage assured me, but once I crossed the Omaruru river, which was in full flow, it was almost as if I had left something behind which I will never experience again - where Nature has endowed us with the miracle of a once barren desert turned into Paradise. 1

Continued from page 17

rope, pulley and belay system to pull the wheelchairs, one now carrying just equipment, up the steep slopes of soft sand. Soon however, adrenalin, fuelled by the westerly sea breeze and their proximity to the coast, began to counter the massive fatigue brought on by

this struggle through the dunes and the cumulative effects of weeks of tough expedition trekking and little sleep.

Verdict? Mission accomplished! Tim Hames, the expedition leader, summed it up perfectly. "The oldest desert in the world

took us to its heart. Out of the heat and the sand came new hope for this expedition of disabled people who will carry the spirit of Namibia to give inspiration to those less fortunate. Thank you Namibia!"

Letter to the Editor

Hi!

Compliments on a fabulous newsletter - I picked it up at the SKEP Partners' Conference in Cape Town and found it very readable and informative.

Of particular interest to me was the warden profile of Penda Shimali who manages parks close to Windhoek. The challenges he described are similar to those we face working with the City of Cape Town on the Cape Flats to build good practice in the management of urban conservation areas in a way that benefits the surrounding communities where incomes are low and living conditions poor. We have a booklet summarizing some of the lessons and issues for debate from the first three years of our project, in case it is of interest and use to urban conservators in Namibia. We are waiting for a message from our new mayor before printing, but let me know if you'd like hard copies and I'll be happy to mail once they are available. Also, if anyone from your team is ever in Cape Town and interested in seeing what is being done in urban conservation here, we would be very happy to arrange it. Best wishes,
Tanya Goldman
CAPE FLATS NATURE
Cape Town

Park Talk

Park Talk is a bi-monthly talk and discussion session dedicated to Namibia's national parks and their management.

Past Park Talks

16 May 2005:
"Performance of Park Agencies in Southern Africa and Innovation for Im-proving Park Man-agement"
by Dr Brian Child, Chair of the Southern Africa Sustainable Use Specialist Group (SASUSG) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

1 August 2005:
"What are the National Parks Worth? Economic Impact"
by Dr Jon Barnes, MET Economist

3 October 2005:
"Do the Parks need Condoms? - Impact of HIV/AIDS on Park and Natural Resource Management"
by Ms Martha Mwan-dingi, Head of Envir-onment Unit, UNDP, Ms Birga Ndombo, Researcher at the Integrated Environmental Consultants of Namibia (IECN) and Mr Jonathan Smith (SPAN Project)

31 May 2006:
"What is the point of rhino management?"
Biological management of black rhino in the Etosha National Park. By Pierre du Preez: Chief Conservation Scientist Directorate of Scientific Services, MET

"Etosha Centenary - 2007 Why and What are we celebrating?"

Ms Louisa Nakanuku
Head: Environmental Education
and Information Service Unit, DEA, MET

Wednesday, June 14 2006 @ 18:00 - 19:30
Polytechnic Hotel School
cnr Beethoven & Brahm Streets, Whk West

"National and Private Parks: Present and Future"

Dr. Chris Brown: Executive Director
Namibia Nature Foundation

Wednesday, August 30th, 2006 @ 18h00-19h30
Cinema room, Franco Namibian Cultural Centre
118 Robert Mugabe Avenue

www.span.org.na
info@span.org.na
Tel: 061-2842569



Hosted by the
Strengthening the
Protected Area Network
(SPAN) Project,
Ministry of Environment
and Tourism

Your shot!



"Desert Blues", Sossusvlei, Namib Naukluft Park. By Toon Brouwers (Netherlands)



Little itch! Mahango Game Park. By Helmuth Tjikurunda (Namibia)

Your shot!

You don't have to be a professional photographer to capture one of the awe-inspiring moments there around us each day.

The beauty of our country and its ever-changing landscapes; the detail of our plants; the joy of seeing an animal free in nature; the humour of our fellow species.

Sandpaper will showcase the best, funniest and most interesting of your contributions.

Please send your contributions to sandpaper@span.org.na

or SAPN Project Ministry of Environment and Tourism, DPWM P / B a g 1 3 3 0 6 , Windhoek.

Photographs and high resolution digital pictures will be accepted.

With every rising sun our commitment to you grows.

Having firmly put our roots down in 1915, we've committed ourselves to growing with our country and striving towards bringing banking to the nation. Through the widest retail network and AutoBank footprint we can deliver on this commitment and look forward to more growth in the future.

Inspired. Motivated. Involved.



Standard Bank