

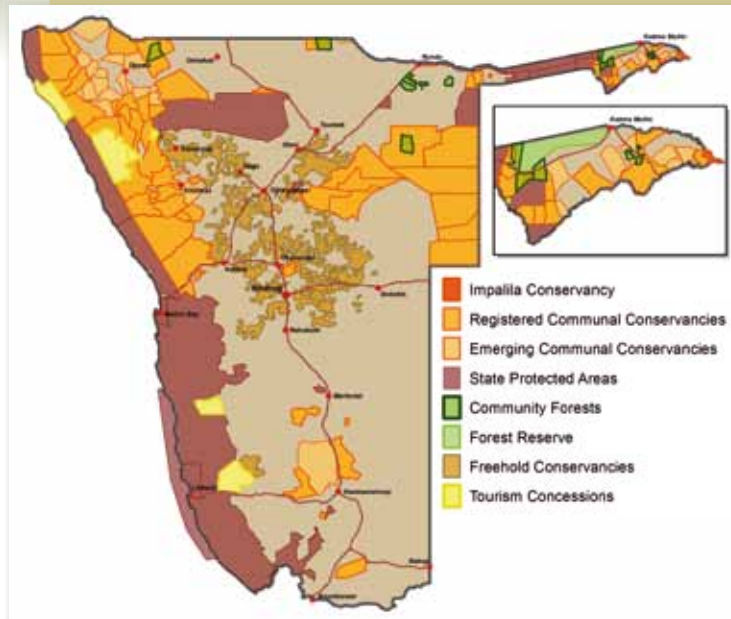
Living with wildlife –
the story of **Impalila Conservancy**



Impalila – after Impalila Island, 'the far-away place'



Living with wildlife – the story of IMPALILA 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
- 2001** – implementation of the Event Book monitoring system in Impalila Conservancy
- 2005** – Impalila Conservancy is registered in December
- 2006** – the Human Animal Conflict Conservancy Self-Insurance Scheme (HACCSIS) is introduced in Impalila Conservancy
- 2006** – conservancy members receive training in problem animal management and chili production used to deter elephants
- 2007** – Impalila becomes part of the annual Caprivi Game Count



QUICK FACTS

Region: Caprivi

Size: 73 square kilometres

Approximate population: 2,000

Main languages: Subiya and Lozi

Date of registration: December 2005

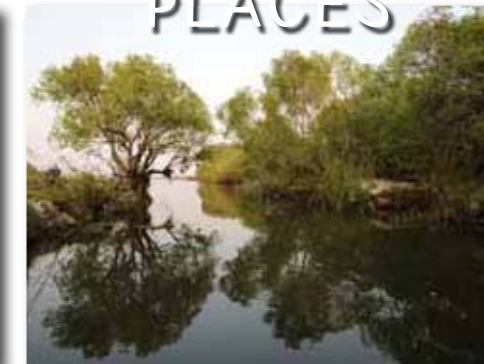
IMPALILA offers an enchanting mix of

PEOPLE



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

PLACES



vast, diverse and spectacular landscapes – the Zambezi, rich floodplains and unique woodlands... a healthy environment diversifies economic opportunities and drives economic growth

& WILDLIFE



charismatic, free-roaming wildlife – elephant, buffalo, crocodile and hippo, diverse antelopes and abundant birdlife... 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.

Impalila is the 'far away place', a small island nestled in the furthest corner of the Caprivi in north-eastern Namibia. It is a very small

conservancy, covering less than a hundred square kilometres, and embraces around 2,000 residents, most of whom speak Subiya, as well as the area's lingua franca, Lozi. The original inclusion of the finger-like Caprivi strip into Namibia was agreed in the late 19th century by European colonial powers at the 'Berlin Conference' to allow the German colony access to the Zambezi River. The narrow strip is surrounded by Angola and Zambia to the North, Zimbabwe to east and Botswana to the south. The borders were drawn without following any cultural divisions and separated people with a common heritage into different nations. During the South African administration of Namibia, people were moved off Impalila Island to create a reserve, but a few families returned during the floods of the late 1950s and remained.

The Impalila community began the process to register as a conservancy together with the neighbouring Kasika community, originally intending to register as one conservancy. After a lengthy process, it was decided to form two conservancies, which were registered in December 2005.

RESOURCES AND ATTRACTIONS

Conservancies
are living landscapes...

With its cultural and environmental diversity, the Caprivi has always occupied a unique place in Namibia. The **culture** of people in the area was heavily influenced by the Lozi and Kololo kingdoms that dominated the region in successions of power from the 1600s to the late 1800s. At its height, the Lozi empire, based in what is today Zambia, brought people of around 30 different ethnic affiliations, including the Subiya, under one overarching Lozi influence. The Subiya have been the main group occupying the area between the Chobe and Zambezi Rivers for the last few hundred years and have always retained some degree of cultural autonomy. Much of Impalila Island's small population is still



casting a line for the prized tiger fish while elephants look on from the river bank, enjoying wonderful birding along quiet backwaters, or walking through enchanted woodland along paths that lead to beautiful villages beneath huge baobabs... 'the far-away place' is the place to be

made up of four extended Subiya family groups, who resettled on the island during a period of flooding in the late 1950s. The families moved from nearby Kasika, which is susceptible to flooding, to Impalila via Botswana in order to utilise the higher ground of the island.

The Caprivi Region is generally very flat, falling within the Kalahari Basin, the largest accumulation of sand in the world. The **environment** of Impalila is relatively unique in the area. The small wedge of higher, rocky ground deflected the course of the Zambezi River and was thus surrounded by a maze of meandering channels, backwaters and floodplains. The Chobe River is in fact a backwater of the Zambezi, diverting some of its floodwaters to the west. Impalila Island lies around 950 metres above sea level and is one of few places in this part of the Caprivi that is not effected by regular flooding, increasing its value as an area for permanent settlement.

Average annual rainfall in the area is amongst the highest in all of Namibia at between 650 and 700 millimetres. Nonetheless, rainfall is highly variable from year to year, while the changing water levels of the rivers influence the accessibility to land in lower-lying areas.

Fish are an important resource for the island, both as a direct food source and as a source of income through sale and recreational angling. Over 80 species of fish have been recorded in the Zambezi.

Since the establishment of conservancies, **wildlife** numbers in communal areas have rebounded from historic lows prior to independence. Eastern Caprivi supports a large wildlife diversity, which is under pressure from people, as settlement and subsistence



a maze of meandering waterways surrounding a magical island in the mighty Zambezi, countless birds and impressive wildlife, golden sunsets and friendly people... all enveloped by the ever-present sound of the soothing river

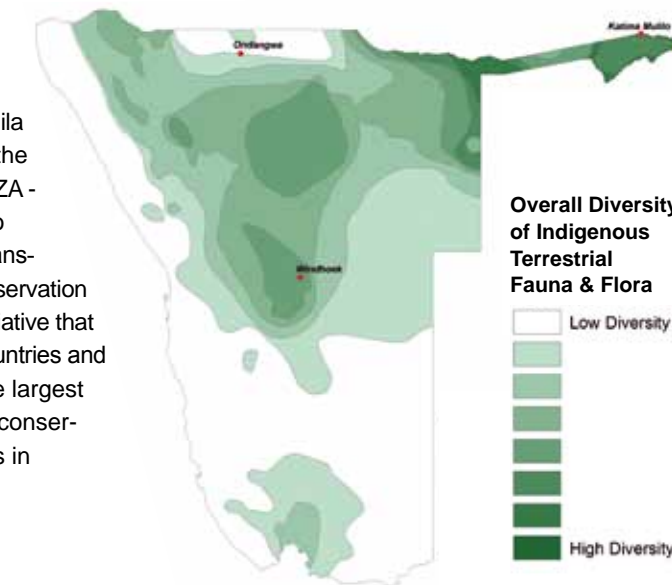
agriculture have reduced wildlife habitat. The conservancy is still home to a variety of large mammals, including elephant, buffalo, lechwe, sitatunga and waterbuck, all of which occur mostly on the floodplains in the west of the conservancy. Crocodile and hippo are common in the rivers, while the island's woodland is home to small populations of bushbuck, warthog and common impala. The diversity of woodland, riverine and floodplain habitats supports over 450 bird species, including rare birds such as Pel's



fishing owl, crested guinea fowl, rosy-throated longclaw, rock pratincole, African skimmer, pygmy goose, black coucal, olive woodpecker, Schalow's turaco, emerald cuckoo, river warbler and half-collared kingfisher.

The fertile soil of the island has produced a unique woodland, referred to as Impalila woodland. Many plants found here occur nowhere else in Namibia. The island is fringed by lush riverine vegetation, while the dry woodland of the interior is dominated by mopane and silver cluster-leaf, and dotted by stately baobabs. Other important trees include sycamore fig, leadwood, marula, jackal berry and bird plum. The Zambezi floodplains in the west consists of vast grasslands, while the margins of waterways support lush growth, including phragmites reeds and papyrus. Many plants have important traditional uses as a source of food, medicine or building material.

Around Impalila... the conservancy is at the point where four countries meet - Zambia to the north, Botswana to the south and Zimbabwe to the east. Attractions like the world-famous Victoria Falls and Chobe National Park are within easy reach. Impalila also lies at the heart of KAZA - the Kavango Zambezi Trans-frontier Conservation Area, an initiative that links five countries and is one of the largest contiguous conservation areas in the world.



LIVELIHOODS AND DEVELOPMENT

Conservancies
empower rural people...

Subiya is the main language group throughout much of the Kabe and Katima Mulilo constituencies of East Caprivi, while Lozi is the main language spoken between different ethnic groups throughout the Region. All Caprivian language groups together make up less than ten percent of the national population and the Subiya are a distant minority. The people of Impalila are further away from the Namibian capital, Windhoek, than anyone else in the country.

Separated by both distance and difficult physical access, development in this remote corner has been limited. Impalila Island is surrounded by rivers and floodplains, and is accessible only by boat or



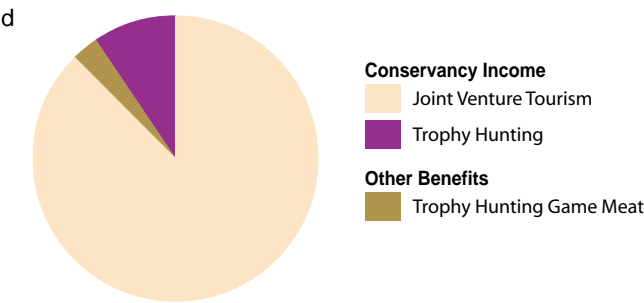
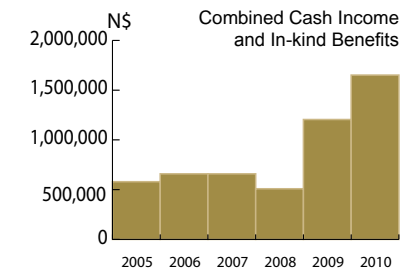
Impalila facilitates access to diverse training and capacity building, empowers individuals, especially women, to actively take part in decision-making, as well as instilling a renewed sense of pride in cultural heritage

small plane. There are very few vehicles on the island, which has only a limited network of dirt roads. An airstrip allows access for charter planes and a few small shops provide a relatively basic selection of goods.

The regional capital of Caprivi, Katima Mulilo, is reached via an endless maze of four-wheel drive tracks across the floodplains of neighbouring Kasika Conservancy, followed by another 70 kilometres of tar road from the Ngoma border post to the town. This means that many facilities and services are out of easy reach for residents of the island. Kasane, a bustling town right across the Chobe River in Botswana, provides accessible shopping and other facilities via a small border post on the edge of the river. Impalila Island has a police station and an immigration office. Mobile phone coverage on the island has significantly improved the ability of residents to communicate and organise their lives.

While there are boreholes on the island that supply ground water, most of the water supply comes from the rivers. Some water is still being carried to homesteads, but much of it is now pumped. The only primary school on the island is currently being upgraded to a combined

school and a secondary school provides education to grade 10. A small clinic with two nurses and a vehicle for emergencies provides basic health services on the island, and there is another clinic at Mbalasinte to the west. The nearest Namibian hospital is in Katima Mulilo, and a health centre at Bukalo provides some beds for the ill.



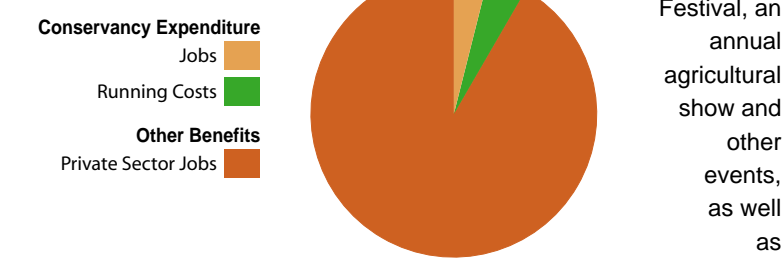
Benefits to the conservancy and its members come from a variety of sources. Sources and amounts vary from year to year, depending on factors such as agreements with private sector partners, and market fluctuations. The pie chart shows the main benefit sources in 2010.



the conservancy has the potential to enhance livelihood options for its residents, including a variety of tourism activities, craft production, the sale of fish and garden produce and other sales and services

The diverse mixture of livelihood activities on Impalila depends very much on natural resources. Crop production, vegetable gardening, fishing, livestock herding, and the sale of thatching grass and reeds are all important. Vegetables are sold to tourism lodges as well as locals. There are very limited employment opportunities and most of the few government employees come from outside the area. The conservancy provides some employment and creates a variety of other benefits. Conservancy income is spent on salaries and running costs, funding for the

Masubiya Cultural Festival, an annual agricultural show and other events, as well as



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.

support to the Bukalo Khuta (traditional leadership) in recognition of their stabilising and leadership role. Funds have been set aside for the possible development of another clinic to improve health facilities on the island. Craft production is an important source of income, especially for women. A great variety of baskets, jewellery, wooden bowls and animal carvings are sold at small village markets. Customers include tourists staying on the island as well as day visitors from Botswana.

Access for visitors to Impalila is either by boat or small charter plane as a fly-in safari. A number of lodges provide excellent tourism accommodation. Impalila Island Lodge has a joint venture agreement with the conservancy and provides important employment and income. Agreements with other lodges and houseboat operators are currently informal, but tourism creates significant employment on the island.

The conservancy itself offers cultural tours that include village visits and cultural performances, as well as fishing trips and dugout canoe rides. The guiding provides great opportunities for visitors to explore the island and make the most of the superb birding and angling. This is an important source of income for the local guides, while the cultural tours also generate income for the villages and craft producers.

The Impalila trophy hunting concession generates little income, as hunting operators tend to focus on the more accessible floodplains of neighbouring conservancies.





MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES

Conservancies
facilitate sustainability...

The **management structure** of Impalila Conservancy consists of a nine member management committee and an executive committee made up of the chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, treasurer and traditional authority representatives. Conservancy employees include the conservancy manager, treasurer and secretary, four community rangers, three tour guides, two resource monitors and a watchman. Two fisheries monitors are employed by the Ministry of Fisheries & Marine Resources and work closely with the conservancy, using the conservancy office and other facilities. The conservancy operates from a floating office moored on the bank of the Chobe River. The



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

conservancy owns only one boat, which is used for monitoring as well as tourism activities, limiting responsiveness to issues. The conservancy has a close relationship with the traditional authority and calls on traditional leaders to help resolve disputes. Field NGO Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) provides a variety of logistical and other support for the conservancy.

Activities... The conservancy actively monitors a variety of natural resources and their use. Resource monitors support craft development, create awareness of tree damage, and monitor the use of plants such as reeds and thatching grass, mopane and palm tress.

The conservancy issues recreational fishing licences, while the Ministry of Fisheries issues commercial licences. Fisheries monitors create awareness on the management of fish resources and regularly weigh and measure catches. They record fishing methods and create awareness of the importance of net mesh sizes and the type, number and lengths of nets used. There is a closed season for fishing throughout the month of December. To further protect fish stocks, a fish reserve in the Kasai Channel seeks to limit fishing in this area to catch and

release sport angling.

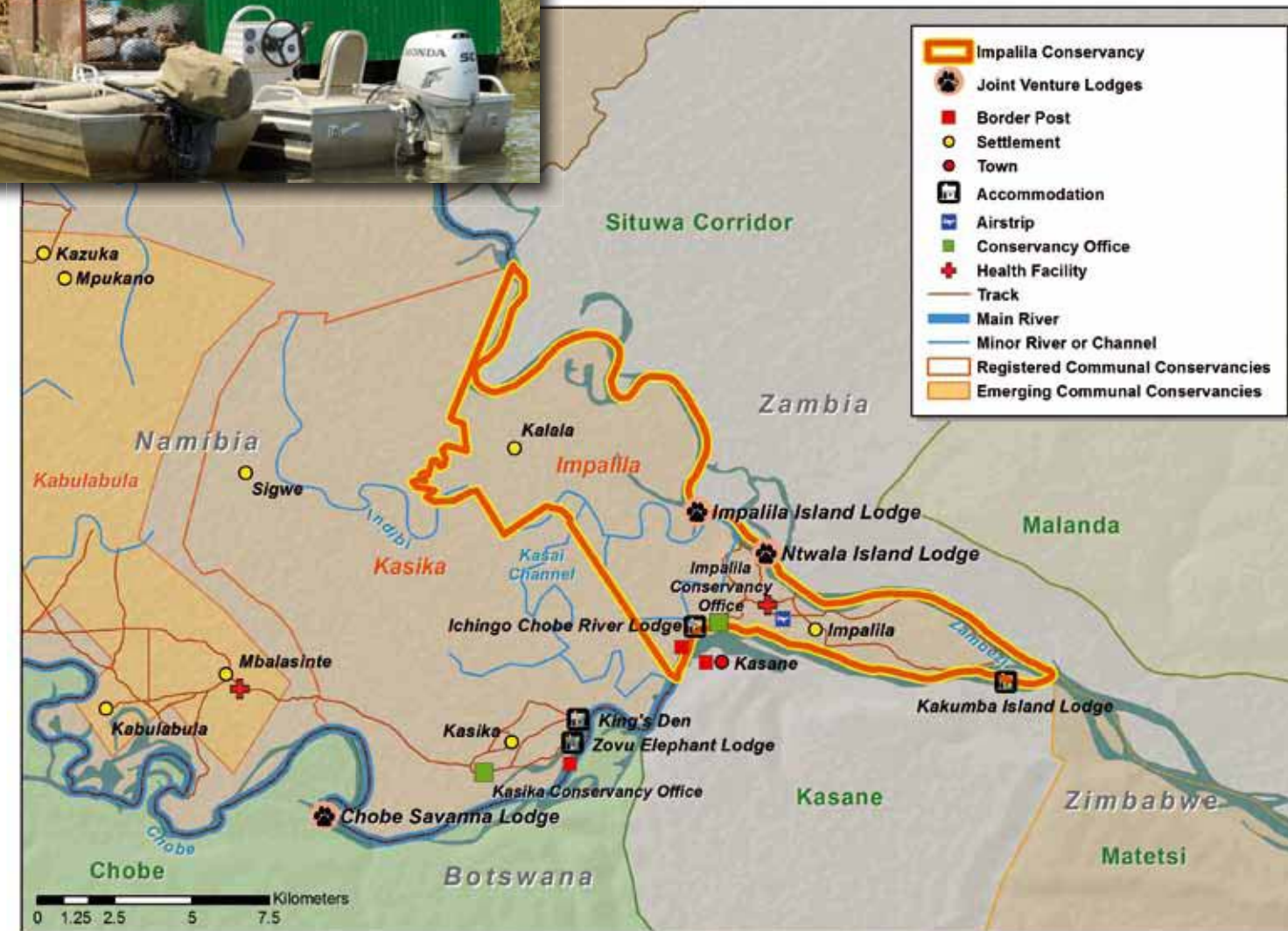
Impalila is part of the annual Caprivi Game Count carried out by the Ministry of Environment & Tourism (MET) with support from NGOs. The count is done on foot along fixed routes, recording both wildlife tracks and sightings. Community rangers also carry out active natural resource monitoring through the Event Book monitoring system, recording game sightings, human wildlife conflict, poaching incidents, game utilisation and any other data deemed important by the conservancy. Data is aggregated into monthly and annual reporting charts that facilitate adaptive management. In addition to the boat patrols and monthly fixed foot patrols that record Event Book data, the conservancy also carries out some joint patrols with the police and follows up on poaching incidents.

The conservancy is active in mitigating human wildlife conflict. Incidents include regular crop damage as well as attacks on people and livestock. Crocodile attacks are a big issue, which has been reduced through crocodile fencing at strategic points. The remote location of the conservancy hampers rapid response to incidents by MET officials, putting pressure on conservancy staff to deal with

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



issues. Through the National Policy on Human Wildlife Conflict Management, a system of providing financial offsets for losses is being implemented. The conservancy receives a fixed lump sum from the MET and is responsible for paying offsets to residents. Claims must be accompanied by a report from rangers investigating the incident, and are reviewed by a panel before payments can be made.



CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES...

Conservancies
are full of opportunities...

The great diversity of environmental assets, combined with a wealth of cultural resources, creates untapped potential in Impalila Conservancy.

Challenges... The young conservancy is still exploring ways to maximise benefits for residents and has been faced with some community frustration over a lack of tangible rewards from the conservancy formation. Limited engagement from the tourism industry and especially from mobile houseboat operators has been a source of disappointment. Land distribution on the island is a challenge, and

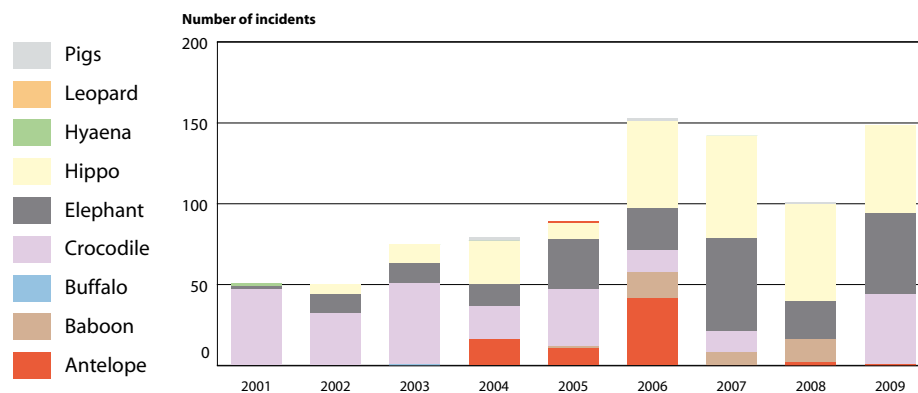


strategic development that maximises the areas tourism potential while mitigating pressures on the environment can facilitate a bright future for the far-away island conservancy

the conservancy has not been able to secure land for an office, or for community tourism developments.

Poaching of wildlife and fish stocks is an ongoing challenge and the conservancy faces poaching incursions from neighbouring countries. Limited funds have restricted conservancy effectiveness, especially regarding monitoring and anti-poaching activities, and have inhibited investment in community development projects.

Human wildlife conflict is a challenge where ever people coexist with wild animals, especially if these include elephants and predators. Elephants, as well as pigs, baboons and antelopes, regularly come into conflict with gardening activities. Crocodiles are responsible for numerous attacks on livestock, as well as occasional attacks on people. Hippos are a challenge for people on the river, causing many incidents including some fatalities, as they attack people to defend their territories. Rare leopard and hyaena incidents have also been recorded.

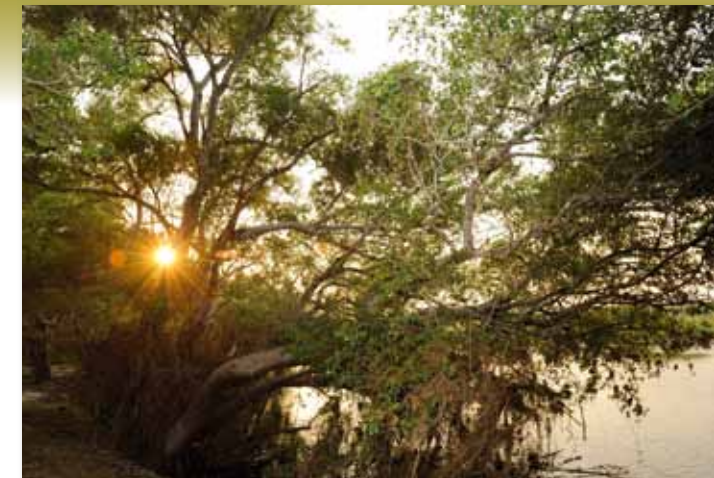


Human wildlife conflicts are monitored using the Event Book and clearly indicate the main conflict species.

... AND THE FUTURE

The conservancy has a variety of **plans** to engance tourism in the area. Impalila is working together with neighbouring conservancies to initiate the formation of a management complex that encompasses adjacent conservancies and facilitates joint management at a larger landscape level. This has advantages for both natural resource management and tourism development.

While the relative inaccessibility of Impalila makes it difficult to incorporate the island into regular tourism routes, the remoteness is part of its charm and great potential exists for more exclusive travel. Impalila has a variety of opportunities to benefit from regional tourism, and especially from the proximity of high tourism traffic in Botswana. Access from Kasane in Botswana is relatively easy and Impalila offers



Impalila is a unique and charming island retreat, expanding the suite of Namibian tourism attractions and providing great potential to diversify the livelihoods of people on the island

own tourism activities provide opportunities to increase direct income and employment. The potential of cultural tourism, while already being utilised, could be further enhanced. The annual Masubiya Cultural Festival provides the opportunity to create a seasonal highlight that can attract additional visitors. Craft sales are an important source of income and targeted support can optimise this sector.

a unique island retreat that can complement wildlife safaris in both Botswana and Namibia. The luxury of fly-in travel can make Impalila a wonderful stop-over on any Namibian fly-in safari.



Come to Impalila —
be part of the future...

The production of this brochure was jointly funded by MCA-Namibia, Norad and WWF



Norad

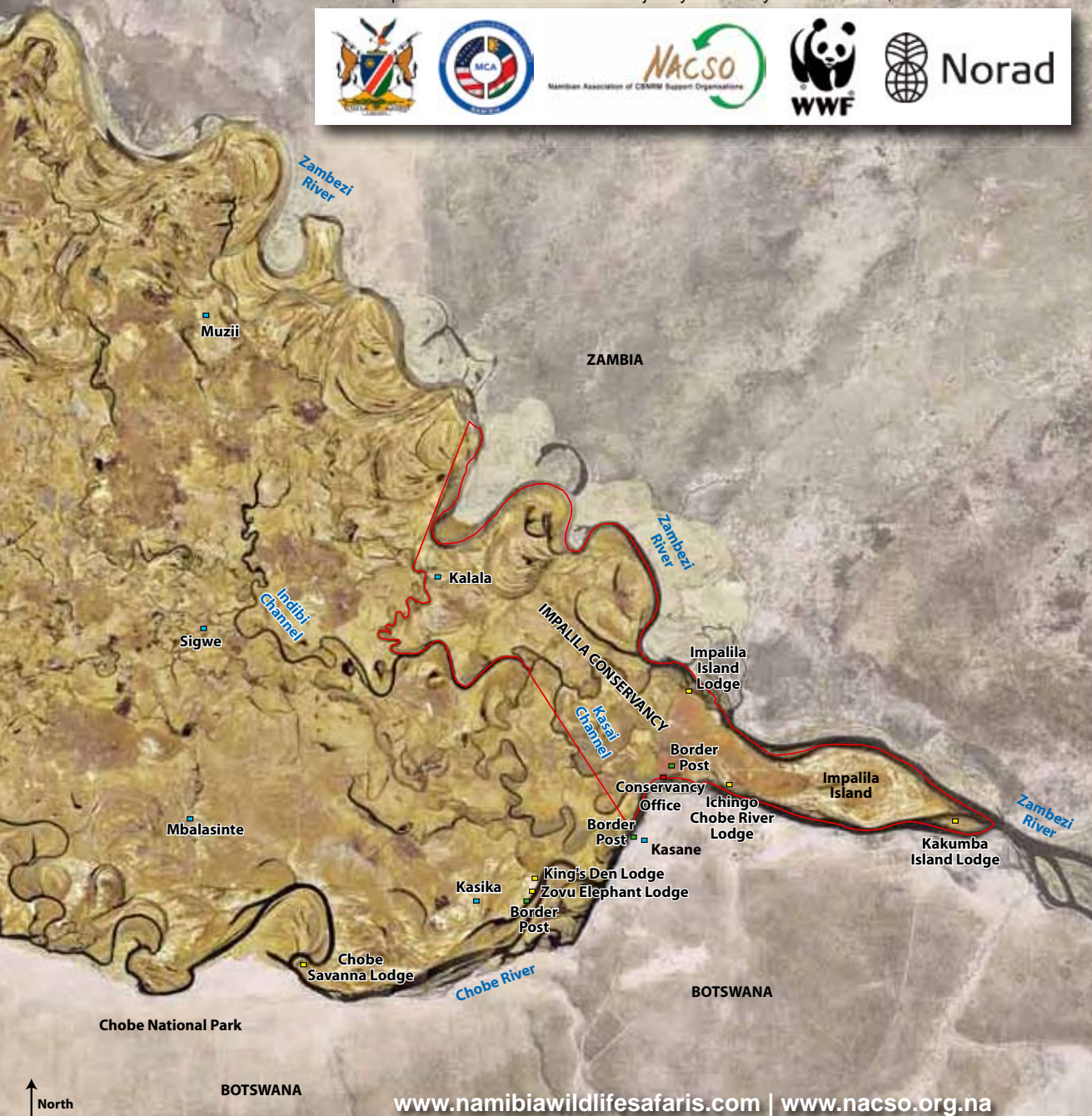
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