

The #Khoadi-//Hôas Conservancy



• QUICK FACTS AND SUCCESSES •

- ≠Khoadi-//Hôas is a legally constituted management body run by the community for the development of residents and the sustainable use of wildlife and tourism.
- The conservancy covers an area of 3,366 square kilometres in the Kunene Region of north-western Namibia.
- This was one of the first four conservancies to be registered by government in June 1998.
- About 3,200 people live in ≠Khoadi-//Hôas. The main language spoken is Khoekhoegowab (Damara/Nama).
- Wildlife includes elephant, black rhino, lion, leopard, cheetah, spotted hyena, giraffe, mountain zebra, springbok, oryx, and kudu.
- ≠Khoadi-//Hôas was one of the first conservancies to reintroduce black rhino. This reintroduction, and that of black-faced impala, demonstrated government confidence in the conservancy's ability to manage and protect rare and valuable species.
- The conservancy lies in an area where very many endemic species are found, and is an important part of a broad area managed for conservation in north-western Namibia.
- The conservancy derives most of its income from trophy hunting, tourism and hunting for meat.
- The conservancy has set aside land for wildlife and tourism, and monitors wildlife in collaboration with government and NGOs. Environmental shepherds employed by ≠Khoadi-//Hôas also monitor grazing and livestock condition, and address issues related to water supply.
- ≠Khoadi-//Hôas was the first conservancy to integrate the management of wildlife, livestock, rangeland and water.
- It was also the first to fully own a lodge, and was subsequently successful in obtaining rights to the Hobatere tourism concession.

• WHAT HAPPENS IN A CONSERVANCY? •

- Traditional farming activities are supplemented by incomes – largely in the form of cash – from wildlife and tourism.
- Wildlife multiplies because it gains productive value in conservancies.
- Natural resources and conservancy land increase in value.
- The conservancy and its natural resources are managed by a group elected to serve the interests of its members.

• A BACKGROUND TO ≠KHOADI-//HÔAS •

Made up of 3,366 square kilometres, ≠Khoadi-//Hôas lies in the Kunene Region of north-western Namibia. The conservancy straddles two constituencies: the northern two-thirds fall into Sesfontein, while the southern third forms part of Khorixas constituency.

The conservancy forms part of an extensive conservation area between the Orange River in the south and Kunene River in the north and it is surrounded by other areas where wildlife and tourism are valued as significant uses of land. The closest of these are also communal conservancies: Ehrovipuka, Omatendeka, //Huab, and Torra, while the Palmwag and Hobatere tourism concessions lie to the west and north. The north-eastern corner of ≠Khoadi-//Hôas abuts Etosha National Park. Many of the freehold farms to the east are also used for tourism, trophy hunting and wildlife production. Several of these adjoining farms belong to the Kaoko-Etosha and Loxodonta africana freehold conservancies.

Elevations range between 600 and 1,600 metres above sea level in the rugged, scenic landscape of ≠Khoadi-//Hôas with its age-old hills and rocks. Indeed, the metamorphic gneiss complexes and granites that underlie the eastern two-thirds of the conservancy are of the oldest in Namibia, having been formed between 1,650 and 2,500 million years ago. By contrast, the basalt layers that shape the flat tops of the Grootberg hills in the western area are much more recent. They were laid down between 125 and 132 million years ago during the break-up of the

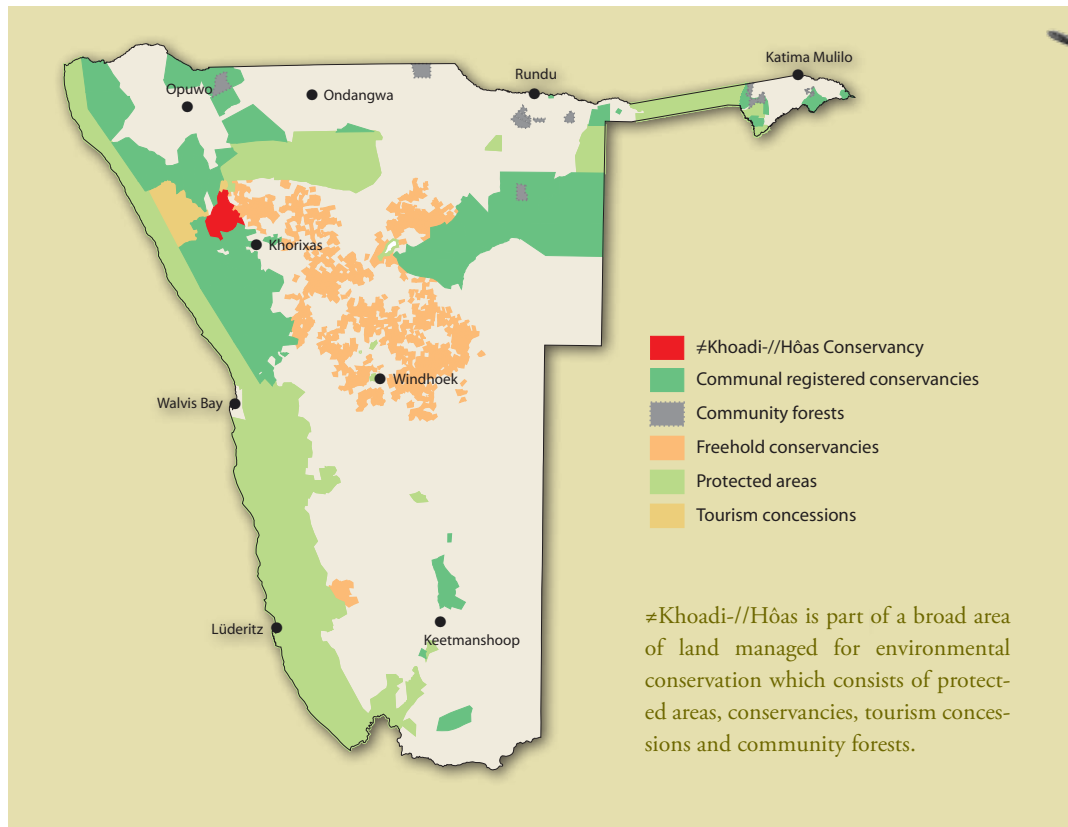


ancient continent of Gondwana. At this time, a series of huge eruptions spewed out volcanic lavas which were deposited as basalt layers. Much of the basalt in this area probably came from the Messum and Doros volcanic craters which lie some distance to the south of the Grootberg.

Two environmental factors, shallow soils and extreme aridity, create particularly harsh living and farming conditions in ≠Khoadi-//Hôas. With little or no soil, rain water is often lost rapidly as a result of surface flow or evaporation. The shallow soils also limit vegetation growth because plants are generally unable to establish deep root systems. Some areas do have pockets of deeper soils, but these are relatively infertile. As a

result, vegetation is sparse, and its growth restricted to short periods when rain wets the shallow soils.

Rainfall is rare and low. This, combined with very high evaporation rates, leads to extreme aridity, the second factor which causes the environment to be particularly challenging. Annual rainfall ranges between 250 millimetres in the north-east and 100 millimetres in the south-west, with average potential rates of evaporation between 3,000 and 3,500 millimetres per year. Over three-quarters of all rain falls in the months of January, February and March.



Rainfall is extremely variable in ǀKhoadi-//Hôas, as it is over all of north-western Namibia. Not only does it vary from month to month and year to year, but also from place to place. Falls are two or three times higher than average during the best years, while less than half the annual average is measured in the driest years. Livestock and herbivorous wildlife prosper when there are abundant pastures, but struggle to survive drought years when little food is available. Animals move around to cope with such variation, trekking to where good rains have fallen. Before permanent supplies of borehole water became available, people living in the area were also largely nomadic pastoralists, often on the move in search of greener pastures.

However, these days all the inhabitants of ǀKhoadi-//Hôas live in settlements or *poste* (cattle posts in earlier times) scattered across the 44 old farms that now make up the conservancy and the !Gaiodaman traditional authority area. The South African administration bought the farms in the 1960s and 1970s and incorporated them into the former Damara 'homeland'. Some people voluntarily moved to this homeland but many others from elsewhere in Namibia were forcibly settled there by the South African administration. Two of the settlements – Erwee and Anker – have grown into small villages. Several hundred people live at each of these villages where there are schools, clinics and a few small shops.

The formation of the conservancy was initiated by the Grootberg Farmers' Association (GFA), a well-organised and active local farming group. Their request to form a conservancy was the first independent request (not driven by a conservation organisation) of the kind submitted to government. The GFA's application coincided with new legislation passed in 1996, to the effect that communities could establish rights over wildlife and tourism through the formation of conservancies. The GFA recognised the opportunities that alternative wildlife management approaches held for farmers and ǀKhoadi-//Hôas was accordingly registered as a conservancy in mid-1998. It was one of the first four communal conservancies to be established in Namibia.

The GFA led the operations of the conservancy in its early days and many members of the GFA committee were elected to the first conservancy management committee. Because of experience already gained by the

GFA, the need to develop the conservancy's institutional proficiency was considered less pressing; instead, most of the assistance given was directed at making ǀKhoadi-//Hôas self-supporting. Thus, ǀKhoadi-//Hôas received less external financial and technical support than the three other conservancies registered at the same time (Salambala, Nyae Nyae and Torra). However, the GFA contracted two American Fulbright Scholars to give advice on the development of the conservancy.

The GFA and the emerging conservancy also worked with the Ministry of Environment & Tourism, other government agencies, and NGOs to pioneer a collaborative management approach, which later became known as the Forum for Integrated Resource Management (FIRM). The Forum was to assist the community in identifying its own developmental objectives and a programme of action, and then to coordinate the activities of service providers through collaborative action in support of the community vision and action plan. A more integrated approach to rural development resulted, including the management and development of water infrastructure, rangeland, livestock, wildlife and tourism. Systems evolved where detailed annual work plans were developed jointly by the GFA and conservancy at the start of the year. Extension staff from relevant government line ministries and supporting non-governmental organizations attended FIRM meetings to indicate where they could assist. Additional meetings were held during the year to assess progress and adjust work plans if needed. All this helped to facilitate a collaborative approach to rural development between the GFA, the conservancy, line ministries and NGOs. The FIRM approach has been further developed and replicated elsewhere in Namibia, but today the method is often more narrowly focused on livestock and rangeland.

Residents were patient as successive management committees struggled over time to bring wildlife-based development to the conservancy. For several years after its establishment the conservancy relied on a small trophy hunting quota for its main income, apart from some external financial support to cover basic running costs. Thus, benefits from the conservancy were relatively few, and it was only in 2005 that the establishment of a tourism lodge enabled the conservancy to expand its income base significantly. For some considerable time the conservancy had hoped to obtain rights over the Hobatere tourism concession on its



northern border. After lengthy negotiations, the Ministry of Environment & Tourism finally awarded the Hobatere concession to the conservancy in 2008. This has opened up another new and important source of income to the community.

The conservancy is run by an elected Management Committee of 17 people who hold office for a five-year term. The committee is looking at ways of retaining half of the outgoing members for a second term to ensure the carry-over of accumulated experience from term to term. An executive committee of six members (with the traditional authority acting in an advisory capacity) makes most of the day-to-day decisions within the conservancy. Decisions are based largely on information from the many monitoring mechanisms that are now in place. These include an Event Book system used to collect data on wildlife and grazing resources, and to monitor key aspects of the conservancy's institutional development. The conservancy is divided into smaller representational areas to improve communication with the widely scattered settlements.



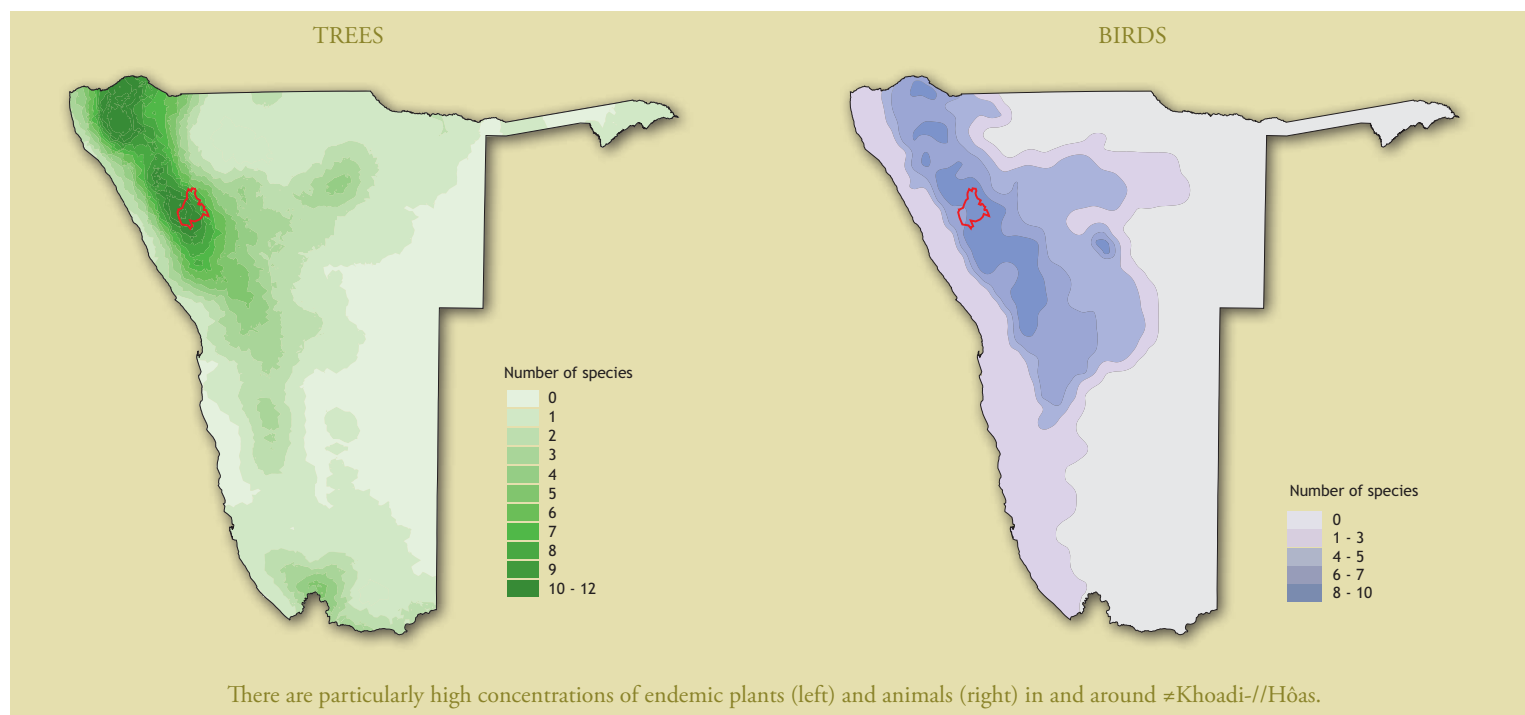
• THE ENVIRONMENTAL VALUE OF ≠KHOADI-//HÔAS •

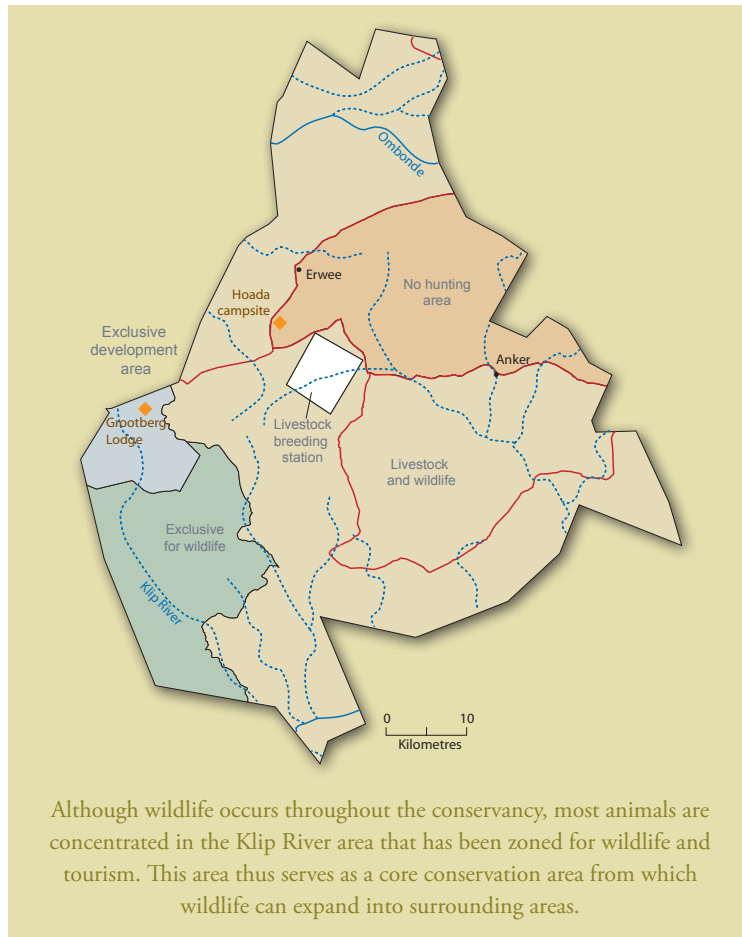
Despite its harsh conditions, several features contribute to the high value of ≠Khoadi-//Hôas's natural environment. The first is the diversity of habitats, which is largely a consequence of the varied topography and rock and soil types in the area. The types and structure of vegetation and the associated animals vary from place to place, and animal species often differ seasonally, especially in relation to rainfall.

Secondly, this area of Namibia is extremely rich in endemic species (organisms that occur only, or largely in a limited geographic area). The maps below clearly show the wealth of trees and birds, the two groups of endemic species that have been most comprehensively mapped. Similar trends can be seen in other plants and animals, with high proportions of endemics in and around ≠Khoadi-//Hôas. For example, more than half

the scorpions in the area are endemic species, while 25% of reptiles, 30% of snakes and over 40% of lizards are endemics. Namibia and ≠Khoadi-//Hôas thus have a responsibility to conserve these plants and animals within their localised distributions. Because their ranges are so limited, these organisms are often rare, at least on a regional or continental scale. Endemics also hold special interest for scientists and naturalists eager to study or view them.

Thirdly, this area of north-western Namibia is home to abundant wildlife. Some species are rare or uncommon, such as black rhino, cheetah and mountain zebra, and special measures are required to conserve them. Others – such as elephants, lions and leopards – are icons of the wilderness and pristine environments.





It is clear that wildlife populations have increased dramatically since the early 1980s when numbers were very low as a result of poaching and a succession of dry years. The ranges of many species have also expanded. Over the past three years, game counts have shown approximate numbers in ≠Khoadi-//Hôas as: 190 giraffe, 930 baboon, 370 oryx, 890 kudu, 2,600 springbok, 330 mountain zebra, and 140 ostrich. Although numbers fluctuate seasonally and annually when some animals move across conservancy boundaries in search of better grazing after rainfall,

most wildlife populations now appear to be stable or increasing at a slower rate than when the conservancy was first established.

Three black rhino were reintroduced in 2007 through the custodianship scheme of the Ministry of Environment & Tourism. This helped to expand the range of these endangered animals and to boost the potential for income generation, since the rhino in the Klip River are a major tourist attraction. In addition, the Ministry released eland (83 in 2008), oryx (50 in 2002) and the endemic black-faced impala (67 in 2007) into ≠Khoadi-//Hôas.

Perceptions about wildlife have changed very significantly since the formation of the conservancy. For instance, springbok were a rarity in areas around Erwee a decade ago, but today they are often seen mixing with livestock. In short, wildlife is now perceived as valuable rather than simply as a source of meat, or as a nuisance or threat. It is also widely agreed that the conservancy has helped to reduce large-scale and commercial poaching by outsiders.



An impressive array of large mammals occurs in ≠Khoadi-//Hôas, including elephant, black rhino, eland, leopard, mountain zebra, kudu, oryx, ostrich, springbok, steenbok, giraffe, duiker, klipspringer, warthog, hyaena, jackal, cheetah and occasionally lion.



The many endemic birds include the rare Hartlaubs' Francolin and Violet Woodhoopoe, the White-tailed Shrike, Rüppell's Parrot, Herero Chat, Monteiro's Hornbill (left), Bare-cheeked Babbler (centre) and Damara Rockrunner (right).

• THE ECONOMY OF ≠KHOADI-//HÔAS •

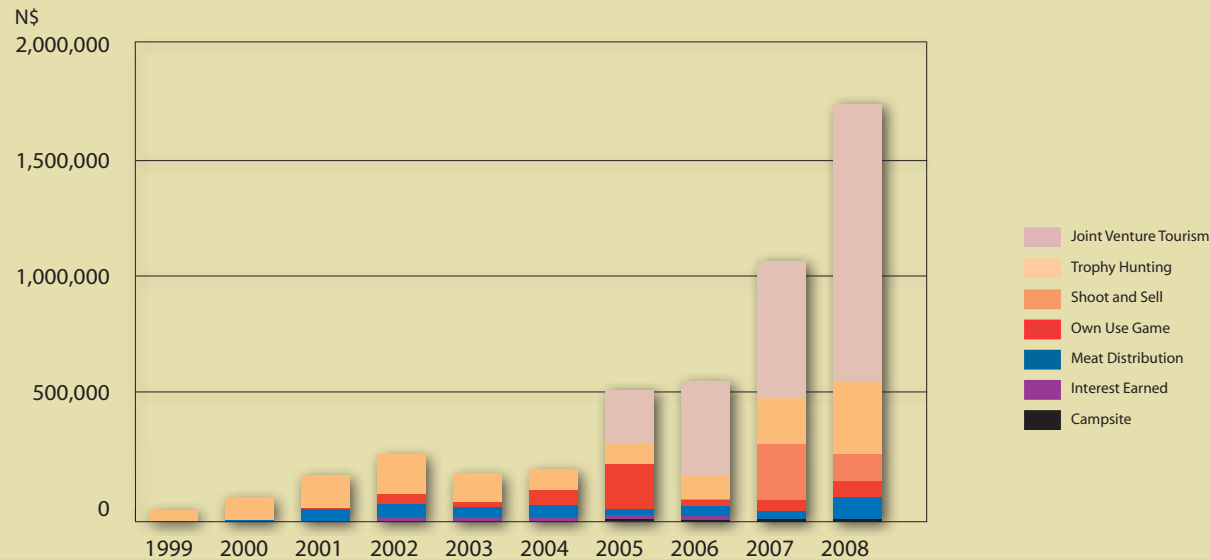
Prior to the formation of the conservancy, incomes were derived largely from two sources: off-farm sources (such as pensions, remittances and some wages) and livestock farming with goats, cattle, sheep and donkeys. Levels of household wealth were and remain extremely variable. The wealthiest farmers are those with several hundred cattle, goats and sheep, while poor families have less than 20 animals, or even none. Crop farming is virtually impossible because of the arid climate and poor soils.

The essence and advantage of communal land – as is widely believed – is that everyone with traditional or customary rights to live there also has rights to its agricultural resources. Communal land thus provides the poor with places to make a living, which might not be available in areas where homes and land have market value. But communal land also provides wealthy, influential people with free pastures where they can keep large numbers of livestock. As a result, stocking rates at ≠Khoadi-//Hôas are very high and pastures have been badly overgrazed, particularly around the *poste* and water points where livestock congregate. Under conditions of average rainfall and where pastures have not been damaged, the desired stocking rates for this area are approximately 20 hectares per large stock unit (equivalent to a cow or donkey, or four goats or sheep). However,

there are now about 34,000 large stock units feeding off 336,600 hectares, which results in a stocking density of just under 10 hectares per large stock unit, or roughly double the sustainable rate.

It is against this background of difficult farming in a harsh environment and on communal land that the conservancy has significantly improved the livelihoods of numerous people in ≠Khoadi-//Hôas. The economic benefits manifest in a number of ways. Many jobs are created by and through the conservancy. The conservancy office alone employs twelve residents (eight environmental shepherds, their coordinator, an information liaison officer, a hunting guide and a campsite manager) and a further 32 jobs have been created at Grootberg Lodge. The number of families supported by this employment is significant because jobs are extremely scarce in the area.

The conservancy distributes meat from trophy hunting and its own hunts. Although the amounts received per household are relatively small, the value of meat distributed can be considerable, ranging between N\$66,000 and N\$211,000 annually during the past four years. Several contributions have been made to improve social welfare. For example,



Income for the conservancy have come from various sources and has risen substantially over the years.

cash was donated to local schools to pay for renovations, the conservancy purchased and loaned breeding stock to members to help improve the quality of their livestock, and regularly pays for a soup kitchen to provide food for the elderly.

≠Khoadi-//Hôas has also invested heavily in measures to prevent or mitigate problems caused by elephants and predators. Protective walls have been built around some water points and special water points for elephants have been established to divert them from visiting water sources at settlements. The conservancy also provides diesel at a 50% discount to members for pumping water if it has been used up by elephants, and compensates water point committees for elephant damage. All these measures help ensure the maintenance of water supplies for people and their livestock.

Although not on a main tourism route, ≠Khoadi-//Hôas has a number of attractions. The landscape is breathtaking and wildlife is increasing, particularly in the spectacular Klip River valley which the conservancy set aside as a core wildlife and tourism area. The following are the main enterprises in the conservancy:

GROOTBERG LODGE: Perched on the brim of the Etendeka Plateau with expansive views down into the Klip River valley is a hidden gem, the Grootberg Lodge. The lodge is the first in Namibia to be fully owned by a conservancy, and was built with funds provided by the European Union. It is managed for the conservancy by a small company called EcoLodgistix through a joint venture agreement. The lodge is named after the Grootberg mountain to the south, which holds much importance for residents of the conservancy. The lodge was opened in 2005 and after a

slow start, now has a high rate of occupancy. Most guests are Europeans. The peak season is from August to late November. Guided walks, game drives and rhino tracking are offered to guests.

The conservancy receives a percentage of net turn-over from the lodge, which will increase as the lodge becomes better established. The agreement also provides for the preferential employment of residents and their training to managerial levels. (For example, Otniel Araseb started as a builder on the site, moved up the ranks to barman and is now Assistant Manager.) The conservancy aims to take over the full management of Grootberg Lodge in 2015. Lodge personnel and the environmental shepherds collect data on black rhino and other game in the area and provide the information to the conservancy management committee and Ministry of Environment & Tourism via Save the Rhino Trust (SRT).

HOADA CAMP: The conservancy operates its own campsite called Hoda (meaning 'for everyone'). Hoda is tucked away amongst granite boulders just 150 metres off the main road, an ideal stop-over for tourists on the way to or from the north-western Kunene Region. Over time the infrastructure has been developed and it is now perfect for the self-sufficient traveler.



HUNTING: As in other conservancies in Namibia, hunting in ≠Khoadi-//Hôas is based on sustainable quotas approved by the Ministry of Environment & Tourism. The quotas are for trophies, shoot-and-sell, and own use, and are based on annual game counts and regular monitoring by the conservancy's environmental shepherds. Trophy hunting is currently undertaken by African Safari Trails during the hunting season from February to November. Most hunters are German, American and Italian, and are attracted by the opportunity of a 'fair chase', the absence of fences, spectacular scenery and the region's renowned kudu and zebra trophies. The hunting operator also takes on the shoot-and-sell contract to minimize the loss of trophy animals. The conservancy will take ownership of the hunting camp once the current contract ends.

• CHALLENGES AND THE FUTURE •

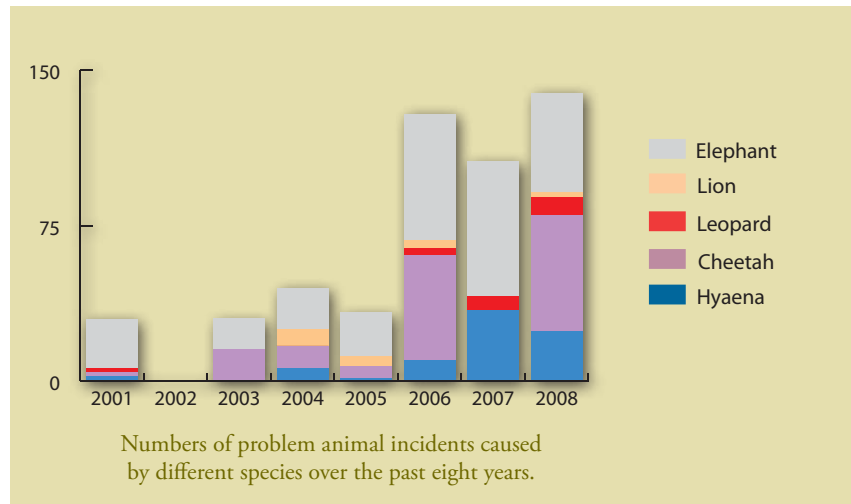
MANAGEMENT: The fair distribution of benefits is one of the greatest challenges for the conservancy management committee. It is not easy to ensure that everyone gets an equitable share of the benefits, and that these benefits contribute significantly to improving people's livelihoods. However, with the increased income from the Grootberg Lodge and the opportunity to operate a concession in the Hobatere tourism area, the conservancy should be able to increase the returns to its members. By strengthening management, natural resources can also be used more productively, sustainably and equitably, all of which would improve the economic health of residents and provide greater asset value for the conservancy.

NATURAL RESOURCES: While some local poaching for the pot continues, it is not at a level that causes declines in numbers of wildlife. Poaching is also less easy to control, in part because poachers are warned by means of cell phones of the presence of environmental shepherds in the area. New approaches to control poaching are thus needed. Community hunts will also increase support for the conservancy by providing more meat and enabling local hunters to hunt legitimately.



HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT: This is one of the biggest challenges faced by ≠Khoadi-//Hôas since increasing problems caused by wildlife may cause farmers to lose faith in conservation. Of all the incidents reported, most were caused by elephants (50%) and cheetah (33%). Elephants destroy water infrastructure and fences in their search

in the early 1980s are certain to return at some stage. Competition between livestock and wildlife will then be very severe. To prevent mass mortalities and a waste of potential income, both the conservancy and Ministry of Environment & Tourism must be prepared to remove much greater numbers of wildlife than permitted by quotas in recent years.



for water in this arid area, while lion, leopard, hyaena and cheetah cause livestock losses. The conservancy continues to address these problems and plans to provide more protective walls around water points and to explore further means of deterring elephants. One method involves the use of 'chili bombs'. The bombs, consisting of ground-up chilies mixed with elephant dung, are set alight, giving off a pungent smell. ≠Khoadi-//Hôas is also developing a water management plan to provide water specifically for wildlife and thus to reduce conflicts. Kraal fences can be fortified with rocks and thorn branches, and raised to keep out predators. The Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) has provided some training in this regard but more work on farming techniques is needed to reduce stock mortalities.

DROUGHT: During the past 10 years rainfall has generally been average or better than at other times and both wildlife and livestock have prospered. However, much drier conditions similar to those experienced

TOURISM AND NEW ENTERPRISES: While the enterprises developed by ≠Khoadi-//Hôas have earned good revenues, much of the increase in tourism has been due to the recent tourism boom in Namibia as a whole. Tourism is a highly competitive industry, and the conservancy will continually have to innovate and aggressively attract visitors. ≠Khoadi-//Hôas must also explore new enterprises, including options for small local businesses that could benefit from tourism and trophy hunting activities. Current efforts to investigate secondary enterprises, such as vegetable and craft production, are to be welcomed.

For more information and updates contact:
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Etosha Pan

Erwee

Hoada Campsite

Conservancy Office

Anker

Kamanjab

Grootberg Lodge

Klip River

Huab River

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