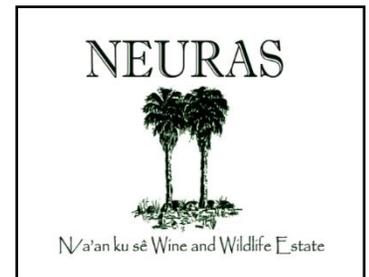


Wildlife Conservation Volunteering - Neuras



Background

In the local Koikoi language Neuras means "place of abandoned water", and owes its early existence as a farm to the presence of several crystal clear cold-water springs. In 2012, Allan and Sylvia Walkden Davis bought the farm with winemaking aspirations. Shiraz, Merlot, and Petit Verdot vines were planted on the property and their first wines were produced in 2001. Neuras has since become known as "one of the driest vineyard in the world", not because of the grapes but due to its semi-desert location and low annual rainfall.



Since 2012 N/a'an ku sê started managing Neuras and continues to monitor large carnivores in the area, as well as to capitalize on the potential to support conservation through wine production. Volunteers will help the Neuras team record wildlife information from game counts, wildlife cameras, site exploration, and large carnivore GPS data that will contribute to the long-term management of the estate.

Environment



Neuras Wine and Wildlife Estate is located in the Pro-Namib ecosystem and totals 144km² (or 14 400ha). The estate is uniquely nestled in a much larger public and private conservation landscape and therefore adds to Namibia's large-scale wildlife protection efforts. The northern section encompasses the majestic Naukluft Mountain range, and the Tsauchab river system that empties into Namibia's famous Sossusvlei pan. The southern part of the property is a geological maze of an extensive canyon complex with a unique underground cave system. These environments along with the five springs provide specialized ecosystems and contain highly adapted wildlife that the Neuras team strives to protect and study.



The Wine



Neuras produces four types of wine on site, Neuras Red, Neuras Shiraz, Tripple Clone Shiraz and a Tripple Cultivar. Neuras is now also producing Namibia's first Brandy, Ruby Dessert Wine and a Rum. Depending on the season, volunteers may be able to assist in the various components of producing the wine such as harvesting, bottling, and labelling, all of which are done by hand. Even for non-wine drinkers helping with this process can be extremely rewarding and demonstrates how conservation projects can be sustained through novel approaches.



Wildlife Conservation Volunteering - Neuras



Activities at Neuras

Here volunteers will become first-hand involved in conservation through the research and monitoring of free-ranging carnivores.

Capture Mark Release

To understand how wildlife, utilize the area and how they interact in a challenging and demanding environment requires indirect monitoring techniques such as GPS satellite tracking; especially for very secretive species like the leopard. GPS collars are a good way of gathering important information. The volunteers will help researchers identify areas of regular carnivore activity (cheetah marking trees for example) for the placement and daily checking of cage traps. When species of interest are captured, the animals will be immobilized on-site and fitted with suitable GPS or VHF trackers for continued monitoring. After release, the work continues at the computer following the satellite information from study animals and putting them in a scientific context. This only happens when there is a conservation need (conflict or research situation) and is not necessarily something which happens every week/month.



Left: GPS Collar fitt Right: Released female leopard

Radio Telemetry Tracking

Collaring animals (predominantly leopard and cheetah. We do not have any collared cheetah here, nor do we ever see them on camera traps) with GPS trackers to follow their day-to-day movements is only one piece of the puzzle though. Remote satellite tracking does not tell us much about the breeding success, prey selection, health status or other important ecological parameters of a study animal. Direct observations are necessary to evaluate these suitably and therefore the team will go into the field when possible to track collared individuals and make direct assessments. The animals are found by way of radio telemetry (when it works – sometimes the batteries have died and then we can't track them) which means locating the radio transmitter in each collar with an antenna and receiver. Days in the field





Wildlife Conservation Volunteering - Neuras

can be long and warm, and a certain amount of walking is often required – but the rewards of finding wildlife in the bush and collecting meaningful information at the same time are unrivalled.

Game Counting

Herbivores of all sizes are an integral part of African ecosystems. In an open biological system such as Neuras it is important to monitor the fluctuation of population density of herbivores to assess the overall health of the ecosystem. The volunteers will participate in regular game counts to assist in these monitoring efforts. The commonly observed desert-adapted animals are Mountain Zebra, Kudu, Oryx, Springbok, Steenbok, and Ostrich.



Camera Trapping



During the early resource identification stage as well as during the continuous monitoring of wildlife populations we also rely on “additional eyes” in the form of motion-triggered camera traps. Because the cameras record data 24/7 and every day of the year, they often “observe” wildlife that humans overlook. Moreover, the cameras are non-selective and therefore



capture information on all wildlife that pass in front of them, be they carnivores, herbivores, birds or others. This helps the researchers assess which species are present, and where they are most active, especially for animals that are usually very cryptic or entirely nocturnal. The cameras are non-invasive and sometimes record extremely interesting behavioral data that we would otherwise have no access to. Volunteers will help set cameras in the field (for example at water points, leopard marking trees, caves etc.), maintain them (refresh batteries and memory cards) but also go through the abundance of images to assess and structure the data recorded. For example, the cameras will be used to assess spot patterns of resident large carnivores to document the number of individuals, breeding success and space use.



Wildlife Conservation Volunteering - Neuras



Optional Day Trip

Neuras is situated just over an hour away from the iconic red Sossusvlei Dunes. Neuras coordinators conduct an optional day trip for the volunteers for a nominal fee, offering volunteers the opportunity to experience this stunning landscape for themselves. Sossusvlei is an absolute must-see in Namibia. Alternatively, you can enjoy a mountain hike in the Namib Naukluft Mountains in the Naukluft National Park that borders Neuras Farm.



Accommodation

Volunteers will stay in our new tented camp located across from one of Neuras' natural springs. We have 6 tents with 2 single beds and shared bathrooms.



Additionally, you can choose to upgrade to one of our luxury chalets for an additional N\$ 200.00 per person per night sharing in a twin room, or N\$ 300.00 per person per night single, depending upon availability. Please indicate this option at the time of your booking.



The main lounge area has a swimming pool and a BBQ-facility. We can accommodate groups of up to 12 participants in an intimate and homely atmosphere and groups are guaranteed a lot of hands on experience.

Food

Volunteers will receive 3 balanced meals per day. Meals include a standard breakfast with cereals and toast. Lunches vary between sandwiches, burgers, quiche, and a variety of salads. Dinners typically are warm meals consisting of meat (chicken, red meat or fish) and vegetables with pasta, rice, potato or salad. Once per week, dinner will be in the form of a traditional Namibian braai (barbeque), and a Neuras favourite; brick oven Pizza Night! **Vegetarian options can be catered for upon request. Please inform us of any special dietary requirements prior to your arrival at the project site.**



Wildlife Conservation Volunteering - Neuras



Important Information for Everyone

Volunteers should be equipped to work under any weather conditions, including cold winters and rains (please check prevailing weather conditions at your time of travel). Solid shoes and sun protection (hat, sun-screen SPF30+) are essential. Volunteers should bring their own sleeping bag, multiple water bottles and flash light/head torch. Personal binoculars and field guidebooks are recommended. Please do not forget your South African electricity socket adapter. The local tap water is safe to drink. Volunteers should be prepared to walk between 5km – 10km daily.

Although Neuras is not located in a Malaria zone, people should bring prophylaxis if they intend to travel to other areas in Africa. However, mosquitos and other insects are common on the reserve and repellents should be brought. All volunteers should ensure adequate health insurance cover for visiting Namibia and that relevant immunizations are up-to-date.

Except for emergencies, volunteers have no access to the internet on the estate. The area has NO cell phone network coverage, but the landline is available for emergencies. Local currency (both SA Rand and Nam Dollars are acceptable) can be obtained at the international airport upon arrival. Laundry services are available.

The program at Neuras runs for 7 nights starting every Saturday. Multiple week bookings are encouraged to ensure a lasting impact on the project and due to the diversity of activities.

Pre-bookings for Neuras are recommended due to limited availability and can be made at the time of your booking

Or

Add Neuras to your project itinerary in the office upon your arrival at the Sanctuary

You can mention that volunteers will also help with project work – such as road maintenance, collecting wood, cleaning animal



enclosures, cleaning food prep, washing cars, etc.

We look forward to welcoming volunteers to the

Neuras Wine and Wildlife Estate!

N/a'an ku se Wildlife Experience Pty, P.O. Box 99292, Windhoek, Namibia. www.naankuse.com

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